BC ELN Steering Committee Meeting Minutes
Friday May 23, 2025

10:00am – 12:00pm 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

Guests:

Julia Lane, Chair, WriteAway Advisory Committee (agenda item 5.)
Trish Rosseel, Chair, AskAway Advisory Committee (agenda item 4.)

BC ELN Office:

Kyle Beres, WriteAway Coordinator
Sunni Nishimura, BC ELN Executive Director
Cristen Polley, AskAway Coordinator (Recorder)

Regrets:

None.

Welcome

T. Gottschalk welcomed attendees and provided a territorial acknowledgement.

1. Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted as distributed.

2. PSFS Update

B. Ferrel provided an update on activities at the Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills (PSFS):

- PSFS is exploring the adoption of MortarCAPS, a Commonwealth data standard initiative for higher education that has been implemented in Australia, the U.K., and Canada; a presentation about MortarCAPS will be shared with committee members via slides after the meeting
- PSFS and BCNET are wrapping up joint procurement of a curriculum management system; the process is driven by BCIT, and 14 institutions have expressed interest in accessing the software via a Master Agreement that will result from the procurement
    - Implementation will be supported centrally by BCNET and deliver benefits through scale including reduced per-institution costs and shared knowledge
    - Committee members are encouraged to reach out to colleagues at their institutions who manage curriculum to promote the adoption of this new, common technology
- There is no significant update to share regarding the SFU Service Agreement; more information should be available over the summer.

There were no questions.

3. 2024/25 Expenditure Summary and 2025/26 Expenditure Plan

S. Nishimura presented the BC ELN 2024/25 Expenditure Summary and 2025/26 Expenditure Plan included in the agenda package. Overall, the BC ELN budget is in excellent shape. BC ELN's Core Funding letter for 2025/26 included a $114,583 increase to the PSFS - Core Funding Grant for a total of $600,000.

Highlights presented by S. Nishimura are as follows:

Core Administration, Licensing, and Illume

The BC ELN budget for Core Administration, Licensing, and Illume ended 2024/25 with a positive carryforward, which includes encumbered amounts for the 2025/26 fiscal. It is expected that Core Administration, Licensing, and Illume will also have a positive carryforward in 2025/26, including encumbered amounts for 2026/27.

- Revenue Highlights:
    - BC ELN Core Funding for 2025/26 was received in early April with a $114,583 lift for a total of $600,000
    - PSFS – Removing Barriers Grant was allocated in 2024/25 and includes:
        - $50,000 to investigate the information needs of Indigenous students and potential barriers to BC ELN membership for Indigenous post-secondary institutions, with a goal of developing recommendations for removing these barriers; BC ELN is part-way through expending these funds and will provide an update at the July Steering Committee meeting
        - $60,000 over two years to bolster the AskAway and WriteAway services, with a focus on enhancing service models and addressing barriers to participation particularly for Indigenous post-secondary institutions; BC

ELN is in year two of this funding

    - Miscellaneous revenue for both years includes Associate Member fees and funding received from the Irving K. Barber Learning Centre at UBC and from GLAM sector clients through the BCHDP Hosting and Support Service partnerships; for 2025/26 it also includes a cost-recovery amount for the Collaboration Framework pilot project with Vancouver Community College

- Expenditures Highlights:
    - Website Migration has been reduced from $50,000 to $25,000, as the migration is anticipated to cost less than initially estimated since invoicing and billing functionality is now supported by ConsortiaManager
    - PSFS Core Funding Grant lift of $114,583 is primarily expended in salaries and benefits; notably, 2025/26 BC ELN staffing changes include a new continuing Operations Manager position and a two-year Librarian position

Service Areas (AskAway, WriteAway, Arca)

- Service area budgets are approved by their respective Advisory Committees
- PSFS granted Arca an additional $60,000 to complete the migration, specifically to support aggregated search; with PSFS support, Arca migrated its critical infrastructure at no additional cost to libraries

BC ELN Licensing Programme

- Flow through account to collect partner library licensing contributions and make payments to vendors
- The negative Year End Balance is due to late payments from partner libraries

There were no questions.

MOTION: To approve the 2025/26 Expenditure Plan as presented.
Moved: T. Gottschalk
Seconded: D. Gullacher
Motion carried.

