



ALBERTA INSTITUTE
OF AGROLOGISTS

2020

Rural Development and Support Practice Standard



Approved by AIA Council

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Preface

This practice standard is part of the continuing effort by the Alberta Institute of Agrologists (AIA) to meet its mandate as outlined in the *Agrology Profession Act*. The *Act* specifies that the Institute must establish, maintain and enforce standards of practice as part of the profession's obligation to protect the public in matters related to agrology.

This document was created by a Practice Area Expert Committee (PAEC) consisting of five regulated members of the AIA. Members were selected for their expertise and long-standing practice in rural development and support.

This practice standard is the basis upon which practice reviews will be conducted by the AIA. This document will assist members in ensuring that their professional practice meets the standards for knowledge, work experience, skills and performance required for professionals practicing in the Rural Development and Support practice area.

This document will be reviewed on a periodic basis to ensure it is up to date with current standards and state of knowledge for the practice area.

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Acronyms

CKA	Core Knowledge Area
KR	Knowledge Requirement
PA	Practice Area
PAEC	Practice Area Expert Committee

1. INTRODUCTION

This practice standard applies to regulated members of the Alberta Institute of Agrologists (AIA) who practice or intend to practice in the "*Rural Development and Support*" practice area (PA). It defines expectations and outlines requirements regarding professional practice within this area. Documentation of these requirements provides necessary assurance to the public that AIA has specific requirements for professional practice. This practice standard provides members a benchmark upon which to assess their practice and identify potential learning needs in their continuing competence program.

This practice standard is based on the premise that rural development and support are multidisciplinary activities. Practitioners are expected to understand the limit of their knowledge, skills and experience and seek expertise of other professionals where necessary.

This practice standard forms the basis for implementation of a practice review protocol for this PA. Members working within this PA will be able to request a review of their professional practice based on this practice standard. Such a review will provide valuable feedback to members for areas of improvement.

1.1. Objectives

The objectives of this practice standard include the following:

- To identify and define the knowledge, skills, experience and performance requirements for professional practice within the PA;
- To provide documentation of the requirements indicated above so regulated members of AIA may assess their practice against this standard and thereby identify learning needs to ensure they are in compliance with the standard;
- To provide a standard against which a member's professional practice may be reviewed by AIA to assist the member in identifying areas of their practice that may need improvement; and
- To provide a mechanism whereby AIA can demonstrate that members within the profession are managed in a manner which protects the interests of the public in matters related to rural development and support.

1.2. Definitions

Competence: The ability to perform certain tasks in one's professional practice based on educational training, skills and work experience in a manner that meets performance objectives as defined in a practice standard.

Core Knowledge Area: A general area of knowledge consisting of one or more specialized subject matter areas that is required for practicing within a PA.

Direct Supervision: Guidance provided by a competent professional who accepts responsibility for work conducted by a less experienced professional.

Experience: Knowledge, practical wisdom or skills gained from observation and doing.

Performance: The exercise of knowledge in a professional practice that demonstrates the required ethical conduct and wise judgment as specified within a practice standard.

Practice Area: A unique functional area of professional practice within the agrology profession that requires specialized knowledge, based on education, work experience and skill sets.

Practice Area Expert Committee: A committee of experts who have demonstrated through their professional practice that they have a comprehensive understanding of the requirements for professional practice in a PA.

Practice Review: A process whereby a peer review panel examines a regulated member's professional practice against a practice standard, with the intent of providing input on practice improvement.

Practice Standard: A document that outlines the requirements and expectations for professional practice within a PA.

Professional Practice: The competent and ethical provision of specialized knowledge, recommendations and assessments based on educational training, work experience and skill sets while being accountable to peers as a regulated member of a professional regulatory organization.

Regulated Member: A member in good standing with the Alberta Institute of Agrologists who holds one of the following designations: PAg, RTAg, AIT or ATT.

Skill: An ability developed over multiple years of work experience.

Subject Matter Area: A specialized area of knowledge such as soil chemistry, plant physiology or hydrology required for professional practice within a PA.

2. SCOPE OF THE PRACTICE AREA

Rural development is an important economic and social concept that spans countries across the globe. It is based on the need to help rural communities, farmers, ranchers and business adapt and change in a dynamic and competitive world. Rural areas may lack specific and certain supports, services and programs that are needed for a fully functioning rural society. These supports can include access to rural broadband (high speed internet), necessary infrastructure (e.g., roads, utilities, etc.), farm safety, education, health care and many other community needs. Rural development and support Agrologists attempt to bridge this gap by providing new knowledge, best practice and other innovative ideas to rural communities, investors, producers and the private and public sectors. These ideas are assessed, tested, piloted and implemented where feasible. Projects may be created from a local proponent champion or from a higher level of program driven intervention. Technology and other changes are driving competition and returns, and rural Alberta is not immune to this trend. Therefore, Rural development and support Agrologists need to provide a flow of quality information for rural areas.

Agrologists who practice within the *Rural Development and Support* PA are professionals with specialized education, knowledge, skills, and work experience who focus on the rural communities of Alberta. "Rural" can be defined as all of Alberta except for the seven major urban centres of Calgary, Edmonton, Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, and Red Deer. "Development" refers to planning and initiation of rural programs, while "support" refers to ongoing availability of resources to ensure project or program success. Agrologists' goals are to help achieve economic growth, sustainability and resiliency of rural communities. They provide professional advice to producers, social enterprise, developers and investors, and help build leadership capacity in rural jurisdictions. Rural development and support Agrologists use a multidisciplinary approach for rural advancement, while attempting to close the gap in economic opportunity and services among urban and rural communities.

Agrologists within this Practice Area play many professional roles in the process of assessing, planning and creating solutions needed for rural communities. Agrologists may interface with developers, target groups, private sector suppliers, social enterprises, societies, consultants, post-secondary institutions, policy/program developers and regulators---all within one project or

program focus. Because rural development and support Agrolologists take a wholistic approach to their work, they must be aware of their limitations and understand, where appropriate, to seek help from other Professional Agrolologists with specific science-based backgrounds.

Agrolologists in this practice area must also rely on professional advice from many other professions involved in rural development projects, including but not limited to: bankers, biologists, architects, engineers, lawyers and veterinarians. There may also be an opportunity and need to access expert professional help in certain human health topics such as water quality, livestock disease control, human nutrition, disease management (functional foods, nutraceuticals), farm-based digital tools (automation, sensors, software) and other emerging topics.

