

Applied Research, Professional Practice and Professional Development Survey Results

2011

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Introduction

The Applied Research, Professional Practice and Professional Development Survey was conducted in October 2011. The goal on this survey was to gauge members' opinion on forestry research, professional knowledge acquisition and professional development. 519 members responded to the survey.

Demographics

Consistent with the overall ABCFP member breakdown, 65% of respondents were RPFs and 28% were RFTs. The majority of respondents (73%) work in the forest management sector. Government (50%), industry (21%) and consultants (20%) are the most cited employers. When looking at the area of the province where respondents worked, Vancouver Island/Coast was the area most selected (30%).

Figure 1: Practice Region (see map: [BC Development Regions](#))

	All Valid Respondents
Vancouver Island/Coast	30%
Mainland Southwest	5%
Thompson Okanagan	17%
Kootenay	7%
Cariboo	16%
North Coast	3%
Nechako	11%
Northeast	7%
Other province	2%
International	2%

Professional Practice

Important Issues in Personal Practice as a Forest Professional

When asked what issues are most important to members' personal practice as a forest professional, 55% of respondents rated professional reliance as most important. Other important issues were forest stewardship challenges and timber supply challenges.

Figure 2: Important Practice Issues

	Frequency*	Relative %*
Professional reliance	283	55%
Forest stewardship challenges	267	51%
Timber supply challenges	234	45%
Achieving standards of professional practice	178	34%
Meeting ABCFP Code of Ethics requirements	107	21%
Understanding what is the "practice of professional forestry"	120	23%
Role of employer - role of forest professional	131	25%
Reputation of the profession	141	27%
Community fire hazards	83	16%
Implications of climate change	147	28%
Management of forest carbon	69	13%

Conflict of interest	72	14%
Supervision	152	29%
Accountability and liability	171	33%
Professional conduct	138	27%
Change of membership status	7	1%
Not satisfactorily restocked areas	96	18%
Forest inventory	120	23%
Forest research	126	24%
Public expectations	183	35%
Appraisal data	106	20%
Integration of RFTs	60	12%
Overlapping and conflicting rights and activities on the land base	216	42%
Forest roads	178	34%
Conflicting professional opinions	144	28%
Non-statutory expectations	96	18%
Working effectively with Aboriginal peoples	182	35%
Other	51	10%
TOTAL*	3,858	N/A

*Respondents were allowed to choose more than one issue as most important.

ABCFP Support to Members

The most beneficial areas that the ABCFP provides support to members were technical, scientific and professional information, professional development workshops and courses and professional reliance.

Figure 3: Beneficial Areas Where ABCFP Provides Support

	Frequency*	Relative %*
Member discount/affinity program (discounted insurance, event tickets etc.)	49	9%
Professional events notices	150	29%
Professional errors and omissions insurance	35	7%
Selecting fair charge out rates /providing fair compensation	51	10%
Technical, scientific and professional information	330	64%
Professional volunteer opportunities (ABCFP committees or task forces)	37	7%
Professional development workshops and courses	268	52%
Ethical and technical competence	120	23%
Mentoring opportunities (for mentors and mentees)	51	10%
Professional reliance	210	40%
Awareness of complaints and discipline	158	30%
Awareness of the professional accountability process	128	25%
Receiving updates for changes that impact my practice	204	39%
Advocacy	109	21%
Networking	116	22%
Relationships with other resource professionals	138	27%
Due diligence	173	33%
Safety	96	18%
Integrity	90	17%
Independence	74	14%
Stewardship	159	31%
Working effectively with Aboriginal peoples	87	17%
Other (please specify)	9	2%
TOTAL*	2,842	N/A

*Respondents were instructed to select all the areas that were deemed most beneficial.

Applied Research

Enhancing Professional Knowledge Base

In order to enhance professional knowledge base, 41% of respondents feel that research should focus on silviculture. Forest health and climate change are also rated as important research areas.

Current Research Efforts

When asked if the forestry community's (provincial, national or other) current research efforts match the current or future needs of the BC's forest professionals, 74% of respondents answered 'no'. Reasons for 'no' answers fell into the general categories below:

- Lack of funding or continuity of programs (provincial and federal)
- Research needs to be more operationally driven (relevance)
- Decreased support/downsizing has resulted in fewer specialists and inadequate programs (e.g. Research Branch)
- Not enough understanding of or value placed on non-timber resources
- Government's annual budget process is an obstacle to long term funding
- Not practising adaptive management
- Disconnect between academics and practitioners
- Poor understanding of work being done (e.g. carbon, climate change)
- Economic climate has limited the capital for research investment and has been in decline for many years now
- Inventory not sufficient for long-term planning (too focused on short-term payback)
- Our forests are going through a time of drastic change and we need to understand this effect more than ever
- Existing research has not been capitalized on or distributed enough and many wonder how to access information consistently
- Lack of incentive for licensees or others to invest in research
- Difficulty to measure and evaluate things like cumulative effects

It was found that most employers (60%) support research work.

