



Sponsorship Instructions

Background:

Current OPFA By-laws 11.5 and 11.6 require that all applicants for Full or Associate Membership with the OPFA must successfully complete 18 months of progressive, relevant, mentored forestry experience. This experience must be obtained after attaining a post-secondary degree or diploma and whilst holding a Provisional Member category of registration, although credit for prior mentored work experience within the last 5 years may be requested. The experience does not have to be entirely attained while in Ontario.

The work experience period is intended to contribute to the continuity and improvement of professional practice and conduct. It should result in regular interaction between a Provisional member and their sponsors, ensuring that sponsors have first-hand knowledge of a Provisional Member's experience before completing the Sponsorship Form. Sponsors will be relied upon to a certain degree to assess whether a Provisional Member's experience is applicable to the Ontario forestry environment.

Application Process:

Provisional Members are responsible for finding their sponsors and ensuring that they meet the requirements and become familiar with their work. If a Provisional Member changes job or location, or for some reason the sponsor is no longer able to remain familiar with the Provisional Member's work, the Provisional Member may change sponsors. Provisional Members require a minimum of two sponsors (one of whom may be their mentor) but may have more than two sponsors over the 18-month experience period.

Following completion of the 18-month experience requirement by the Provisional Member, sponsors will be asked to review the Provisional Member's Work History Form and complete and submit a Sponsorship Form directly to the OPFA office.

Sponsorship Eligibility Requirements:

Provisional members require two sponsors. At least one sponsor must be a Full or Associate (with a relevant scope of practice) Member of the OPFA who is in good standing. Sponsors who are Associate Members must have an applicable scope of practice in relation to the Provisional Member's work experience and proposed scope of practice of the Provisional Member. The second sponsor does not have to be an OPFA member and can be a work supervisor or similar.

All sponsors must have direct knowledge of the Provisional Member's forestry related work. It is suggested that sponsors be familiar with a Provisional Member's forestry work for at least 4-6 months. For sponsors qualifying an Provisional Member's experience from outside the province of Ontario, a Registered Professional Forester or a sponsor with equivalent credentials may be used at the discretion of the Registration Committee.

Sponsors who are practicing members of the OPFA must be familiar with the Legislation and By-laws governing the Association and the most recent OPFA guidelines for membership. There should not be a conflict of interest when acting as a sponsor; any potential or perceived conflicts of interest must be declared to the OPFA by the sponsor.

Goals and Responsibilities of Sponsors:

Sponsors are expected to have direct knowledge of the Provisional Member's work in order to be able to provide a detailed assessment of their work, their progression towards the professional level, and its relationship to the OPFA definition of professional forestry, by completing the Sponsorship Form at the end of the 18 month work experience period.

A sponsor who is also a practicing OPFA member is required to provide guidance to the Provisional Member on the duties of a Registered Professional Forester and review and discuss the OPFA Code of Ethics, Definitions of Professional Misconduct, the Continuing Education and reporting requirements, and the appropriate Practice Guidance documents.

At the end of the work experience requirement, sponsors are required to review the Provisional Member's Work History Form and complete the Sponsorship Form and submit it directly to the OPFA. The information in the Work History Form is shared with sponsors to provide a description of the Provisional Member's work to assist the sponsor in the completion of the Sponsorship Form. Please note however, that the information provided in the Sponsorship Form should be in the sponsor's own words and only reference the Provisional Member's work that they have direct experience of.

Completing the OPFA Sponsorship Form

Work experience questions:

As noted, Provisional Members are required to have 18 months of progressive, relevant, mentored work experience. The Sponsorship Form requires the sponsor to provide a first-hand opinion of the Provisional Member's work experience with the knowledge that there are challenges in the assessment of "progressive" and "relevant" work experience and that there are many available career paths for foresters. The OPFA considers an applicant's work to be relevant if it can be encompassed within the defined scope of practice of a Registered Professional Forester. Please refer to the [Professional Foresters Act 2000](#), Section 3 (1) (provided below) for a definition of the practice of professional forestry, and the [Criteria for Relevant Work Experience](#) document for information on what the OPFA considers relevant work experience for Provisional Members, and reference these in your responses. Please note that work of a technical nature is considered applicable during the required 18 months of Provisional Membership but there must be evidence of progression in the scope and duties of the Provisional Member

Sponsors of Provisional Members seeking Associate Membership are also required to complete Section 4 of the Sponsorship Form. This section asks questions on aspects of the proposed Scope of Practice and associated geographic area of which the sponsor has direct knowledge. Sponsors must review the Prescribed Scope of Practice before answering these questions.

What is the definition of the “practice of professional forestry”?

The *Professional Foresters Act 2000*, Section 3 (1) definition forms the basis of the scope of practice of the profession. The practice of professional forestry is the provision of services and advice regarding forest operations and the preparation of plans relating to forestry, good forestry practices and the sustainability of forests, and includes:

- (a) designing, specifying or certifying forest operations prescriptions;
- (b) appraising or evaluating forest resources and certifying forests;
- (c) classifying, inventorying and mapping of forests, including distribution, composition, structure, range, age and tree species;
- (d) determining current and desired future forest conditions;
- (e) customizing and using information from forest estate models;
- (f) assessing or auditing planned forest operations to determine, among other things, whether those operations have been carried out as planned; and
- (g) planning and locating forest transportation systems, including forest roads.

These are examples only and do not represent an exhaustive list of what constitutes the practice of professional forestry.

Professionalism and Ethics:

Sponsors must certify on the Sponsorship Form that they have reviewed and discussed the OPFA Code of Ethics, the Definition of Professional Misconduct, the Continuing Education Requirements (including the reporting requirements), and the Practice Guidance documents that are applicable to the Provisional Member's scope of practice.

Sponsors should discuss their comments with the Provisional Member and provide any further assistance in submitting the required information for membership. Sponsors are to complete the Sponsorship Form in detail and additional pages may be attached if required. All completed sponsorship forms are to be submitted directly by the sponsor to the OPFA office and are kept confidential.

Additional Roles of the Sponsor

Sponsors may also be asked by Provisional Members to act as a character witness and/or as a competency witness. Information regarding these roles will be provided by the Provisional Member and questions can be directed to the OPFA office.

The OPFA thanks all members in advance for their commitment to assisting new members gain experience, professionalism and licensure in Ontario. Mentors and sponsors are invaluable and serve to strengthen professional forestry and provide professional support for each new generation of foresters in Ontario.