Rural development and support can include a breadth of goals, however within this practice area its focus is on the biophysical uses of the land, and associated aspects of advisory, knowledge, and rural capacity building activities. The key pillars for success within the *Rural Development and Support PA* are: Community Assessment and Project Planning; Capacity Building; Economic Development; Rural Community Solutions; and Extension.

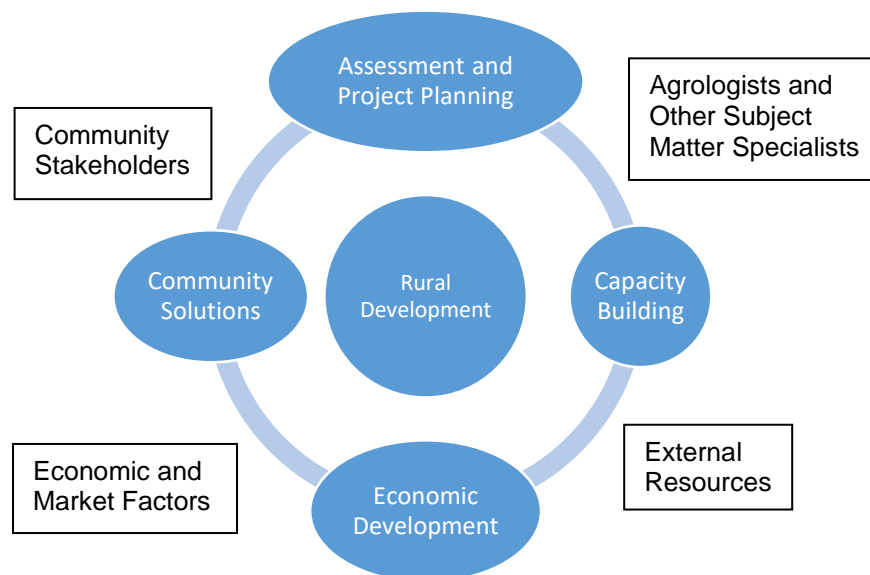


Figure 1. The core activities of the Rural Development and Support practice area in relation to stakeholders; economic and market factors; and external resources.

2.1 Core Activities Within the PA

The core activities listed below identify the main types of work conducted by Agrolologists within this PA. The following descriptions provide a brief overview of the nature of each activity.

2.1.1 Assessment and Project Planning

Community assessment and project planning in rural development begins with the analysis of the community profile, feasibility planning, business planning and finally a strategic action plan focused on creating a better future and rural quality of life. Attention is paid to the local economy,

labour and employment, demographics, land use, resource management, the environment, and socio-economic elements.

Community initiatives, government policy and programs at the local, provincial and federal level, as well as regulations and permits are all considerations in the planning of rural development projects/initiatives. It is beneficial for projects to have a local proponent or champion to move forward successfully. A project manager and community-based steering committee will help in managing the process and ensure high community input. Governance, cooperation and collaboration may be used as part of a broader strategy. Examples of some assessment tools and activities implemented by the Agrologist include:

- SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats);
- Needs and gap analysis;
- Market and supply chain linkages;
- Economic base analysis;
- Biophysical review of land, water, landscape and other features; and
- Community assets assessment, including businesses and social enterprises.

2.1.2 Capacity Building

Upon completing a thorough rural community assessment, the Agrologist can then assess the local capacity gaps to be filled. Capacity building may mean assisting in leadership/ facilitation, supporting a tool or infrastructure (soft or hard) gap, helping to provide specialized knowledge and/or skills, or identifying and building a critical mass of key community project partners. Part of the process also requires encouraging the local leadership of communities, through their members, to take responsibility for development. Rural development and support Agrologists help build the skills and confidence of individuals and groups, while enhancing community decision making and problem-solving processes. It is the role of the Agrologist to help guide and create a common and realistic vision for the future while implementing practical strategies for implementing necessary change.

Those within community leadership often identify issues and opportunities and may need assistance in building solutions. The Agrologist must be skilled in strategic planning and change management processes in order to provide the community capacity to engage in rural development opportunities. The Agrologist must have the capacity to develop common visions (options) and develop strategic and operational plans to identify and achieve the community goals. To build and assess capacity, a needs or gap analysis must be completed to help highlight what need or gap exists. Then the resource can be located and brought forward as agreed.

Agrologists in this area need to be skilled in group facilitation in order to bring together divergent community groups and interests. They need to be able to identify community leaders and detractors and build facilitation processes to meet the needs of all relevant community members. Technical knowledge of governance principles and models is also beneficial for communities to be successful in governing themselves. The ability of communities to be successful hinges on governance models that meet the needs of the community and the various development opportunities.

The Agrologist can also build awareness and identification of any public and industry programs which can help the community. These programs are often offered by federal, provincial and non-profit organizations and will help facilitate procurement of capital and operating grants. Capacity building will take time and often will cut across several departments and organizations.

To help build a successful rural development project, the Agrologist may utilize computer-based tools and software to help with communications, project management and facilitation. Due to

distance, diversity and time constraints, the use of digital tools will help maximize knowledge sharing and overcome communication barriers. Many tools can be accessed including mobile cell phones and shared databases. Proper documentation and meeting agendas are needed to track decisions and progress towards the end vision.

2.1.3 Economic Development

Economics and management are very important aspects to creating a sustainable solution or new venture in a rural area. The Agrologist must understand how the current situation is deficient, who the affected parties are, what is required, and how it will provide a feasible solution. An Agrologist in this practice area should be well versed in project management and be aware of local logistics such as biophysical factors and climate, water and land use considerations, roads, highways, location of production sites and proximity to markets. Other factors for the rural development and support Agrologist to consider include: global and local demand chains; market access; industry supply base (crops, livestock, other) from producers; technology and processing to produce the commodity, product or service; management, labor and training programs; regulations, certifications, permits and supporting programs; municipal and community acceptance; leadership; financing; and a strategic business plan.