Who Should Conduct Research and Link it to Practitioners

Respondents feel that government agencies (64%*) and universities (45%*) should be primarily responsible for research initiatives. According to respondents, government agencies (50%*), professional bodies (28%*), extension organizations (25%*), industry associations (24%*) and universities (21%*) should be primarily responsible for linking research to practitioners.

*Note: Respondents were allowed to choose more than one group as primarily responsible.

Professional Development

Respondents feel the best formats for learning are in-person formal courses and applied workshops. Other formats for learning that were rated highly were web-based formal courses, webinars and self-directed learning.

When asked if the ABCFP should take a stronger role in promoting professional development within the membership, almost two-thirds responded (64%) yes. Survey respondents feel that the ABCFP should have a role in the coordination of professional development offerings on behalf of third-party providers and also in course development and offerings.

Keeping Professional Knowledge Current

Over two-thirds (70%) of respondents don't have concerns about keeping their professional knowledge current in their area of practice. Of the 30% of respondents who do have concerns, some of the subject areas that they would like to see improvements to include operations, forest health, silviculture and fire management.

The primary obstacle to respondents keeping their professional knowledge current is **time constraints**. Cost and employee support are also obstacles.

Close to half of respondents (45%) have concerns about other forest professionals keeping their knowledge current. Reasons for concerns were grouped into the general categories below:

- Time constraints/too busy/workloads (doing the work of multiple roles)
- Economic climate is preventing professional development (viewed as a luxury by employers)
- Information overload
- Scope of workload too broad to stay informed properly
- The bar is set too low for professionals/lack of ABCFP requirements for education (lack of accountability)
- Negative rate pressures for consultants
- Basic technical skills are eroding
- Work/life balance demands
- Lack of training opportunities, especially in remote parts of province (the North)
- Lack of leadership
- Outdated info still being used
- Lack of a training format that results in quick on-the-job utilization (applicability)
- Poor understanding of professionalism-first
- Inadequacy of fire management knowledge, appraisals, general supervision
- Repeating research on the same topics – need to coordinate a library of this old information
- Focus on short-term objectives has diminished the value of education for the long-term
- No support for urban forestry

Summary

Professional reliance, forest stewardship challenges and timber supply challenges are among the most important areas of practice to respondents. Keeping professional knowledge current in these and other areas is assisted by ABCFP support in providing technical, scientific and professional information, professional development workshops and courses and professional reliance. Currency of knowledge is hindered by time constraints, cost and lack of employee support.

The majority of respondents feel that current research efforts do not match their current or future needs, and government agencies and universities should be primarily responsible for initiating research initiatives. Government agencies, professional bodies, extension organizations, universities and industry associations should be primarily responsible for getting research information into the hands of BC's forest professionals.

Appendix 1: Survey Questions

Applied Research, Professional Practice and Professional Development Survey

Your confidentiality is assured. NO PERSONAL INFORMATION IS COLLECTED WITH THE SURVEY RESULTS.

A. DEMOGRAPHICS

1. Please indicate your membership category (select all that apply).

- Registered Forest Technologist (RFT)
- Registered Professional Forester(RPF)
- Trainee Forest Technologist (TFT)
- Forestry Pupil (FP)
- Forester in Training (FIT)
- Accredited Timber Cruiser (ATC)
- Accredited Timber Evaluator (ATE)
- Silvicultural Accredited Surveyor (SAS)
- Transferring Forest Professional
- Visiting Forest Professional
- ABCFP Limited License
- RFT(Ret)
- RPF(Ret)
- Honorary Member
- Life Member

2. Please indicate how many years of professional forestry experience you have.

3. Which employment sector do you work in?

- Energy and mines
- Environmental
- Fisheries
- Forest management
- Forestry manufacturing
- Education
- Research

Other

4. Which employer group do you belong to?

Government

Industry

Consulting

Academia

Student

Unemployed

Retired

Other

5. What part of the province do you practice in (see map: [BC Development Regions](#))?

Vancouver Island/Coast

Mainland Southwest

Thompson Okanagan

Kootenay

Cariboo

North Coast

Nechako

Northeast

Other province

International

B. PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

1. Below is a list of issues you may face in your practice as a forest professional. Please select the ones that are most important to your personal practice (select as many as apply).

