

BC ELN Steering Committee Meeting Minutes
Monday March 2, 2026

9:00am – 11:00am Pacific
Via Zoom

In Attendance:

Gohar Ashoughian, Simon Fraser University
Jonathan Bengtson, University of Victoria
Rita Cavaliere, Nicola Valley Institute of Technology, *Rural Colleges*
Mar González Palacios, Simon Fraser University, *Host Site Officer*
Darcy Gullacher, Trinity Western University, *Small Universities*
Shirley Lew, Vancouver Community College, *Urban Colleges*
Brenda Mathenia, University Canada West, *Associate Members (Vice-Chair)*
Christina Neigel, Capilano University (Chair)
Kenley Neufeld, University of the Fraser Valley, *Teaching Universities and Technical Institutions*
Susan Parker, University of British Columbia

Guests:

Julia Lane, Chair, WriteAway Advisory Committee (agenda item 2.)
Trish Rosseel, Chair, AskAway Advisory Committee (agenda item 3.)

BC ELN Office:

Kyle Beres
Kyla McCallum (Recorder)
Sunni Nishimura, BC ELN Executive Director
Cristen Polley (Moderator)

Regrets:

Ben Ferrel, Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills

Welcome

C. Neigel welcomed attendees and provided a territorial acknowledgement.

1. Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted as distributed.

2. WriteAway Sustainability Update

J. Lane provided an update on WriteAway Sustainability. Shifts in participation and usage patterns created a structural deficit for WriteAway, prompting the launch of the Sustainability process. Work completed to date includes:

- The WriteAway Sustainability Working Group (January – April 2025) developed a vision for a sustainable service and identified eleven supporting action items.
- The Service Model Working Group (July – October 2025) analyzed survey and focus group data, resulting in eight recommendations. These include exploring synchronous support, expanding into additional learning support areas, and improving accessibility.
- The WriteAway Advisory Committee endorsed the Service Model Working Group's recommendations and the creation of two working groups:
 - The Technical Infrastructure Working Group (February 2026 – present) is reviewing the technical requirements associated with adopting the service model recommendations and evaluating platform options.
 - The Commitment Model Working Group will commence in Summer/Fall 2026 to review WriteAway's staffing and financial model.

The WriteAway Advisory Committee will allocate one-time transition funding from the Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills (PSFS) to:

- Maintain current levels of service during a critical transition period, avoiding immediate cuts to hours or service quality;
- Implement updated staffing and financial models that reflect current realities, including constrained budgets and shifting student needs;
- Respond to the evolving role of generative artificial intelligence (AI) in academic support while highlighting the distinct value of human guidance, offered online.

Discussion

K. Neufeld expressed support for expanding accessibility through auditory feedback options, noting that some students may prefer or require this modality.

In response to a question, J. Lane highlighted WriteAway's advantages, noting that the service benefits from employing local students who understand the BC context and that it also provides valuable student employment opportunities.

J. Lane and K. Beres addressed a question about meeting the 48-hour turnaround target. In 2025, WriteAway almost always met this expectation, and often within 24 hours, although turnaround times varied with semester cadence. Peak periods (late November to early December) saw increased wait times. Short turnaround times—the result of fewer student submissions—encourage more frequent second- and third-draft revisions, giving students greater opportunities to engage in iterative writing support. J. Lane noted that the turnaround expectation can be a source of stress for tutors and expressed optimism that sharing expected wait times with students will improve transparency and reduce pressure.

C. Neigel thanked J. Lane, who then left the meeting.

3. AskAway Sustainability Recommendation for Endorsement

Given the financial commitment required from AskAway participating institutions, the AskAway Advisory Committee sought endorsement from the Steering Committee for the new, sustainable commitment model. C. Neigel reminded the Steering Committee of its responsibility to consider how the proposed model may affect BC ELN and its relationship with the BC post-secondary library community.

T. Rosseel and C. Polley presented the recommended AskAway commitment model, which was approved by the AskAway Advisory Committee at their February 6, 2026, meeting. T. Rosseel thanked members of the Recommendations Implementation Team and partners from participating libraries who provided feedback during the process, informing the final model.

Proposed changes were shaped by previously endorsed recommendations, service data, and feedback from consultations with library directors, coordinators, and service providers. The recommended model supports a sustainable service beginning in the 2027/28 fiscal year, includes a scheduled review in 3 years, and balances three factors of change:

- **Fees:** An 8.4% increase in 2027/28 compared to 2026/27 fees, with subsequent years subject to a 2–5% annual inflationary increase.
 - One-time transition funding from PSFS would be used to keep annual fee increases low as institutions transition to the sustainable model.
- **Staffing:** Tiers 2–5 include an additional one hour per week and a set number of evening/weekend hours, with an option to pay in lieu of staffing evening / weekend hours through the Evening/Weekend Offset Contribution Fee.
- **Service Hours:** A reduction of 10 hours per week.