Rural development and support Agrologists may need to access other professionals as the dynamic nature of products and markets continues to change. Rural development and support can include very complex issues, relationships, diversity and distance from services and markets. Agrologists within the Management Practice Area may provide additional support as their areas of expertise overlap with this Practice Area. Agrologists must carefully analyze economic and market assessments to help provide go/no go information for effective decision making. Often community champions and groups will become involved for community-wide projects. The trends indicate that care and time is needed in community consultation, Indigenous relations, and requiring more reliance on digital and other technology tools to help in communications with stakeholders. It is the role of the Agrologist to effectively facilitate this communication.

2.1.4 Rural Community Solutions

Rural community project solutions can be novel or common (to many communities) and the Agrologist will help guide and document the scope of community desired outcomes using Assessment and Planning, Capacity Building and Economic Development activities. The solution can be novel to each community to create lasting and positive benefit. The Agrologist may also need to adapt and adjust programs and measures in consideration of the social, environmental, economic and culture conditions of the rural community and region.

The Agrologist may also develop project solutions based on prior best practice case studies or similar efforts from other jurisdictions. Agrologists in this Practice Area augment their general knowledge with special case studies, other industry experts and outside resources to assess what works and what does not work. Examples of common project solutions can include new crop varieties and products, digital and automation equipment, creating bio-fuels from oilseeds, and shared use community kitchens.

Rural development Agrologists should be familiar with, understand, and provide advice on the uniqueness of the rural community development issues with the collaboration of stakeholders. Practitioners strive to implement smart innovative initiatives and creative solutions to foster learning and transition away from current threats and challenges. In turn, this enables rural Alberta communities to grow and become more vibrant and sustainable.

3. KNOWLEDGE REQUIREMENTS

Knowledge requirements are technical and scientific areas of knowledge that are essential to professional practice within the PA (Table 1). These requirements consist of core knowledge areas consisting of one or more specialized subject matter areas that are foundational to the PA.

The specification of subject matter within each required core knowledge area provides assurance that members working within the PA have the necessary fundamental knowledge to practice. The subject matter within each core knowledge area represent specific scientific or technical knowledge and skills and experience relevant to the PA activities. Subject matter knowledge is usually obtained through educational training in a degree or diploma program; however, subject matter knowledge may also be attained via work experience, self-study or non-adjudicated industry courses (i.e., short courses). To assure the public that practitioners have indeed acquired knowledge outside of an educational degree or diploma program, such knowledge needs to be validated through a challenge exam process implemented by the AIA.

It is the responsibility of members to review Table 1, conduct self-assessments and identify how their knowledge and expertise aligns with the required subject matters. Members who do not meet a required subject matter within a core knowledge area related to their professional practice are required to address the deficiency before practicing unsupervised in relation to that core knowledge area. Members are expected to work toward updating their knowledge where they are lacking specific subject matters for the activities related to their practice. ***Where regulated members do not meet a knowledge requirement for a subject matter, they are required to address the deficiency in one of the following ways.***

1. **Seek Advice and Direction**: Members lacking specific knowledge in required subject matters must recognize the limits of their expertise in that subject matter and seek advice and direction from a qualified professional.
2. **Complete Challenge Exam(s)**: To validate that subject matter knowledge has been gained through work experience, self-study or non-adjudicated industry courses, a member may choose to either (i) write a professional practice examination supplied by the AIA; or, (ii) to appear before a panel of peers to complete an oral examination supplied by the AIA.
3. **Pursue Formal Education and Training**: Obtain credit in a formal course from an appropriate educational institution or from an industry course approved by the AIA. Such courses must have an adjudicated examination to document knowledge attained.

3.1 Core Knowledge Areas

Several core knowledge areas have been identified as being foundational to practice within the PA (Table 1). These include core knowledge in Biophysical Resource Management; Business Management; Economics; Legislation and Policy; and Organizations and Governance. Each core knowledge area consists of several subject matter areas which identify specific scientific or technical disciplines

Subject matter areas consist of both required subject matters and recommended subject matters. Required subject matters represent the minimum credible knowledge required for the given core knowledge area and are mandatory for members who wish to provide professional advice or services related to the core knowledge area.

Recommended subject matters represent knowledge that is not mandatory but provide increased depth of knowledge related to the core knowledge area. These subject matters are highly

recommended and have been identified to provide direction to members for their continuing competence program.

3.1.1 Biophysical Resource Management

Agrologists are uniquely positioned among professions because of their training and understanding of the interaction of biophysical components of land and water systems. Biophysical resources are the building blocks of rural development and it is important to understand how to best use these resources given competing interests in rural areas. Rural development Agrologists require an integrated understanding of land use systems including their constraints and capabilities. Professional recommendations are needed when making decisions that may affect various biophysical resources such as water, soils, vegetation (both domestic crops and natural areas), animals (livestock and wildlife) and air within the context of various land use scenarios. It is for these reasons that Rural Development Agrologists are sought after by private developers and government agencies to provide technical expertise to assist in assessing the feasibility of rural development projects and programs, particularly with respect to management of biophysical resources.

3.1.2 Business Management

Economic development within sustainable rural communities will not occur without successful rural businesses and farms. Rural development Agrologists require an understanding of fundamental business principles and their adaptation to the operating reality of rural communities for development of viable and sustainable business ventures. Rural communities often experience constraints and extreme risks that urban centers do not. These include skilled labor availability, human resource specialists, training and educational opportunities, infrastructure and transportation limitations, and general economy of scale challenges. Agrologists can help businesses in rural communities plan for and address these constraints in concert with the usual activities of business planning, finance availability, market understanding, competition and overall profitability. Agrologists working in this practice area need to understand business management within the context of rural communities.

3.1.3 Economics

An understanding of Economics is fundamental to the *Rural Development and Support* practice area as it is a key driver for decision-making. Rural development and support Agrologists apply their business management principles to support a rural community to foster an efficient, effective and sustainable agricultural industry. Agrologists can provide the business case to efficiently use both time and resources to achieve project and program objectives and desired outcomes. The Agrologist can link this directly to feasibility assessments for new businesses; sourcing raw materials; marketing of new products; understanding trade; assessing economies of scale; determination of whether private investment decisions are warranted; and whether public level intervention is needed to address gaps in rural services and opportunities (e.g. health, education, infrastructure, business development, etc.).

3.1.4 Legislation and Policy

Rural development and support Agrologists must understand legislation and policy in relation to rural development to assess what is legally possible within the regulatory framework in which projects and programs must operate. Timelines and scheduling may also be affected in this regard. Agrologists practicing within this practice area must be aware of and work with legislation, policies and bylaws at the municipal, provincial and federal levels of government.