- Timber supply challenges
- Achieving standards of professional practice
- Meeting ABCFP Code of Ethics requirements
- Professional reliance
- Understanding what is the "practice of professional forestry"
- Role of employer - role of forest professional
- Reputation of the profession
- Community fire hazards
- Implications of climate change
- Management of forest carbon
- Forest stewardship challenges
- Conflict of interest
- Supervision
- Accountability and liability
- Professional conduct
- Change of membership status
- Not satisfactorily restocked areas
- Forest inventory
- Forest research
- Public expectations
- Appraisal data
- Integration of RFTs
- Overlapping and conflicting rights and activities on the land base
- Forest roads
- Conflicting professional opinions
- Non-statutory expectations
- Working effectively with Aboriginal peoples
- Other (please specify)

2. Below are some areas where the ABCFP can, or already does, provide support to members. Please select the ones that are the most beneficial to you (select as many as apply).

- Member discount/affinity program (discounted insurance, event tickets etc.)
- Professional events notices
- Professional errors and omissions insurance
- Selecting fair charge out rates /providing fair compensation
- Technical, scientific and professional information
- Professional volunteer opportunities (ABCFP committees or task forces)
- Professional development workshops and courses
- Ethical and technical competence
- Mentoring opportunities (for mentors and mentees)
- Professional reliance
- Awareness of complaints and discipline
- Awareness of the professional accountability process
- Receiving updates for changes that impact my practice
- Advocacy
- Networking
- Relationships with other resource professionals
- Due diligence
- Safety
- Integrity
- Independence
- Stewardship
- Working effectively with Aboriginal peoples
- Other (please specify)

C. APPLIED RESEARCH AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

3. In order to best enhance our knowledge base, please tell us which practice areas research should be focused on. PLEASE PICK YOUR TOP THREE AREAS ONLY.

- Silviculture
- Forest Health
- Climate change
- Forest regeneration
- Fire
- Wildlife
- Fisheries
- Carbon
- Biodiversity
- Old growth
- Riparian
- Operations
- Other

4a. Does the forestry community's (provincial, national or other) current research efforts match the current or future needs of the forest professional in BC?

- Yes
- No

4b. Why?

5a. Does your employer support any research work?

- Yes
- No

5b. If yes, please specify:

6a. Who should be primarily responsible for research initiatives? Please rank (1=most responsible and 9=not responsible).

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Government agencies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Industry associations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Universities/Colleges	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Extension organizations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Self-directed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Commercial providers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Professional bodies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Employers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6b. If other, please specify:

7a. Who should be primarily responsible for linking research work with the practitioners? Please rank (1=most responsible and 9=not responsible).

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Government agencies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Industry associations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Universities/Colleges	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Extension organizations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Self-directed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Commercial providers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Professional bodies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Employers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7b. If other, please specify:

8a. Given the reduced outlets for ongoing forest education in recent years, looking to the future, what is the best format for this kind of learning? Please rank (1=best and 8=worst).

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
In-person formal courses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Web-based formal courses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Applied workshops	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Blogs/Wikis	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Webinars	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Self-directed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
On the job	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8b. If other, please specify:

9a. Should the ABCFP take a stronger role in promoting professional development within the membership?

- Yes
- No

9b. If yes, please select the most appropriate role the ABCFP should be taking (select all that apply).

- Advertising only
- Tracking professional development credits
- Advocacy for other professional development providers
- Coordinating on behalf of professional development providers
- Hosting services
- Course development and offering
- Other

10. Do you have any concerns about keeping your professional knowledge current in your area of practice?

- No
- Yes. Please specify a subject area that you would like to see improvements to.

11a. What are the primary obstacles to keeping your professional knowledge current? Please rank (1=greatest concern and 7=not a concern).

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Lack of information on subject	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of information providers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Concern regarding the quality of provider	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Time constraints	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Employer support	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cost	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11b. If other, please specify:

12. Do you have concerns about other forest professionals keeping their professional knowledge current?

Yes

No

If yes, please specify:

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13. Please give us any additional comments you may have.

A rectangular text input field with a thin border. On the right side, there is a vertical scroll bar with a small upward-pointing triangle at the top and a downward-pointing triangle at the bottom. At the bottom left and right corners, there are small square buttons with left and right-pointing arrows, respectively.