

Provisional Member Guide:

Developing a Personal Practice Focus and a Learning Plan

A Provisional Member's Personal Practice Focus and Learning Plan should be updated throughout the work experience period and reviewed and discussed with your mentor. A record of the dates they were reviewed by your mentor must be kept. Once the work experience period is complete, you must report to the OPFA that your Personal Practice Focus and your Learning Plan are up to date.

You do not need to submit the Personal Practice Focus or the Learning Plan to the OPFA unless requested, however you must keep them in your files. After approval as a Full or Associate Member of the OPFA you will be required to renew these documents every 3 years and review them annually.

PERSONAL PRACTICE FOCUS (PPF)

The Personal Practice Focus (PPF) identifies areas of existing competency and is a tool to help determine what additional knowledge, skills and experience would maintain or enhance a member's competency or facilitate career development. Professional forester competencies are the skills, knowledge and abilities that form the core requirements necessary to successfully undertake activities within the professional forester's Scope of Practice. The *Professional Foresters Act, 2000* defines the scope of professional practice in forestry to be the "provision of services in relation to the development, management, conservation and sustainability of forests and urban forests ...". [Practice Guidance – Scope of Practice](#) lists many examples of activities that fall within the scope of professional forestry.

A member may choose to focus on those competencies that have relevance to his/her current or intended practice. Consideration should also be given to developing or enhancing other competencies that may be challenged by your employer, a client, in a Peer Review, or in a complaint or future OPFA competency program Audit (if approved for implementation).

The OPFA recognizes the needs and advantages for members to hold diverse and multi-disciplinary skill sets. Within reason, complementary competencies that will allow a member to be more effective in his/her practice of forestry can also be considered in the PPF. For example, a member's professional practice may integrate aspects of communications, business administration, and human resources management. Providing the complementary competencies are not far removed from having influence over the sustainable development of Ontario's forests, it is not

unreasonable to include such competency development and maintenance in your PPF. Identifying and providing for growth in these complementary areas is important for effective professional practice management. OPFA members might also consider taking up activities to share their knowledge, or to expand the knowledge-base that professional foresters, and the public, might draw upon to advance sustainable forest management.

The Personal Practice Focus is divided into three elements, presented here as questions to be answered by the member:

1. What are my current competencies?

Members might opt to update a resume, draft a job description, or address the following supporting questions:

- What DO I know or am able to do?
- What MUST I know or be able to do?
- What do I consider to be my specialty(ies)?

2. What competencies should I build or strengthen?

Members might opt to identify new knowledge or skills you anticipate needing for your current job, for professional interest, or for career progression. You might also consider refreshing knowledge and skills in order to do something better, to learn the latest state of practice, or to become a recognized expert. The following supporting questions can help frame this assessment:

- What do I WANT to know or be able to do?
- How are my profession or my specific practice changing?
- What are my short-, medium-, and long-term career goals?
- What additional skills do I need to undertake current work more efficiently?

3. How do I plan to build or strengthen key competencies?

Members might opt to identify strategic actions you feel are necessary to continue competent practice in your job, and/or to facilitate achieving your career goals (e.g. improve my knowledge of silvicultural practices). This element need not identify specific courses or activities – this will be addressed as part of a Learning Plan.

Appendix 2.1 includes an [example PPF template](#) for a Personal Practice Focus, however members may use an alternate format if they wish.

LEARNING PLAN (LP)

The Learning Plan is a tool to help members maximize the effectiveness of continuing education, by identifying in advance (where possible and where appropriate), what courses and activities can help build or strengthen the competencies needed in current practice and/or for career progression.

The Personal Practice Focus should identify general areas of existing and desired competency. The Learning Plan should identify select competencies that you expect to address within the next three years, and for each of them, identify specific courses, activities or certifications to pursue in the coming year(s).

Many employers require their staff to have a Learning Plan in place. If you feel the Learning Plan you developed for your employer sufficiently addresses the competency needs you've identified in your Personal Practice Focus, then it is acceptable to use it as a component of your OPFA Competency Support documentation.

Should you have difficulty finding the training you've identified in your Learning Plan as an immediate competency need, consider alternative formats for learning, such as self-study, online learning or volunteer opportunities. The OPFA website lists upcoming [forestry events](#), links to various [training](#) and learning opportunities, and links to [other organizations](#) that may provide continuing education opportunities.

The OPFA recommends also consulting other members who hold such competencies, to ask what activities they undertook, or whether they could provide you with training and/or knowledge (e.g. on-the-job training or volunteer opportunities).