Policy and legislation may also directly or indirectly effect rural community sustainability and well-being. Agrologists working with rural communities must understand legislation and policy, where

legal authority lies (e.g., municipal, provincial, federal), and who has the authority to make decisions regarding rural development projects and programs.

3.1.5 Organizations and Governance

Rural development and support ultimately involves interactions among people and among organizations. Agrologists need to have effective communication skills, particularly mediation and facilitation skills where possible. Agrologists need to develop and implement an effective governance model that establishes the terms of reference to which all parties agree. The Agrologist also requires community capacity building skills with respect to governance so that complex community dynamics can be effectively managed. Strategic planning that identifies key players, and any potential barriers to successful completion of a project is also a helpful skill for Agrologists. Finally, Agrologists must understand the dynamics of rural community human resource management. Many rural community projects are staffed by volunteers rather than by hired professional staff with technical or business training.

Table 1. Core knowledge areas, required subject matter areas and recommended subject matter areas for the Rural Development and Support practice area.

Core Knowledge Area	Required Subject Matters	Recommended Subject Matters
<i>Biophysical Resource Management</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land Use Planning and Evaluation OR Land Management (e.g. Agriculture, Forestry, Natural Areas and Ecological Services, etc.) • Introductory Soil Science • Introductory Water Resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Science • Crop Science • Animal Science
<i>Business Management</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finance • Operations Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business and Market Planning • Farm and Business Management • Supply Chain Management • Consultation/Cross Cultural Training • Business Technology • Risk Assessment and Management
<i>Economics</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductory Economics • Resource/Agricultural Economics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International Trade • Cost of Production • Competitiveness • Rural technology & application
<i>Legislation and Policy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislation (e.g., Agricultural, Food, Environmental Legislation) • Policy and Program Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Law • Business Law • Legal and Regulations • Trade Agreements • Risk Assessment and Management

Organizations and Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications • Organizational Behavior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult Education • Organizational Design, Behavior and Governance Rural Sociology • Project/Program Management • Strategic Planning • Mediation and Facilitation • Conflict Resolution • Cross-cultural issues • Forested Land Use • Livestock Production
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4. WORK EXPERIENCE

Work experience represents a source of knowledge that is gained through professional practice rather than through educational training. Such experience facilitates development of skill sets and attaining of knowledge needed to be competent within one’s practice. Development of these skill sets and knowledge takes time working in an environment where feedback is available to develop one’s skills and experiential knowledge.

Three levels of work experience are recognized within this practice standard. These include:

- a) Junior Level (0 to < 3 years) – The junior level of experience coincides with entry level personnel who have recently graduated from an appropriate educational program or have recently begun their professional career in the PA. This work experience is conducted under direct supervision by a qualified intermediate or senior practitioner within the PA. Practitioners at the junior level are considered to have insufficient experience to provide unsupervised professional services.
- b) Intermediate level (3 to < 10 years) – The intermediate practitioner no longer requires direct supervision and has developed the necessary skills and obtained the necessary experiential knowledge to take responsibility for their work.
- c) Senior level (≥ 10 years) – Senior level practitioners are those that have at least 10 years of work experience and generally provide supervision to intermediate and junior staff. They are often recognized as knowledge experts by their peers.

Members will strive to ensure that they have sufficient work experience to conduct and accept responsibility for the work they do. The time frames indicated in Table 2 are provided for guidance. Individual career progression and work experience may vary from these time frames.

Table 2. Typical years of work experience and examples of job duties and responsibilities.

Level of Experience	Examples of Typical Job Duties	Key Responsibilities
Junior (typically < 3 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn the fundamentals for rural community assessment and policy development • Learn to understand perspectives and effectively communicate with landowners, farmers, ranchers and other rural stakeholders • Build an understanding of local rural culture and enhance knowledge about rural capacity building • Learn to understand rural development practices and drivers • Gather information on community assets through environmental scans, literature reviews, collection of census data; review of economic inventories and case studies; primary research, etc. • Learn how to interpret rural data • Conduct jurisdictional scans and literature searches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide support to intermediate and senior level staff in various activities • Assist with data collection, entry and preliminary analysis/reporting • Follow project plans and tasks
Intermediate (typically 3 to 10 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and assess Acts and Regulations governing community and resource management • Take an active role in analyzing and evaluating pros and cons as they relate to actions that may or may not be feasible when developing and implementing plans/projects • Write business/community management plans and reports • Mentor/train junior personnel • Build and manage project teams • Design and lead interviews and focus groups in order to obtain community input • Work with senior personnel to help develop and report recommendations and results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible for organizing data analysis and ensuring data integrity • Follow and adjust project plans as needed to effectively meet objectives • Management, planning and regulatory compliance alignment
Senior (typically > 10 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop project plans in collaboration with Junior and Intermediate professionals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write, assess and help provide strategies, budgets, resource links and effective collaboration

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure compliance with the relevant Acts and Regulations governing rural development in Alberta are followed • Lead the rural development process including consultation and policy development • Identify tools and technology to facilitate the rural development process and ensure success of a plan or project • Builds and seeks out client and community contacts to ensure effective networking with other resources and stakeholders • Understands and interprets technology applications in a rural context • Prepares and guides advice/options for analysis/consideration • Develop, plan, and coordinate stakeholder engagement and community surveys • Train and mentor junior and intermediate personnel • Assists with understanding and transferring knowledge of the rural landscape • Assists the community in understanding opportunities and the context of how to take advantage of them • Ensures effective communication with clients and communities • Responsible for final review and edit of reports • Presents results, supports the community efforts as needed and guides towards implementation as needed/ requested 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides oversight that ensures effective regulatory compliance and that project and program management is carried out • Ensures initiatives are designed and implemented in a cohesive and progressive manner
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4.1 Skill Set Requirements

Certain skill sets and capabilities enhance proficiency within a given PA. Application of scientific or technical knowledge requires skill sets which are identified within this practice standard. Skill sets are essential to functioning effectively within the PA and are generally developed during work experience, mentoring and/or gained through professional development courses.

