

A Continuing Competency Program for Members of the ABCFP

Final Report

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Introduction

Last year, the council of the Association of BC Forest Professionals asked the professional practice committee to develop an options paper that would outline a continuing competency program for members. The options paper was produced, reviewed and endorsed by council and distributed as a discussion paper for members' input. Approximately 270 members completed the questionnaire contained in the communications package or expressed their views in writing. In addition, 387 members attended 27 meetings held throughout the province. Here they provided council, committee members and staff with their views, concerns and constructive suggestions to improve the proposal.

The professional practice committee reviewed in detail the input, general concerns and suggestions of members and discussed how they should be addressed.

The two most common suggestions made by members were:

- that a continuing competency program is needed (85 per cent);
- that the association should provide members with tools to remain competent (98 per cent).

There was general agreement (79 per cent) with the proposed continuing competency outcome statement. The statement was modified based on feedback from members.

Outcome Statement:

At the end of this process the ABCFP will have:

- *a program that helps the association ensure the competence of its members; and*
- *a framework that helps members ensure their continuing competence in their area(s) of practice.*

The original five-step process presented in the discussion paper was refined into a three-element program. There was general recognition that the tools and resources “step” is really a list of resources, suggestions and opportunities available to members.

There was also general recognition that an external program review is still considered essential to the program but does not directly involve the individual members and therefore should not be considered a “step.” Rather it is a feature of the program.

Council is committed to the concept of member input at each stage.

Members will be consulted and given the opportunity to influence each element of the program. Other professions may also be called upon to provide additional information and input. In an effort to identify what worked and what didn't work for them. Council has directed that member consultation, ease of adaptation, implementation and cost control are critical considerations.

Continuing Competency Program Elements

As a result of these findings, the continuing competency program contains three elements:

1. Self Assessment

Self assessments must be completed annually, after major career moves, upon legislative change or as the member deems necessary. In the first year (2004), self assessments will be voluntary and will become mandatory thereafter. If a member fails to complete a self assessment, he or she will not be able to renew membership

Objectives

For each member to assess their own competence in their scope of practice, identify opportunities for improvement and develop action plans to realize/capture those opportunities (to an approved standard, in a consistent manner).

Purpose

For each member to complete a self assessment and action plan (professional development plan) annually or as their job conditions change.

For each member to have identified an action plan to address any concerns and ensure competency is maintained.

Rationale

The rationale for keeping this element is to encourage all members to continuously improve their competence. It is the first and most direct method and received a high level of support from members. It supports the association's objective for ensuring members' continuing competence and is an economical and flexible step in the program.

2. Peer Review

Peer reviews are voluntary but there is a substantial incentive to encourage members to participate. Members who do participate will be less likely to be selected for a practice review.

Objectives

To provide each member with the opportunity to have their practice and their self-assessment records reviewed and evaluated by another member(s). This will reduce the number, need and cost of association led practice reviews.

Purpose

To provide an independent review of a member's competence. This will help members prepare for a practice review should they be chosen.

Rationale

The rationale for keeping this element is to increase the level of independence and credibility of practice documents. Peer reviews can be used to reduce the percentage of practice reviews (i.e. high participation by members, results in a lower number of practice reviews needed). Peer reviews are less expensive, formal and onerous than practice reviews. They increase the objectivity and credibility of the program.

The peer review element is consistent with the association's legislated obligations for ensuring members competence. It provides a critical exchange of ideas, mentoring and feedback between members.

This element allows for flexibility because it is voluntary for members who work on their own. It also creates the opportunity to use other review processes and performance assessments and relate them to a member's practice.

3. Practice Review

This element of the continuing competency program is the only association led evaluation of members' competence. It is a random sampling of members and completes the legislative requirement for ensuring the competency of members.

Objective

To validate and confirm that self assessments and peer reviews are working. It provides the association with a direct measure of member competence. An independent review of member practice and professional development is of benefit to all members. It provides credibility to all the elements of the program.

Practice reviews will be designed to provide constructive feedback to the member.

Other benefits of practice reviews include:

- to reduce or eliminate public complaints;
- to provide a mechanism to fill in gaps not covered by peer reviews;
- to give direction to members through bulletins based on general feedback from completed practice reviews.

Purpose

To independently demonstrate the effectiveness of the self-assessment and peer review mechanisms. It is meant to be a proactive, constructive process, not tied to the discipline process (except in extreme cases) that also provide direction to members to rectify deficiencies in a timely manner.

Rationale

The practice review element allows the association to independently demonstrate to its members and the public, a higher level of diligence in ensuring the competence of members. It provides incentive for members conduct self assessments and peer reviews. It gives internal and external credibility to the entire program.

Tools & Resources

The association will engage in an on-going process to provide a list of tools and resources (either web based or printed) to members that will show them how they can either maintain their competence and track their professional development. Where such tools and resources do not exist, the association will either provide them directly or encourage other groups to do so.

External Program Review

If the profession is going to put this much energy into a continuing competency program, it only makes sense to measure its effectiveness. The external program review does not directly affect the membership at large and should not be considered one of the elements of the program. It is, however, one of the points of due diligence that the profession must carryout to measure the effectiveness of the program. The external program review will be undertaken by an independent third party after the three elements of the program are in full effect.

Continuing Competency Program Timeline

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Program Elements							
Self Assessment	Develop	Refine/ Test	Mandatory				
Peer Review			Develop	Voluntary			
Practice Review				Develop	Mandatory		
Additional Features							
Tools & Resources	Ongoing						
External Review Program					Develop	Implement	

Questions or Comments?

Please direct all questions or comments to:

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