

BC ELN Steering Committee Meeting Minutes
Thursday July 17, 2025

1:00pm – 3:00pm Pacific
Via Zoom

In Attendance:

Gohar Ashoughian, Simon Fraser University
Jonathan Bengtson, University of Victoria
Rita Cavaliere, Nicola Valley Institute of Technology, *Rural Colleges*
Ben Ferrel, Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills
Mar González Palacios, Simon Fraser University, *Host Site Officer*
Tania Gottschalk, Thompson Rivers University (Chair)
Darcy Gullacher, Trinity Western University, *Small Universities*
Shirley Lew, Vancouver Community College, *Urban Colleges*
Brenda Mathenia, University Canada West, *Associate Members*
Christina Neigel, Capilano University, *Teaching Universities & Technical Institutions* (Vice-Chair)
Susan Parker, University of British Columbia

BC ELN Office:

Sasha Han (Recorder)
Leah Hopton
Sunni Nishimura, BC ELN Executive Director
Cristen Polley

Regrets:

None.

Welcome

T. Gottschalk welcomed attendees and provided a territorial acknowledgement.

1. Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted as distributed.

2. SFU Agreement Update (PSFS)

B. Ferrel provided updates on the British Columbia cabinet shuffle and on the service agreement between BC ELN's host site, Simon Fraser University (SFU), and the Government of British Columbia.

Earlier in the day on July 17th, Premier David Eby announced that Jessie Sunner would be appointed as the new Minister of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills. One of the priorities identified in Minister Sunner's mandate letter is the directive to work with the Minister of Finance to review all of the Ministry's existing programs and initiatives to ensure they are as efficient as possible and remain relevant to British Columbians in light of current Provincial budget constraints.

Discussions with SFU regarding BC ELN's service agreement had slowed since the last Steering Committee meeting, in part due to anticipated changes in direction stemming from cabinet transition. B. Ferrel will be receiving more information about the work with the Minister of Finance later in the summer, allowing for more meaningful conversations about the relationship between the Ministry of Post-Secondary and Future Skills and SFU, and about the administration of sector organizations like BC ELN. Progress on the service agreement is expected to continue throughout the fall.

A question was asked about whether the cabinet shuffle could result in changes in how organizations like BC ELN are administered. B. Ferrel noted that while changes are possible, it is too early to speculate what those changes might look like.

3. Removing Barriers Initiative Update

S. Nishimura provided an update on the Removing Barriers Initiative, which is being supported by a one-time grant from Ministry for \$50,000. The initiative aims to identify and remove barriers preventing interested Indigenous-led and First Nations-mandated post-secondary institutions from joining BC ELN, and to better understand the needs of Indigenous students, educators, and researchers in British Columbia.

BC ELN contracted Two Worlds Consulting, a firm that has experience working with Indigenous-led organizations, in Fall 2024. Their original work plan involved holding listening and learning sessions throughout Spring 2025, with an aim to present recommendations to the Steering Committee at this meeting.

An initial session was held in April 2025 with the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT). Following this session, BC ELN staff met with representatives from the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) and the Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Association (IAHLA), where they learned that IAHLA is the established first point of contact for initiatives of this kind. BC ELN has since been invited to present to the IAHLA board in August.

In response, Two Worlds has adjusted their work plan, and their recommendations will be delivered to the Steering Committee after the August meeting with the IAHLA board.

There were no questions.

4. Shared Library Services Platform (LSP) Proposal

G. Ashoughian presented the Shared Library Services Platform (LSP) Proposal included in the agenda package. The proposal, co-presented by J. Bengtson and S. Parker, recommends the commissioning of a feasibility study for a Shared LSP for BC ELN member institutions.

Drawing on experiences with shared systems in Ontario post-secondary institutions, G. Ashoughian outlined potential benefits for BC ELN, including cost savings, improved access to collections, shared governance, and operational efficiencies. The purpose of the feasibility study would be to provide BC ELN members and key partners with the evidence and analysis needed to determine whether a Shared LSP is a viable, beneficial, and sustainable option for BC post-secondary institutions.