Table 3. Skill sets relevant to the practice area

Skill Sets	Description
Understanding and consideration of rural context, culture, and values	It is important for the rural development and support Agrologist to understand and consider the nature of rural settings, that is, the unique challenges faced by rural peoples, and the values and culture of rural society. Applying urban assumptions and cultural values to rural societies can lead to difficulties in communication and rural capacity building. This understanding must be considered when identifying potential social, economic and environmental opportunities for sustainable rural development and support.
Effective communication including public speaking, presentation consultation and facilitation skills	Rural development and support professionals perform a critical role in effectively translating and communicating information and knowledge to a variety of user communities. Effective communication skills are vital for the Rural development and support Agrologist. Consultation with stakeholders and facilitating dialogue to achieve greater understanding of issues, opportunities and constraints is a key part of rural development activities.
Providing extension services to communities	Professionals in this PA must educate and help facilitate support to people engaged in agricultural production or processing. The practitioner should help members of the community remove barriers, access markets and other services in the agricultural supply chain, obtain information, improve skills, and access relevant technologies to their situation. Extension includes components of technology transfer and informal education, along with facilitation to a broad range of interdisciplinary communities of practice and educators.
Negotiation, mediation, consensus building and conflict resolution	These skills are necessary for dealing with resolution of resource conflicts and challenges presented by competing interests. Being able to bring parties with conflicting opinions together and work toward a mutual consensus supported by all parties is a necessary part of working within this practice area.
Relationship building with clients, stakeholders and regulators	This skill set relates to establishing and maintaining relationships and communications with clients, stakeholders and regulators. It is important to foster and maintain collaborative partnerships with colleagues, clients, stakeholders, government agencies and regulators.
Leadership, coaching and mentoring skills	This skill set includes solution-focused leadership and coaching methods and guiding others to achieve their goals.

Regulatory understanding and application	It is important to understand the legal framework, including legislation, standards, guidelines, policies, codes of practice, and beneficial management practices, that establish the regulatory context for rural development activities. Supplementary codes of practice and management guides, land use plans and other associated documents which guide development of rural opportunities are also critical.
Research, analysis, planning, decision analysis and management	This skill set is required to ensure all stakeholders' expectations are addressed within the context of sustainable approaches which balance business economic returns with societal expectations and environmental quality. It includes proposal and budget preparation, revenue and cost tracking, development and implementation of a management and/or project plan, ongoing assessment of alignment with plans and objectives; change and cost management; project integration and completion. This requires a professional objective approach to recommendations and procedures.
Documentation and reporting	Documentation of rationale for decisions made and conclusions drawn is a key requirement of professionalism. Clearly expressing results and professional opinions, based on supporting data in an appropriate format, is an important skill for the practitioner.
Ethical practice	Members adhere to the Code of Ethics for the profession as they make recommendations to their clients. The Code of Ethics states, " <i>The Profession of Agrology demands integrity, competence and objectivity in the conduct of its members while fulfilling their professional responsibilities to the public, the employer or client, the profession and other members.</i> " (See Appendix B)

5. PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENTS

This practice standard not only identifies educational, work experience and skill set requirements for competent practice but also defines the performance expected of regulated members participating in the PA, in addition to the General Practice Standard that applies to all AIA members (see Appendix 1).

The following performance requirements outline the expectations of the professional practicing within the *Rural Development and Support PA*. Failure to comply with these expectations may be considered as constituting unprofessional conduct under the *Agrology Profession Act*.

Regulated members stay current with rural development and support research, legislation, directives, guidelines, industry standards and other reference documentation.

Regulated members:

- regularly review documentation and reference material used to support their practice. Obtain and review more current versions as they become available.
- attend and provide presentations at workshops and updates related to rural development and support including provincial, national and international conferences.
- communicate with regulators, research scientists, policy specialists, educators and other practitioners to ensure they remain current with current rural development trends as well as know and understand the legislative requirements they work within.

Regulated members understand the limits of their knowledge, skills and experience and seek the expertise of other professionals where necessary.

Regulated members:

- make appropriate scientific, technical, practical and logistical decisions based on their education and experiential knowledge in rural development and support.
- apply their skills and use sound judgement in an ethical manner.
- seek advice and input from other professionals when their expertise is insufficient to make competent decisions and recommendations.
- do not conduct work that is beyond their expertise and work experience level unless they conduct the work under the direct supervision of a qualified regulated professional.

Regulated members clearly understand their role within the practice area

Regulated members:

- clearly understand their role in the practice area, represent themselves as such and do not exceed the boundaries of that role.
- only sign and seal those plans, reports, and other documents for which the members are professionally responsible, and which were prepared by or under the direction of the member.

Regulated members clearly understand a project's objectives, scope and terms of reference and ensure alignment with the execution of a project management plan.

Regulated members:

- document and understand the objectives, scope and deliverables, and work within the terms of reference, legislative framework or client contract.
- use a consistent and thorough process for management and evaluation.
- regularly review the management plan to determine changes needed in a dynamic system for ensuring alignment with community goals, objectives, regulatory requirements and changing environmental and economic conditions.
- regularly engage with clients, stakeholders and employer regarding the scope and project objectives and adapt and document any changes as required.

Regulated members make decisions and recommendations based on refereed science and established professional and common-sense practice.

Regulated members:

- understand that one management approach is not applicable to all situations.
- strive to balance rural social and economic gains and maintain practice and/or recommendations within a reasonable deviation from established norms.
- use established tools and processes to successfully provide recommendations.

Regulated members review the requirements of this practice standard and address any practice deficiencies through their ongoing continuing competence program.

Regulated members:

- conduct self-assessments based on the education, work experience, skill set, and performance requirements indicated within this practice standard.
- review their self-assessment with a senior qualified professional.
- identify any deficiencies and develop a plan to address them.
- regularly participate in the AIA continuing competence program as required by the *Agrology Profession Act*.

6. RECOMMENDED READING MATERIAL

The following is a list of some recommended reading material relevant to the *Rural Development and Support PA* in Alberta. It is not intended to be an exhaustive list.

