

The Partnership Plans National Implementation of a Continuing Education Certification Program

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Abstract

The Partnership has agreed to move forward with a national implementation of a Continuing Education Certification Program subject to a satisfactory cost analysis. The project will be operated by the Library Association of Alberta.

Keywords

library continuing education; library professional development; continuing education certification

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At its Spring Meeting in February, 2011, The Partnership received and discussed the report and recommendations from the Library Association of Alberta (LAA)'s Continuing Education Certification Pilot Project. The report, **Document and Reveal: The Library Association of Alberta Continuing Education Certification Program Pilot Project** (<http://hdl.handle.net/10402/era.23102>) was the culmination of LAA's year-long pilot study of a voluntary national continuing education system.

The primary goal of the Continuing Education Certification Program is to provide all library workers across Canada, including those who are unemployed, with the opportunity to take part in a system which allows them to document their ongoing continuing education activities and to receive a certificate once they have met a minimum set of standards. The development of the pilot program was based on the following guiding principles established by The Partnership, which require that the program be:

- ☐ **Inclusive** -- open to all Canadian librarians, library technicians and library staff
- ☐ **Flexible** -- so that a solo person working in a remote location could complete the program
- ☐ **Participant-centred** -- focused on participant needs, participant activities, participant ownership
- ☐ **Inexpensive** -- so that cost not be a barrier to participation or to administration by associations
- ☐ **Simple** -- so that associations can operate the program easily
- ☐ **Portable** -- so that participants can remain in the program when they move from association to association

The program does not take the place of a post-secondary program, but rather recognizes and reveals the day-to-day learning, both informal and formal, that library workers undertake.

The Library Association of Alberta operated the Pilot Project on behalf of The Partnership from September 2009 to August 2010, and has volunteered to undertake the development and implementation of the national program. During the Pilot, forty-three LAA members were enrolled as participants, and eight as mentors. The mentors served to provide participants with guidance regarding the program, and were available to answer any questions that participants may have had. Participants took part in a geographically-limited, full implementation of the program, testing all facets.

The participants were surveyed at the mid-point of the Pilot, and again after the conclusion. During the course of the Pilot, presentations were given in a number of professional venues and feedback formally sought. This feedback, combined with the results of the two surveys, was analysed. The results led to ten recommendations to The Partnership.

The first of the recommendations was to implement a national Continuing Education Certification Program. Most of the remainder were recommendations for improving the operation of the Program. The Partnership decided to proceed with a national implementation of the project, provided a thorough cost analysis is undertaken so that fees for the program can be set appropriately.

The Pilot operated with participants recording their continuing education activities on paper forms and submitting these at the end of the Pilot to receive their certificates. As a result of participant feedback, one of the most important changes that will be made for the national program, will be the development of a web-entry database that participants can use to record their continuing education activities. This will make the record keeping much easier than the paper-based system used for the Pilot. It will also ensure that everyone works to the same standards and will make compliance audits easier.

A further recommendation, which was adopted, is that the program web-page and the database be available in both French and English, to ensure that all Canadian library workers can make use of the system.

Given the time involved to complete the cost analysis and the development of the database and the web-site, the project is scheduled to launch nationally in early 2012. A Partnership National Certification Committee has been struck to provide guidance as the national implementation plan is developed.

The report and recommendations, **Document and Reveal: The Library Association of Alberta Continuing Education Certification Program Pilot Project** will be available on the LAA Continuing Education web-site (<http://hdl.handle.net/10402/era.23102>).

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