The Chair opened the meeting for questions and comments:

- B. Ferrel voiced support for the proposal, noting its alignment with post-secondary collaboration models that the Ministry is keen to encourage. B. Ferrel also expressed willingness to participate in a Working Group if a motion to create one were to pass.
- Should an environmental scan proceed as part of the feasibility study, a more inclusive Request for Information (RFI) process was recommended over a Request for Quotation (RFQ) process to allow for the inclusion of open source applications. B. Ferrel noted that because cost escalation with contracted vendor solutions has become a growing challenge in the sector, open source solutions would be worth exploring.
- B. Ferrel also suggested that, should a working group be formed, it would be important to consider inclusion of roles outside of the Library, in particular representation from Chief Information Officers (CIO), to ensure broad awareness and buy-in can be established. The newly formed BC Chief Information Officers Committee was recommended as a potential platform to engage CIOs.
- S. Lew expressed strong support for the proposal on behalf of the Urban Colleges constituency group, noting that this is a “concrete, values-based, but practical step” the Steering Committee could make in the current political and economic environment. S. Lew also stressed the importance of recognizing the diversity of BC ELN member institutions and their needs, and ensuring the focus of the feasibility study is on value-added outcomes for users.
- D. Gullacher shared similar support from the Small Universities constituency group, where there was unanimous agreement that the timing is right to explore the question of a shared LSP. D. Gullacher also noted concerns about staff fatigue at institutions that have recently undergone LSP migrations, and highlighted this as a consideration when assessing vendor-supported vs. self-hosted open source systems.
- Sharing additional support for the proposal, B. Mathenia and C. Neigel noted that the formation of a focused working group would be ideal to ensure that the concept of a ‘shared LSP’ is clearly defined, the feasibility study is appropriately scoped, funding options are identified, and that BC ELN membership is well-represented.
- G. Ashoughian supported the formation of a representative working group to proceed with a feasibility study, potentially with consultant involvement, and emphasized the urgency of getting started as the study alone could take up to a year.

MOTION: That BC ELN facilitate establishing a Shared LSP working group (broadly representative of BC ELN membership) to lead the feasibility process.

Moved: B. Mathenia

Seconded: S. Lew

Motion carried.

Given the broad support of the proposal from the committee, a second motion was brought

forward to immediately charge the newly-formed working group to proceed with the feasibility study.

MOTION: For BC ELN, working with the newly-established Shared LSP working group, to initiate a feasibility study for a Shared LSP.

Moved: G. Ashoughian

Seconded: C. Neigel

Motion carried.

Committee members agreed that the working group's first action would be to develop a project charter that includes scope, deliverables, governance, and a timeline for the study.

5. Associate Member Applications

T. Gottschalk reminded the committee that BC ELN offers institutions meeting the appropriate criteria the opportunity to join the consortium as Associate Members, ensuring that the needs of diverse student populations are met and that resource sharing is strengthened across the province. T. Gottschalk invited L. Hopton, who manages Associate Member applications, to present new applications for consideration and provide background.

Adler University Vancouver

L. Hopton first presented an application from Adler University Vancouver:

- While Adler University operates three campuses, including one in the United States, the Vancouver campus programs are unique to British Columbia and are designed for the Canadian context.
- When asked about overlapping membership between BC ELN and the Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois (CARLI), Adler University Vancouver clarified that their core e-resource needs are met through CARLI. As such, they will not seek duplicate licensing through BC ELN. Instead, their interest in BC ELN membership is focused on gaining access to specialized Canadian and Indigenous e-resources. They also confirmed that access to any BC ELN-licensed resources would be limited to students at the Vancouver campus.
- Adler University Vancouver also expressed interest in joining Illume, which would allow their specialized psychology resources to be shared with the province's other universities and colleges.

There were no further questions from the committee.

MOTION: That the BC ELN Steering Committee approve Adler University Vancouver as a BC ELN Associate Member for a one-year provisional term beginning September 1, 2025, with the option to renew upon approval.

Moved: B. Mathenia

Seconded: C. Neigel

Motion carried.