4. AskAway Sustainability Recommendations for Endorsement

T. Gottschalk reminded attendees that the recommendations for endorsement were developed by the AskAway Commitment Models Review Working Group and approved by the AskAway Advisory Committee. The role of the Steering Committee is to consider the recommendations in the context of BC ELN. T. Gottschalk welcomed T. Rosseel to the meeting.

T. Rosseel presented the AskAway Sustainability Recommendation included in the agenda package. T. Rosseel provided background on the recommendations, reiterated the value of AskAway and member libraries' commitment to the service, presented the recommendations, outlined a timeline and estimated cost to implement the recommendations, and noted the additional staff time required to complete this work. T. Rosseel confirmed that the funds needed to implement the recommendations would be in addition to PSFS Removing Barriers funding, which ends in 2025/26.

The meeting was opened for questions and comments:

- S. Lew thanked the Advisory Committee and the Working Group for their work and for modeling a method of analysis for sustainability that could be adopted more widely
- C. Neigel noted that institutional enrolment is changing rapidly and asked if the working group considered the short and long-term impacts on AskAway usage and the commitment models
    - C. Polley responded that the FTE tier models are built to accommodate FTE changes (e.g., if institutional FTEs lower significantly, institutions will move to a lower tier and contribute fewer hours; at the same time, less staffing will be needed on the schedule if enrolment, and by extension usage, has decreased)
- S. Nishimura confirmed that the FTE numbers that BC ELN uses to assign libraries to commitment model tiers are taken from PSFS institutional budget letters
- T. Gottschalk noted the potential impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on the service and the need for this to inform sustainability work
    - T. Rosseel and C. Polley confirmed that the AskAway Emerging Technologies Working Group is well-positioned to investigate the impact of AI on the service
- B. Ferrel expressed support for the submission of a request for PSFS transitional funding to complete AskAway sustainability work and inquired about the timeline; S. Nishimura affirmed that confirmation of additional funding from PSFS is needed within the current fiscal year (2025/26) to meet the proposed implementation timeline.

T. Rosseel outlined options if a request for transitional funding is not successful including adjusting service hours and/or completing the implementation work on a revised timeline.

MOTION: To endorse the approved AskAway Sustainability Recommendations and proceed with a request to PSFS for transitional funding as presented.
Moved: T. Gottschalk
Seconded: S. Lew
Motion carried.

T. Gottschalk thanked T. Rosseel, who then left the meeting.

5. WriteAway Sustainability Recommendations for Endorsement

T. Gottschalk reminded attendees that the recommendations for endorsement were developed by the WriteAway Advisory Committee based on sustainability review work the committee completed between January and May 2025. T. Gottschalk welcomed J. Lane to the meeting.

J. Lane presented the WriteAway Sustainability Recommendation included in the agenda package. J. Lane provided background on the recommendations, reiterated the value of WriteAway, presented the recommendations and the service's vision for sustainability, outlined a timeline and estimated cost to implement the recommendations, and thanked the WriteAway Admin Centre for their support to date.

The meeting was opened for questions and comments:

- S. Lew commented on the value of the service to support academic integrity
- Several members, including J. Lane, B. Ferrel, and T. Gottschalk, commented on the need to position WriteAway in relation to AI in the writing support ecosystem as an essential component of sustainability work:
    - B. Ferrel noted the need for WriteAway and AskAway to articulate their value as online, human-supported services, alongside in-person supports and especially in the context of AI
    - T. Gottschalk noted that AI tutor models are already being used by students (e.g., embedded into learning management systems)
    - K. Beres highlighted the positive response that WriteAway received at the recent BCcampus Educational Technology Users Group (ETUG) workshop, where attendees were pleased to learn that qualified human tutors were responding to student submissions
    - C. Neigel pointed to emerging scholarship that encourages individuals to articulate their uneasiness with and/or concerns about using AI technology and to create space for these conversations.

J. Lane outlined options if a request for transitional funding is not successful including reducing service levels, increasing service support fees, and/or extending turnaround times.

MOTION: To endorse the approved WriteAway Sustainability Recommendations and proceed with a request to PSFS for transitional funding as presented.
Moved: S. Lew
Seconded: R. Cavaliere
Motion carried.

T. Gottschalk thanked J. Lane, who then left the meeting.

6. New Business

There was no new business.

7. Wrap Up

The next Steering Committee meeting will be held virtually on July 17th. Agenda items will include the Removing Barriers Report and strategic goal setting. More information will be sent shortly.