The equitable distribution of evening/weekend hours across tiers promotes greater transparency, while also providing flexibility for institutions who cannot meet additional staffing commitments.

During the AskAway Advisory Committee meeting on February 6, members discussed:

- The importance of preserving AskAway's evening and weekend hours as an extension of institutions' in-person reference services. Committee members therefore supported the recommended model's moderate reduction in service hours, noting that it offered a more balanced approach compared to alternate models that would have involved significantly deeper cuts to evening and weekend coverage.
- Reviewing the commitment model every three years, which would allow for timely adjustments to reflect changing fiscal and service realities. This review process would include potential updates to elements outside the current scope—such as the tier structure—and the development of a framework for measuring success. In response to the Advisory Committee's feedback, the three year review period was incorporated into the commitment model recommendation.

T. Rosseel concluded the presentation with a description of the timeline if the Steering Committee were to approve the recommended model. Participating libraries would be notified of changes in April 2026 and provided at least one month to review before confirming continued participation. The new, sustainable model would take effect in April 2027.

Discussion

In response to a question about continued participation given increased fees and reduced service hours, T. Rosseel highlighted community feedback that supports balancing changes across all three factors—fees, staffing, and service hours. Moderately reducing service hours preserves the overall breadth of service while avoiding steeper cost increases. The AskAway model has also remained unchanged for many years, making fee adjustments necessary to reflect rising costs; however, transition funding from PSFS will help ease institutions' shift to the new model. S. Nishimura offered assistance in communicating AskAway's value to administrators, emphasizing that participating institutions both contribute to and benefit from the service's role in strengthening provincial resiliency.

S. Parker noted that the provincial nature of the service—in that service providers support students from institutions across BC, not only their own—represents a significant value that PSFS could highlight in conversations with institutional leadership. A robust review of AskAway in the future, as outlined in the recommendation, would help demonstrate the service's province-wide impact and strengthen the case for elevating AskAway beyond the library level within institutions.

B. Mathenia added that current fiscal challenges highlight how collaborative services such as AskAway are precisely what the library community needs.

A committee member asked whether the recommendation accounts for how changes in FTE may affect the service. T. Rosseel responded that potential impacts arising from an evolving post-secondary system underscore the need for a review of the commitment model in three years, and that the current process for developing this recommendation provides a strong foundation for that future review. C. Neigel suggested sharing initial thoughts on the future review process with participating libraries when notifying them of the new commitment model, which would demonstrate that long-term financial sustainability is a key consideration.

MOTION: To endorse the new sustainable AskAway Commitment Model, as approved by the AskAway Advisory Committee, to take effect beginning in the 2027/28 fiscal year and to be reviewed in three years.

Moved: K. Neufeld

Seconded: B. Mathenia

Motion carried.

C. Neigel thanked T. Rosseel, who then left the meeting.

4. Administrative Updates

S. Nishimura provided administrative updates.

Resource Sharing Landscape and Environmental Scan

Due to recent changes in interlibrary loan management systems and limitations in system interoperability, BC ELN will be partnering with the Public Libraries Branch to conduct an environmental scan of resource sharing. The scan will examine comparable services operated by other consortia and will be followed by a needs assessment.

In response to a question, S. Nishimura expressed confidence in BC ELN's long-standing relationship with the current ILL software vendor. She recognized that BC ELN partner libraries desire flexibility and that the Shared LSP Initiative may have an impact on the future development of resource sharing through BC ELN.

Anticipated BCcampus Collaboration

The Steering Committee may receive a proposal for BC ELN's involvement in the BCcampus Pressbooks platform for open source, online authoring and publishing of textbooks.

- S. Parker observed that, depending on institutional structure, BC ELN partner libraries may or may not be responsible for managing their institution's relationship with Pressbooks.
- In response to a question about the scope of BC ELN's potential involvement, S. Nishimura clarified that the proposal would position BC ELN as a significant partner, contributing operational structures to support the service.

Post-Secondary Institution (PSI) Review Letter

C. Neigel acknowledged that B. Ferrel had received the letter containing BC ELN partner libraries' feedback on the BC government's review of post-secondary education and had relayed it to the team managing the post-secondary sector review.

5. New Business

There was no new business.

6. Wrap Up

The next Steering Committee meeting will be held virtually on May 21. Agenda items will include the 2026/27 BC ELN Budget.