Blake, R.B. 2003. Regional and Rural Development Strategies in Canada: The Search For Solutions. Royal Commission on Renewing and Strengthening Our Place in Canada. Available online at: https://www.gov.nl.ca/publicat/royalcomm/research/blake.pdf
Centre for Rural Economic Development. 2019. Rural Opportunity, National Prosperity: An Economic Development Strategy for Rural Canada. ISBN 978-0-660-31481-5
Government of Alberta. 2005. A Place to Grow: Alberta's Rural Development Strategy. Available online at: https://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/csi12110/\$FILE/grow-feb2005.pdf
OECD. New Rural Policy: Linking Up for Growth. National Prosperity Through Modern Rural Policy Conference. Available online at: https://www.oecd.org/rural/rural-development-conference/documents/New-Rural-Policy.pdf
Porter, M. E. 1990. The Competitive Advantage of Nations. Harvard Business Review 68, no. 2: 73–93.
Rogers, E.M. 2003. Diffusion of Innovations, 5 th ed. Free Press.
Rosenfeld, S. 2004. Creating a New Rural Development Strategy. Conference on Knowledge Clusters and Entrepreneurship; Minneapolis, Minnesota. Available online at: https://q.bstatic.com/data/bsuitewf/43d7844c311578bcc90f6f75ca44504a132050b6.pdf
Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry. 2008. Beyond Freefall: Halting Rural Poverty. Available online at: https://sencanada.ca/content/sen/Committee/392/agri/rep/rep09jun08-e.pdf
Toma, D. 2011. Rural Colleges Innovative Practices Review. Northern Labour Market Clearinghouse. Available online at: https://www.nadc.ca/Docs/clearing/CH122.pdf

Websites (Management Guides, Organizations):

Alberta Rural Development Network: http://www.ardn.ca/
Brandon University, Rural Development Institute: https://www.brandonu.ca/rdi/
Economic Developers Alberta: http://www.edaalberta.ca/
Rural Municipalities of Alberta: https://rmaalberta.com/

Journal of Agriculture Extension: https://joe.org/
Serecon: https://www.serecon.ca/resources
U.S. Department of Agriculture, Rural Development: https://www.rd.usda.gov/

Regulatory and Policy Documents:

<p>Alberta Provincial Legislation:</p> <p>www.qp.alberta.ca/</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Agricultural Operation Practices Act and Regulations</i> • <i>Alberta Land Stewardship Act</i> • <i>Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act</i> • <i>Forests and Prairie Protection Act</i> • <i>Municipal Governments Act</i> • <i>Public Lands Act</i> • <i>Public Lands Administration Regulation</i> • <i>Soil Conservation Act</i> • <i>Species at Risk Act</i> • <i>Water Act</i> • <i>Weeds Act</i> • <i>Wildlife Act</i>
<p>Federal Legislation:</p> <p>https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/corporate/transparency/acts-regulations/acts-administered.html</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Canada Wildlife Act</i> • <i>Environmental Protection Act</i> • <i>Fisheries Act</i> • <i>Migratory Birds Act</i> • <i>Species at Risk Act</i> <p>https://www.inspection.gc.ca/about-cfia/acts-and-regulations/list-of-acts-and-regulations/eng/1419029096537/1419029097256</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Feeds Act</i> • <i>Fertilizers Act</i> • <i>Food and Drugs Act</i> • <i>Health of Animals Act</i>

7. SUMMARY

This document describes the knowledge requirements, work experience, skill set and performance expectations for professional practice within the *Rural Development and Support PA* for the Agrolgy profession. It provides direction to members of the Alberta Institute of Agrolgists

who are practicing or who wish to practice within this PA to ensure they are qualified to conduct work in this area.

Members practicing within this PA are required to review this document and assess their knowledge, work experience, skill sets and performance against the requirements and expectations herein. Where deficiencies are noted it is expected that members will develop a plan to address these deficiencies through their individual continuing competence programs. Members are expected to understand the limits of their own knowledge and expertise and seek additional advice and professional support as required.

This practice standard will be one of the tools the Institute will use in conducting practice reviews or investigating a complaint about a member. It is the responsibility of the member to be aware of the contents of this practice standard.

APPENDIX A

The following General Practice Standard applies to all registered members of the AIA. This General Practice Standard is to be adhered to as well as this detailed practice standard for the *Rural Development and Support PA*.

General Practice Standard for All Registered Members of the Alberta Institute of Agrologists

The General Practice Standard applies to all registered members of the Alberta Institute of Agrologists. The purpose of the document is to describe the duties and responsibilities that are incumbent upon each member of the profession. It is the responsibility of each registered member to conduct themselves in accordance with these standards. Registered members will be measured against these standards by the Institute, the public, employers, clients and colleagues. The Standard describes the values of the Institute and the profession, and the expectation for each registered member.

Professional Responsibility

Each registered member of the Alberta Institute of Agrologists (AIA) is required to uphold the standards and reputation of the agrology profession and professional principles.

Indicators

The registered member has a duty to protect the public and to conduct his or her work with an appropriate standard of care.

Standard of care

Standard of care is the legal duty to exercise the watchfulness, attention, caution and prudence that a reasonable professional in the same circumstances would exercise. If a professional's actions do not meet this standard the professional may be found negligent or to have committed unprofessional conduct.

The registered member is personally responsible and accountable for ensuring that his or her agrology practice and conduct meet the requirements of the practice area(s), practice standards, current legislation, regulations and policy.

The registered member will practice with honesty, integrity and respect, and comply with the AIA's Code of Ethics.

The registered member will sign or co-sign a report only if he or she is willing to accept full responsibility for the contents of the report.

The registered member may delegate portions of the work to competent practitioners under the registered member's direct supervision. The registered member will accept responsibility for that work and provide additional quality assurance/quality control to

determine the sufficiency of that work. Registered members will not sign any document for which they will not take full responsibility for the contents of the document.

The registered member will hold the public interest paramount and endeavour to put service above gain and excellence above quantity.

Competency

The registered member will practice only in an area(s) where the member has demonstrated competence.

Indicators

The registered member will only practice unsupervised in the practice area(s) where the member's education, skills, and experience fulfill the practice area qualifications and the registered member believes he or she is competent. If a registered member's education, skills, and experience do not meet the requirements of the practice area, the member will practice *only* under the direct supervision of a qualified, registered professional who is competent to do the work and who will give appropriate direction to the registered member.

The registered member, if called upon by the profession, a judicial review or a court ordered request, must be able to clearly demonstrate the knowledge and skillsets gained to enable them to practice in any practice area(s) in which the member deems himself or herself competent to practice.

