



ABCFP PRACTICE REVIEW ANNUAL REPORT 2020

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ABCFP - Kris Zmudzinski, RPF
Member Competence Specialist

Purpose

The main purpose of a Practice Review is to ensure that registrants maintain and advance competency in their areas of practice by providing supporting documentation that is feasible in the event of a complaint. *The Foresters Act* as well as bylaws and council resolutions obligate members to uphold competency in their areas of practice. Practice Reviews reinforce that the public can trust and depend on the professional foresters managing their land.

There are four elements to the continuing competency program, and Mandatory/Voluntary Practice Review process is one of them. The objective of this process is in essence to elevate a registrant's level of practice. This is done through the mentorship and advice provided by a trusted colleague. In particular, it is achieved through a dialog between two registrants about professional responsibilities, exchange of knowledge and ideas, and resolution of local professional issues.

Methodology

Two types of Practice Reviews were implemented in 2020.

General Practice Review focuses on how a forest professional is meeting their professional responsibilities. These reviews are not based on any specific technical area of professional practice. General practice reviews include the following:

- an evaluation of the professional's performance against professional standards and obligations;
- a review of past annual declarations made by the forest professional;
- progress on related professional development plans linked to the annual declaration; and
- exchange of professional knowledge and ideas to support continued strong professionalism.

The ABCFP has typically selected 100 -140 registrants per year for General Practice Review.

Additionally, each year one or more specific professional practice areas are identified to be the focus for the annual **Technical Practice Review** program. These in-depth, risk-based practice reviews are conducted on site, and carried out by ABCFP staff and hired consultants who are experts in the field of practice under review. The ABCFP has typically selected a minimum of 20 forest professionals per year for technical practice reviews.

GENERAL PRACTICE REVIEWS

In January of 2020, 147 registrants were selected for the general review, based on such factors as years of practice, geographic region of practice, and professional designation. Some registrants were eventually excused from the process. The COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns also affected registrants' ability to connect with their peers. In most cases, reviews were done remotely.

Previous experience with this process indicates that such peer reviews are most beneficial to young forest professionals in the early stages of their careers while also promoting continuous professional development and learning opportunities among established forest professionals. Based on the number of comments received over recent years, the ABCFP concluded that participants see the process as an opportunity to reflect on their professional goals, their shortcomings, but also on ways to improve their professional development, continuing education, and personal professional practice focus. Consequently, we received several unsolicited, voluntary reviews.

The selection process also ensures that all geographic regions of BC are represented and that a variety of RPFs and RFTs participate. For the 2020 peer reviews, 114 RPFs and 33 RFTs were selected.

The initial notice to registrants that they had been selected for a mandatory peer review and providing them with detailed instructions was sent on January 8th, 2020. In this notice, the ABCFP outlined the review process and schedule of requirements as follows:

1. **Acknowledgment** of the general practice review selection: by **February 28, 2020**;
2. The **Plan** for general practice review: by **March 31, 2020**;
3. **Progress** report on the general practice review: by **June 30, 2020**; and
4. **Completed** general practice review: by **September 30, 2020**.

Findings

Soon after the initial notice was sent, several registrants contacted us informing of extenuating circumstances that would exclude them from the process, or at least impede their ability to provide a quality response. Some of the registrants identified themselves as non-practising as per the definition of the practice of professional forestry in Section 1 of *the Foresters Act*, and were excused from the process. However, the majority of exclusions were granted based on personal circumstances like health and family issues, or being in the very early stages of their career.

In total, 134 submissions were received including 10 additional, voluntary submissions. Twenty-three registrants were excused from the process. All received responses were carefully analysed for completeness, and content. Several registrants were contacted for additional information.

Any identified deficiencies or needs for improvement were tabulated and summarized. In the final stage of the process, registrants received letters confirming that the submission was thorough and complete. Furthermore the letter re-stated identified shortcomings, and steps highlighted to be taken by the affected registrants to address such issues. The final letter also contained a request to contact the ABCFP's Member Competence Specialist with progress reports on their improvements.

The majority of peer reviews (63 per cent) identified at least one deficiency in a registrant's practice area. In every case, the registrant provided solutions together with the date of implementation.

After tabulating all received responses, four common areas of deficiencies were identified:

1. Due Diligence - 35 per cent of identified deficiencies (32 per cent in 2019)

The majority of deficiencies were identified in relation to how registrants record, maintain and store professional diaries and phone logs, as well as how they file, store, and recover professional documents.

Assess the registrant's filing procedures with respect to:

- Has the registrant an effective filing and document storage/recovery system?
- Tracking and managing professional documents and the changes that may be necessary over time, especially changes that have an impact on outcomes;
- Ensuring ownership and privacy of personal professional documents;
- Having supporting or ancillary materials underlying personal professional documents on file and appropriately cross-referenced;

- Having appropriate controls in place to prevent accidental destruction or loss of personal professional documents (e.g.: storage of documents and files offsite); and retaining professional documents long enough to cover personal liability period; and
- Assess how the registrant ensures all legal requirements, record keeping, and required system updates are completed in a timely manner;

2. Professional Competence – 20 per cent (32 per cent in 2019)

- Reviewers assessed the registrant’s system for tracking their professional development and whether or not this system can be improved.