LaSalle College Vancouver

L. Hopton then presented an application from LaSalle College Vancouver:

- The Vancouver campus offers degrees, diplomas, and certificates in fields like design, media arts, culinary arts, and more, with ministerial consent to offer degrees.
- The College is in the process of moving into a new 108,000-square-foot facility near the Renfrew SkyTrain station, with 6,300 square feet dedicated to the new Learning Commons.
- The College's Library Director expressed interest in services like licensing and WriteAway, which would strengthen their ability to support students and faculty.

There were no questions from the Committee.

MOTION: That the BC ELN Steering Committee approve LaSalle College Vancouver as a BC ELN Associate Member for a one-year provisional term beginning September 1, 2025, with the option to renew upon approval.

Moved: S. Lew

Seconded: C. Neigel

Motion carried.

T. Gottschalk thanked L. Hopton for presenting both applications.

6. Administrative Updates

S. Nishimura provided administrative updates, including the following highlights:

Capacity Building

- Recruitment is underway at BC ELN for a Project Librarian, a two-year position with a focus on short-term resource sharing, learner support, and member engagement projects.
- The BC ELN Office is in the process of establishing a new Operations Manager position with responsibilities in finance accounting, HR, and event logistics.

Emerging Operational Priorities

- AskAway and WriteAway sustainability is an emerging priority in response to changing user needs and increasing student usage of AI tools.
- Continued work to remove barriers, particularly in strengthening partnerships with Indigenous-led and First Nations-mandated post-secondary institutions and organizations.

Strategic Projects

- Key strategic projects that the BC ELN Office will focus on over the next few months include:
- Updates to the New Product Selection process for licensing resources.

- Review of the provincial SHAREit software, which underpins the Illume Interlibrary Loan (ILL) service.
- Refresh and migration of the BC ELN website and service area websites to Drupal 10, improving accessibility, security, and user experience.
- Support of the eHLbc Core Suite license renewal.

Responsiveness & Inclusivity

- The staff-led Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) Collective meets regularly to create a more inclusive work environment and to advocate for JEDI principles throughout BC ELN.
- BC ELN staff are actively engaging in professional development and ongoing conversations about how AI may impact and enhance consortial services; concrete explorations are moving ahead in Licensing, Arca, AskAway, and WriteAway.

There were no questions.

7. Strategic Framework – Goals Discussion

L. Hopton updated the committee on Strategic Framework progress . She also noted that progress updates continue to be posted regularly to the [BC ELN website](#).

L. Hopton reminded the committee that the Framework is structured around three overarching directions spanning five years. Goals under each direction were designed with shorter timelines for flexibility. BC ELN is currently at the mid-point of the current framework.

While many of the goals remain in progress due to capacity constraints, anticipated completion of a number of goals is early 2026. Longer-term goals (i.e., spanning more than two years) have been broken down into time-bound activities to support ongoing progress tracking.

Two new goals were proposed to reflect emerging priorities, with the intention of incorporating them into the Strategic Framework:

- Investigate the potential of implementing a shared Library Services Platform (LSP) for BC ELN members (under Direction 1: Develop Responsive, Inclusive, and Sustainable Services)
- Establish the JEDI Collective to advance Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) principles within the BC ELN workplace and across the consortium as a whole (under Direction 2: Empower and Engage our Community)

Committee members expressed support for both additions, noting the value of formalizing the JEDI Collective's work within the Framework and the importance of recognizing the Shared LSP feasibility work currently underway.

There were no additional priorities suggested for consideration. L. Hopton noted that the Strategic Framework would be updated to include the two new goals discussed, and the revised version will be posted on the BC ELN website.

8. New Business

S. Nishimura noted that this would be the last Steering Committee meeting chaired by T.

Gottschalk as the end of term approaches, and that C. Neigel would be taking over as Chair on October 1. S. Nishimura and committee members thanked T. Gottschalk for her contributions to the committee throughout the past year.

9. Wrap Up

T. Gottschalk thanked committee members for their participation. The next Steering Committee meeting will be held at the BCIT downtown Vancouver campus on December 5th, following the All Partner Meeting. Agenda items will be shared closer to the meeting date.