The registered member will undertake continuing professional development (CPD) with the majority of the CPD hours directly relevant to his or her practice area(s). The registered member commits to reporting his or her CPD activities on the member profile as activities are completed.

The registered member will continually update his or her scientific and standard industry practice knowledge related to the member's practice area(s).

The registered member will demonstrate critical thinking when planning, implementing and evaluating all aspects of the work and making any recommendations as a professional.

The registered member is able to show his or her reasoning in reaching decisions through accurate and clearly written documentation.

The registered member will advise the AIA of any changes to his or her practice area(s), particularly when a new practice area is chosen. The registered member will specify the knowledge and skills that have been acquired to support work in the new practice area.

Provision of Service to the Public, a Client or an Employer

The registered member will promote the qualified, competent and ethical professional role and accountability of agrologists to the public, other professionals, and themselves.

Indicators

The registered member will prepare accurate, concise and clearly written reports and correspondence that are appropriate for the intended audience.

The registered member will communicate clearly and respectfully with a variety of people, including his or her employer, colleagues, clients, members of the public and regulators.

The registered member will advise the client if the work is outside of his or her practice area(s) and if the member will be unable to fulfil the terms of reference for the work.

The registered member will make a referral to seek advice, and enter into collaborations with other professionals in situations which require expertise that extend beyond the member's competence.

The registered member will avoid situations where a conflict of interest exists or where the duties and loyalty owed by a member to one party likely will be, is, has been, or perceived to be, in conflict with the duties or loyalties the member owes to another party.

The registered member will extend public knowledge of their area of expertise whether it is in agriculture, the environment, food sciences or life sciences, and promote factual and accurate statements on matters regarding these areas.

Stewardship

The registered member will advocate and practice good stewardship of all agricultural and environmental resources based on sound scientific principles.

Indicators

A registered member will consider monetary issues, social values, rational application of sound science, lesson of valid experiences, economic impacts to the geographic region, and impacts on future generations when conducting his or her work.

A registered member will inform the client or employer of any action planned or undertaken by the client or employer that he or she believes is detrimental to good stewardship or in breach of known legislation, regulations or policies.

Safety

The registered member understands his or her obligation for promoting public and worker safety and considers the health of the environment, health of the consumer, industrial safety, construction safety and the general operational safety of projects.

Indicators

A registered member will demonstrate concern for the immediate and long-term direct effects of agricultural and environmental practices on the safety of workers by being aware of, and evaluating risks.

A registered member will balance the claims of producers and needs and wants of a consuming public against the potentially competing claims for safety of the environment and the interests of individuals and businesses affected by their proximity to agricultural operations. The registered member is aware that the public expects and demands a safe supply of food, not only for current use but also for future generations.

APPENDIX B

CODE OF ETHICS

“The Profession of Agrology demands integrity, competence and objectivity in the conduct of its members while fulfilling their professional responsibilities to the public, the employer or client, the profession and other members.”

Members should be aware of any other laws and responsibilities in regard to other business and voluntary activities which may impact their ethical conduct.

Guidelines to the Ethical Responsibilities of Agrologists

The purpose of the following guideline is to clarify the intent of the Code of Ethics and the understanding of the nature of the professional obligations that arise out of the document. Throughout, it is recognized that membership is a right granted by the public to the regulated member (member) to practice Agrology in such a way that the public interest is served. It is also understood that, just as the individual member has an obligation to conduct business in an ethical and competent manner, colleagues and the Institute share the moral responsibility of protecting their Agrologists and the field of agrology against any unfounded and unjust criticisms.

1) Among the regulated member’s professional obligations to the public are the responsibilities:

a) To practice only in those practice areas where the member’s training, ability, and experience make him/her professionally qualified.

The public has given a right to the Professional with the trust and expectation that those activities are undertaken with competence. A member will not make misleading statements regarding his/her qualifications. A member will actively pursue professional knowledge upgrading specific to their practice area(s) in order to remain competent in his/her field of expertise. A member will make referrals to seek advice, and enter into collaborations with other professionals in situations which require expertise that extend beyond the individual member’s competence.

b) To express a professional opinion only when it is founded on adequate knowledge and experience, and where the member has an understanding of the situation and context in which this opinion is being offered.

Members must clearly distinguish among facts, assumptions and opinions in their preparation of reports and professional statements. Professional opinions should be clearly stated and should include clear indications of the constraints that apply to the opinion, and the relevant qualifying circumstances, facts and assumptions.

Members should exercise care that work they conduct cannot in any way be seen to support or make possible any morally suspect or illegal purposes. In the extreme, this caution might cause a member to refrain from association with enterprises or individuals whose objectives and probity are subject to questions.

Members who act as expert witnesses and provide opinion evidence for the purpose of litigation should not take a partisan position. Agrologists must provide evidence as impartial experts and must not do so as advocates of their client or employer. While acting as an expert witness, a member’s role is to assist the judge/jury/panel with technical matters which are beyond the expertise of the tribunal.

c) To advocate and practice good stewardship of all agricultural and environmental resources based on sound scientific principles(s).

Stewardship requires making complex choices based on a variety of relevant but not necessarily compatible factors. Good stewards must consider, but not necessarily be limited to: monetary matters, social values, the rational application of sound science, the lessons of valid experience, impacts on the economic health of the community at large, and the impacts on future generations. Because of the position of public trust, a member's duty is to uphold professional principles above and beyond the demands of employment.

Conflict may arise between a member's duty to uphold professional principles and the duty to serve the needs of an employer or a client. Members must distinguish between the role they play as Agrologists and the role management plays. Managers have prerogatives and privilege for making decisions based on a wider range of constraints than those that might be appropriate for an Agrologist. The member must not confuse the role of providing others with information upon which to base a decision with the role of being responsible for making the decision him or herself.

If a member believes there is a serious conflict between the requirements of employment and a member's professional principles, a member should inform/or consult the Registrar or any other appropriate persons about the conflict. Members may seek advice and support for the position from the Institute.

d) To extend public knowledge of agriculture and the environment and to promote truthful and accurate statements on sustainable agricultural systems and environmental matters.

Members should strive to develop appropriate involvement with schools, agencies and organizations insofar as such outreach activities can help ensure the dissemination and discovery of sound and appropriate agricultural environment knowledge. Members should attempt to correct misleading or erroneous statements on agricultural matters whenever and wherever such statements are encountered.

e) To have proper regard for the safety of others in all work.