Appendix 2.2 includes an [example LP template](#) for a Learning Plan, however members may use an alternate format if they wish.

Appendix 2.1: Personal Practice Focus (PPF) - example

Member Name: _____ OPFA # _____

Date updated: _____

Current competencies:

-
-
-
-
-

Competencies to develop:

-
-
-
-
-
-

How will I acquire new competencies?

-
-
-
-

Appendix 2.2: Learning Plan (LP) – Example

Member Name: _____ OPFA # _____

Date updated: _____

Current Practice:

Career Interests:

What	How	When

Personal Practice Focus:

Member Name _____ OPFA # _____

2015 Competency Support Documentation

Date of last update: November 4, 2015

Current competencies:

- Able to develop, design and implement policies and programs related to forest management planning.
- Expert level working knowledge forest management practices including forest management planning, forest operations and reporting including the understanding of the Ontario legislative and policy environment governing these activities.
- Provide training, direction and guidance to staff and other stakeholders; develop and implement training plans for forest management planning teams.
- Able to resolve forest management planning issues and make recommendations for senior management consideration.
- Highly developed leadership and team building.
- Excellent negotiation, facilitation, and conflict management skills.
- Ability to plan strategically, manage new developments and manage day-to-day activities.
- Excellent communication effectively with client groups/staff and senior management.

Competencies to develop:

- Improve leadership skills relative to OPS managerial approach.
- Contribute to enhancement of post-secondary education in forestry.
- Stay abreast/current of national, provincial, regional and local forestry issues, policy changes, practices and new knowledge.
- Contribute to policy change locally regionally and provincially.
- Continue to enhance professional skills and awareness of new science and technology.
- Develop knowledge and expertise related to adaptation of sustainable forest management to climate change adaptation.

How will I acquire new competencies?

- Attain leadership training specific to role as OPS manager through courses, mentoring by senior managers and acting opportunities.
- Influence technology program at Sault College by participating on natural environment advisory committee.
- Continue to participate on local, regional and provincial committees.
- Complete policy training related to preliminary regulatory impact assessments and policy inclusion lens.
- Attend regional and/or annual OPFA meetings and CIF e-lecture series.
- Participate in projects, lectures and workshops related to adaptation of sustainable forest management to climate change.

Learning Plan 2014-2015:

Member Name, _____ OPFA # _____

Current practice: Policy Development, Management, Strategic Planning, Training

Career interests: Administration, Mentoring

Date prepared/revised: 2014-10-09

What	How	When
Enhance awareness of new science and technology.	Attend science forums/workshops related to emerging Bioeconomy, ecological land classification, Woodland Caribou range assessment, climate change, etc.	Ongoing; 2012-2013 attended formal workshops/training sessions and forums (bioeconomy, ELC, caribou, climate change); 2014 attended 2013-2014 attended CCFM climate change workshop in Edmonton; 2014-2015 – attend additional forums/workshops
Policy development skills.	Participate in policy development; complete required policy professional training including preliminary regulatory impact assessments and policy inclusion lens. Enhance knowledge/skills by taking acting assignment with Forest Policy Section.	Ongoing; 2012-2013 completed mandatory policy training; engaged in policy development; 2014 attend advanced policy professional sessions; take acting assignment
Human Resources skills.	Attend OPS cultural awareness and HR training courses as required for current and future positions.	2012-2014 Completed training courses related to inclusiveness, diversity, ISAR Information & Communications Standards, and workplace discrimination.
Improve leadership skills relative to OPS managerial approach.	Attend OPS leadership courses. Informal meetings with persons in current management roles. Participate in acting assignments/roles. Attain leadership training specific to role as OPS manager through courses, mentoring by senior managers and acting opportunities.	Ongoing; 2013-2014 completed training related to business process improvement, management foundations, leadership, financial management, assessing performance; 2014 – acting supervisor assignment; 2014-2015 Enhanced MCP Leadership Development Program.
Contribute to enhancement of post-secondary education	Influence technology program at Sault College by participating on natural	Completed 2012-2014.

in forestry.	environment advisory committee. Guest lecturer at post-secondary institutions.	
Stay abreast/current of national, provincial, regional and local forestry issues, policy changes, and practices	Attend relevant conferences and actively participate on International/Provincial/Regional/Local Policy Committees.	2012-14 attended intergovernmental meetings (Quebec-Ontario, international forums), Chair Provincial Forest Management Planning Team; 2014-15 build knowledge thru exposure to CCFM