3. Professional Integrity – 20 per cent (12 per cent in 2019)

- The most frequently identified area to improve is related to sponsoring a trainee. Respondents assessed how they guide the trainee’s development towards professionalism, and how they provide advice, direction, and diversity for the trainee’s work experience period.

4. Signing and sealing – 10 per cent (10 per cent in 2019)

Registrants were not aware that the use of seal/stamp is optional. It appears that they were not familiar with (former) Bylaw 10 dealing with identification of professional work.

5. Other– 15 per cent

Several registrants did not identify opportunities to advocate good stewardship of forest lands, or the opportunity to extend public knowledge of forestry.

Professional Reliance Tool

One of the questions on Form 1 of the review asked the registrant if they have used the Professional Reliance Tool. This evaluation tool was developed to assist ABCFP practising registrants achieve a consistent application of professional reliance. The evaluation tool is intended for ABCFP registrants to evaluate their own practices and is not intended to be used for judging the practice of other professionals. It may also be used as a reference during your routine decisions or tasks, or as a periodic assessment of professional work.

Out of the 134 responses we received, 61 registrants indicated they use this tool in their practice.

Similarly to 2019, this year's general review process identified negative findings. However, these negative findings were minor in their nature. Those findings are still important and require remedial action, but they should not require the attention of the Professional Practice Committee. Furthermore, all reviews contain a clear path for remedial action. This in itself should ensure that identified problems are, or will be dealt with in the near future. If in doubt, the Association can perform random audits of selected registrants.

The issues of due diligence, as related to maintaining, storing, and retrieving professional diaries, phone logs, and records of professional development were front and centre of identified deficiencies. These are important issues for professionals engaged in professional practice. Not having a system that tracks changes to professional documents over time, or not having access to documents when needed, can severely affect the registrant's practice.

Interestingly enough, many registrants were not familiar with rules of identifying professional work, as explained in (former) Bylaw 10. This deficiency can be easily rectified by reading the bylaw.

Professional Integrity deficiencies were related mostly to the sponsoring obligations of forest professionals for a trainee (formerly enrolled member). Trainees with designation of FIT, TFT, ASFIT, or ASTFT must follow the path to become RPFs, RFT's or NRP's through articling. Articling is defined as gaining relevant work experience under the guidance of a sponsor (practising registrant). Direction for the articling program was formerly contained in ABCFP Bylaws 6 and 11. Bylaws 6.3.1 and 6.4.1 state that trainees (enrolled members) may only engage in the practice of professional forestry under the direct supervision of a practising registrant. The former Bylaw 11 (Code of Ethics) required all members to inspire confidence in the profession and share knowledge and experience with others.

As in 2019, this year's findings indicate deficiencies in familiarity with requirements and expectations for forest professionals as described in the Foresters Act, ABCFP Bylaws and appropriate guidance documents. This issue relates directly to the registrant's responsibility to the profession. Former Bylaw 11.4.6 explained that registrants must keep informed in their personal field of practice and to be aware of current issues and developments in forestry. Former Bylaw 11.3.7 reminds registrants to practice only in those fields where training and ability make the registrant professionally competent. Finally, former Bylaw 12.2.1 states that competent registrants have an obligation to maintain sufficient knowledge in their field of practice.

In their submissions, registrants provided realistic plans for filling in the gaps in their competence.

Remedies included:

- Familiarize and expand working knowledge of *The Foresters Act*, ABCFP bylaws and guidance documents, and
- Keep current, and review relevant policy changes on a yearly basis.

Typically, larger employers already receive quarterly regulatory updates, invest in mentorship and provide professional development, so they can easily share the information with professionals.

All other identified deficiencies are less consequential, but important to be addressed. This year there were no concerns related to safety.

TECHNICAL PRACTICE REVIEWS

GENERAL IMPLEMENTATION DETAILS:

- Risk-based, or technical reviews, look at how ABCFP registrants are maintaining competency, qualifications, technical and professional completeness and correctness, and how much professional development is undertaken.
- Practice areas of focus are developed on an annual basis and registrants are chosen for low, moderate, and high-risk professional practice area to ensure full representation across all registrants.
- The selection process attempts to target early and mid career professionals.
- Consultants are used in the technical practice review to complement ABCFP staff and to provide additional expertise.
- The start of a risk-based technical review begins with a general practice review conducted by the ABCFP Member Competence Specialist.
- The Professional Practice Committee may be called upon to provide remedial recommendations for significant negative findings and ABCFP staff will provide remedial recommendations for minor negative findings.

AREA OF PRACTICE: For 2020, the area of practice, as identified by the ABCFP Council and staff was: *Silviculture/Site Plans*

All technical reviews in 2020 were conducted in-house by the ABCFP Member Competence Specialist who is an expert in the field of silviculture site plans.