Members must understand their obligation for promoting safety. Members should consider the impact the exercise of their professional duties will have upon the health of the environment, industrial safety, and health of the consumer, construction safety and the general operational safety of completed projects. Members must demonstrate concern for the immediate and long-term direct effects of agricultural and environmental practices on the safety of workers by being aware of and evaluating risks.

The public expects and demands a safe supply of food, not only for current but also for future generations. Members must balance the claims of producers and consuming public against the potentially competing claims for safety of the environment and the interests of individuals and businesses affected by their proximity to agricultural operations.

2) A member's responsibility to the client or Employer is:

a) To act conscientiously and diligently in providing professional services.

Members should endeavour to put service above gain and excellence above quantity. If a member becomes aware of errors or omissions in his/her work, he/she must report the same to his/her client or employer, and immediately work to remedy such errors or omissions.

Expect as required by law, to maintain the confidentiality of client and employer information unless given the explicit consent of the client or employer.

b) A member should consider all information received from a client or employer as confidential unless such information is in the public domain.

Information obtained during and specific to a professional contract situation is confidential and must not be disclosed to others or used by the members outside that contracted situation without the consent of the client or employer. However, technical expertise gained by a member through work may be used in subsequent projects without consent from other parties.

c) To obtain a clear understanding of the client's or employer's objectives.

Members must clearly understand the objectives of the client or employer. Members must make inquiries regarding such objectives to ensure that professional services are provided in the context of complete and accurate information. It is recommended that all oral communication that is material to the delivery of professional services be confirmed in writing.

d) To inform the client or employer of any action planned or undertaken by the client or employer that a member believes is detrimental to good stewardship or in breach of known laws or regulations.

It is a member's duty to advise a client or employer of the consequence of questionable actions and inform the client or employer of the facts that lead the member's belief that the action is detrimental to good stewardship.

e) To refuse any assignment that creates a conflict of interest.

A conflict of interest exists where the duties and loyalty owed by a member to one party are, are likely to become, or to a reasonable, informed and objective observer would appear to be in conflict with the duties or loyalties the member owes to another party.

A member should not accept an assignment in which he/she has a personal or business interest unless that interest is disclosed and approved by the client or employer.

Where a member is in a position of providing professional services to more than one party with different interests in the same or related matter, the member must explain the significance of acting for more than one party to each of the affected clients or employer(s) (the parties) and obtain the written consent of the parties to continue working for more than one party. If any of the parties fail to give their consent the member must then determine whether it is possible to act on behalf of a subset of the parties without conflict. If conflict cannot be eliminated by acting only on behalf some of the parties, then the member should advise all the parties that he/she cannot continue to act for any of them in the matter that generates the conflict of interest.

Members must also advise the parties that no information received in connection with the common matter from the one can be treated as confidential so far as any of the other parties are concerned.

f) To not accept compensation from more than one employer or client for the same work, without the consent of all.

Members need to distinguish between the data or product, which becomes the property of the client; and the process or technical experience, which remains the property of the member.

3) The Agrologist's Responsibility to the Profession is:

a) To inspire confidence in Agrology by maintaining high standards in conduct and work.

A member must keep in mind that the work of an Agrologist is continuously open for public scrutiny and it is the responsibility of each individual to build and maintain a positive image of the field and the profession. Not only must a member perform his/her duties of employment to a high level of excellence, but the conduct of that member must also be of high standard.

b) To support activities for the advancement of the profession.

Members have an obligation to participate in the activities of the Institute (i.e., meetings, elections, holding office, mentoring) as the individual members situation and opportunities allow.

Members need to be constantly aware they are Agrologists and should, by their conduct, provide a positive image of the profession. Each member must be prepared to personally promote Agrology in personal contacts and communications, and to participate in specific promotional initiatives organized by the professional organizations.

c) Where a member believes another individual may be guilty of infamous or unprofessional conduct, negligence or breach of the Agrology Profession Act or bylaws:

to raise the matter with that individual and

if not resolved or if otherwise deemed necessary to inform the Registrar of the Institute in writing.

A member should ensure that the facts and understanding of the misconduct are correct. Consultation with a colleague or Registrar is encouraged if it may help clarify the issue. Members should make every effort to raise and resolve the issue in a candid and professional manner. Agrologists should note that only in exceptional circumstances is it inappropriate to raise such a matter with the other member if done courteously and politely.

d) To state clearly on whose behalf professional statements or opinions are made.

A professional opinion or statement prepared by an Agrologist is for a specific situation and set of circumstances. The content of a professional opinion should include the context in which it is made.

e) To sign and seal only those plans, reports, and other documents for which the members are professionally responsible and which were prepared by or under the direction of the member.

Members who affix their seal and/or signature assume responsibility for and understand the document. The responsible professional must have exercised sufficient control and association with the document so he/she can sign and seal the document based on personal knowledge. Members will not associate themselves with documents, reports or statements that misrepresent, distort or omit material facts. Members should familiarize themselves with information that details the procedures and protocols that are associated with the use and practice of sealing professional works.

4) A member's professional responsibility to other members is:

a) To abstain from undignified or misrepresentative public communication with or about members.

Conduct between members should be characterized by respect, courtesy, honesty, and good faith. Direct and honest criticism between professionals is acceptable and professional debate is encouraged when characterized by fairness and propriety.

Members should be courteous when criticizing the work of another member and be as careful with a colleague's reputation as they would be with their own. Members will advise another regulated member in advance if they are reviewing/critiquing the other's work for a specific project. An individual member will not make statements or representations on behalf of the Institute without prior authorization.

b) To give credit for professional work to whom credit is due.

Members should always acknowledge the work and contributions of others when directly using that work in whole or in part. Members should clearly understand and appreciate that the unpaid use of marketable processes and technology developed by another member could jeopardise that other member's livelihood.

Members will follow the rules and law of copyright. Members will secure releases for any data, process (es), and publication(s) obtained from written or electronic sources.

c) To share knowledge and experience with other members.

Each member has a duty to new members and to the future of the Institute to be available as a mentor for new members. Individual members should offer and seek out constructive professional discussion and debates with colleagues to maintain a vibrant and progressive profession.

Code of Ethics, Revised September, 2010