SELECTION OF MEMBERS FOR A RISK-BASED, TECHNICAL PRACTICE REVIEW:

The ABCFP Member Competence Specialist, provided a list of registrants selected for the 2020 risk-based technical practice review program. Twenty two registrants were initially selected. The completed general review forms, along with examples of the registrants' work were forwarded by the Member Competence Specialist. Upon receipt, 14 of the selected registrants qualified for the next step and were provided a copy of the Review Process Information Sheet and a copy of the Risk-Based Technical Practice Review Questionnaire. Upon completion and return of the documents to the ABCFP, an appropriate date and time was scheduled to interview and discuss the information provided by the

registrant. Contact was made by telephone, or email, and interviews ranged from one to two hours depending on the number of unresolved issues. Upon completion of the interview, a report was drafted and provided to the registrant for their input. Once both parties were satisfied, the report was printed, signed and sealed. One copy was sent to the registrant while a copy was maintained by the ABCFP.

A summary is provided below of the number of registrants selected, geographic distribution, level of experience, and professional designations. Following this information is a summary of key findings and recommendations.

NUMBER OF REGISTRANTS SELECTED:

Selected:	22
Registrants excused:	1
Registrants qualified for technical review:	14
Technical Reviews Conducted:	14

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION: Geographic distribution of selected registrants was random.

EXPERIENCE: Generally, selected registrants were experienced in their field of expertise with 10 years the average age of experience.

PROFESSIONAL DESIGNATION: All qualified registrants were RPFs.

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

A summary of key findings and recommendations are presented below. These findings have been grouped into categories as follows:

FINDINGS:

Based on the information provided and the content of our discussions, all registrants met professional expectations. However, there was variance in the level of effort displayed in response to the review. The response ranged from registrants providing basic information and minimal work examples, to detailed in-depth responses, with numerous examples of their work. For those who displayed minimal effort, the one-on-one interviews provided the reviewer an opportunity to draw out additional information.

All registrants were aware of their professional, regulatory and associated legal obligations.

There were discussions on the professional reliance model and the more prescriptive nature of some of the regulations.

All of the registrants interviewed worked within the provincial tenure system.

A few of the registrants expressed concerns that owners (clients) were focused primarily on the need to meet basic legal requirements. When discussed, all registrants interviewed said their work included recommendations that went beyond these basic requirements.

Most registrants conduct their professional work within some form of management control or certification system that incorporates a risk framework or model.

Several registrants saw benefits to the use of a team-based review process (such as the Engineers and Geoscientists BC Organization Quality Management program).

Two registrants recommended that practice reviews be broadened to capture a specific planning/implementation process or major project. This approach would involve a number of professionals, possibly from other associations, and could reach beyond the confines of a single organization.

Most registrants expressed support for the Professional Governance Act (overseen by the Office of the Superintendent of Professional Governance), and anticipate progressive results.

Upon conclusion of their review, the majority of the registrants felt that there should be increased awareness about the process and the results.

All registrants selected, responded within a timely manner and were appreciative of a flexible schedule.

In 2019, modifications were made to the general review and risk-based technical practice review forms. A few additional changes are recommended specific to the general review form, primarily in the ordering of the questions.

Registrants appreciated the content provided in the review process information sheet.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS:

Registrants involved in the technical review expressed concerns that some professionals may be practising outside their scope of education and expertise. Within this same group, there was discussion on professional accountability, qualifications, and the right to practice. One registrant felt that the definition of a qualified professional, qualified registered professional, etc, should be reviewed and made more consistent between legislations.

AUDITS, MONITORING, AND FOLLOW UP:

Generally, registrants were explicit in their support for a robust audit and monitoring program, and how monitoring is necessary to ensure operational strategies and plans achieve their desired outcomes. They also concluded that additional effort and support in this area would be beneficial.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND EMERGING CHALLENGES:

The following climate change question was included in the technical review:

Climate Change: What strategies are being used to mitigate potential ecosystem shifts due to climate change?

The question generated considerable discussion. One registrant expressed concerns that adaptation to climate change needs to be viewed as a necessity and not a consideration.

Registrants support current initiatives such as the recent provincial preliminary strategic climate risk assessment. However, registrants felt that upper level priorities need to be converted into policies and support regulations, and the gap between policy and field activities closed.

Registrants discussed the challenges many professionals face on how to allocate the necessary time to manage the implications of emerging issues and changes in forest resource policy.

CONTINUING EDUCATION:

Similar to findings in previous years, registrants felt there were adequate training opportunities and available resources within their area of practice, and there is an abundance of research and scientific information. They expressed concern that the transfer of research and scientific findings to the

practitioner presents challenges. One registrant said the method of delivery (using workshops as an example) could be modified to improve the transfer of knowledge.

Registrants discussed the potential benefits of consolidating information and providing a single portal for professionals working within the natural resource sector. Further discussions centered on the challenges faced by professionals that work within smaller organizations, or that are new to the profession.

SUMMARY:

The focus of the 2020 Risk-Based Professional Practice Review program was silviculture with emphasis on preparation and implementation of site plans. The above points present a summary of key findings resulting from these reviews. As in the past, the practice review process has provided registrants an opportunity to voice a range of concerns, as documented in the registrants Practice Review Summary Report or in the various forms each registrant completed. It is recognized that some of the issues raised may be outside the purpose of the program, or the responsibility of the ABCFP.