



COLLEGE OF THE ROCKIES
**FUNDING REVIEW
SUBMISSION**

June 2022



COLLEGE OF
THE ROCKIES

College of the Rockies Overview

College of the Rockies welcomes the review of the funding model for BC's post-secondary system and its stated goal of establishing a funding model that is fair and objective, supports student success, and aligns with education and training needs in each region of the province.

COTR strives to be responsive to the diverse education and training needs of the East Kootenays, mindful of the responsibility that comes with being the only bricks and mortar PSI in the region, and for many citizens, the only accessible, affordable pathway to the careers they seek. We are aligned with the province's goals of meeting the labour force needs projected for our area, expanding access to higher education, and preparing our graduates for an advanced 'green' economy. We see the opportunity to serve as an effective agent for labour force development in our region and we are constrained by our capacity and restrictions on our allocation of resources.

COTR sees changes in the funding formula as essential to the sustainability of our current offerings and our ability to respond to emerging needs in our region. In our view the current formula does not:

- Take into account the higher costs of operating in a rural setting, with multiple campuses, smaller cohorts, a highly diverse population of learners and added challenges in recruiting international students;
- Reflect COTR's comparative success, over many years, in achieving our enrolment targets;
- Adequately fund the pathways and supports needed to expand student access;
- Adequately support the development of new programs, partnerships and pathways we see as essential to meeting current and future needs in our region;
- Fund the (rapidly) rising cost of our Trades programs (current funding from the Industry Training Authority covers only ~31% of the total cost of delivery);
- Acknowledge the vulnerability inherent in the reliance of Colleges like ours on net revenue from international education to subsidize our core operations.

COTR welcomes the concept of a wider scope for the funding review, to take into account the funding model for trades training and the important role of international education in our current business model. We also welcome a more in-depth consideration of the costs of providing advanced education options to a dispersed rural population.

Summary of key contributions, strengths, opportunities and challenges

We appreciate the opportunity to participate in and inform the funding model review and respectfully submit the following key points for information and consideration.

1. COTR's most important contributions (economic, social, environmental)

- More than 60 unique programs are delivered addressing every sector in our region
- Accessible, affordable entry point to PSE and careers for all learners
- Estimated economic impact of \$355,000,000 (data from 2019)
- Leader of sector and community dialogue on PSE/labour force needs
- Main source of skills required for the transition to a green economy
- Incorporate sustainable practices in our business and trades programs (eg. Bachelor of Business Administration in Sustainable Business Practices and Electric Vehicle Maintenance)
- Incorporate sustainable practices in our operational functions including three solar photovoltaic systems on campus

2. COTR's role in promoting Indigenous reconciliation

- Indigenous student population is approximately 170 (7.2%) which closely mirrors the indigenous population in our broader communities
- Dedicated services, programs, financial supports and supports through our Elders on Campus program for Indigenous students
- Our Memorandum of Understanding with our partners at the Ktunaxa Nation Council guides collaboration on programs, services and hiring
- Courses in Ktunaxa History, Language and Culture

3. Promoting equitable access to education

- COTR is the only bricks and mortar post-secondary option for learners in our region
- Commitment to providing an affordable post-secondary experience is key to supporting our learners
- Adult Basic Education is offered at all campuses to ensure learners are not disadvantaged due to physical location
- Dual credit and dedicated pathways are designed to support Indigenous and other under-represented learners

4. COTR's major challenges (in advancing economic, social, environmental goals)

- Inadequate funding for administration of pathways (e.g. dual credit) and student supports
- Gaps in community and K-12 partnerships, preventing student awareness of pathways

5. COTR's contributions to collaboration within the BC PSE system

- Long standing partnerships with University of Victoria provide the delivery of the Bachelor of Science in Nursing and Teacher Education degrees on campus in Cranbrook
- Dual credit pathways with various School Districts
- Strong results of success from COTR students transferring to Universities from our University Studies program
- Memorandum of Understanding focused on opportunities for collaboration and sharing of best practices with other BC interior psi's (Selkirk College and Okanagan College)

6. Challenges to collaboration

- No dedicated funding for administration of pathways and student supports
- Short-term funding opportunities often encourage colleges to compete not collaborate (although greater collaboration would be hugely beneficial to COTR and similar-sized Colleges in the areas of curriculum development, international students recruitment and shared services)
- The measure of evaluation using student full-time equivalent numbers that can be captured and reported by only of the partner psi's

7. Key trends affecting PSE (demographic, social, technological)

- In our region rapid population growth is happening in several communities, rapid industry transition (mostly tech-driven), yet lower education attainment and a higher proportion of sidelined workers (higher unemployment; higher non-engaged)
- Overall: increasing demand for PSE; zig-zag career paths; greater need for upskilling and reskilling
- Increasing need for learners to participate in education and training through hybrid and other alternate delivery modes

8. How does the system need to evolve in response to those trends

- More short programs for rapid training and retraining; and more flexible delivery
- Keep curriculum up-to-date; expand Co-Op and Work Integrated Learning options
- Work with communities to support career transitions and sidelined workers
- Expanded technology options to ensure quality of student learning experience regardless of mode of participation

9. How does COTR need to evolve in response to those trends

- Develop new programs (e.g. tech), micro-credentials and delivery options

10. What changes to the funding formula does COTR recommend

- Rural College supplement to reflect added costs of program delivery in small, rural and multi-campus settings
- Dedicated funding for supporting pathways, student services
- ITA funding that covers the full costs of delivering Trades programs
- Flexibility to use retained surpluses for development
- Shift from one-time to stable, predictable, sustainable funding for new initiatives
- Fund collaborative initiatives to support curriculum development/exchange and collaborative business function opportunities

11. COTR's greatest strengths

- CoTR responds to the needs of learners and employers throughout our region through breadth of programming, our regional multi-campus structure and our strength in customized contract training and on-line delivery
- Our 'small college offer' provides affordability, smaller classes, individualized instruction and supports
- We are rooted in our communities and are highly well-regarded and well placed to identify education needs
- We collaborate effectively with other post-secondary partners to offer degree programs (with UVic), dual credit pathways (with three School Districts) and Indigenous programs (in collaboration and consultation with various indigenous partners)
- We seek out collaboration and shared service opportunities to strengthen our organizational operations and provide cost efficiencies (eg. Colleague ERP consortium members for over 25 years)
- Strong programs in Nursing and other Health Sciences, Trades, Tourism & Hospitality, and University Studies.

12. What are COTR's biggest challenges

- In the short run, finding a path back to a balanced and sustainable financial reality while positioning the College to address emerging demands for skilled workers (across all sectors we serve); new programs and updated curriculum; and more flexible delivery models. Essentially, we are funded to continue in "solid state," not to embrace the "new."
- In the long run, we see the need to continually be responsive and innovative and to meet

the needs of a changing regional economy/ labour force. Our ability to be responsive is hampered by legislation that precludes long-term planning and investment of prior year financial surpluses to support our internal capacity in the development of new programming and services for students.

- Some collective agreement provisions and program approval processes were developed prior to the rate and level of change that our learners and industry are now demanding.
- The physical capacity and structure of our campuses restricts our ability to expand student numbers in programs where labour market need and student demand are both high. We are also restricted by physical space and currency of expensive program equipment in offering a 21st-century learning experience to students and providing applied learning that is industry relevant and supports a seamless transition of applied learning skills to applied on-the-job skills.

13. What system innovations should the Funding Review advance

- We would welcome the opportunity to partner with BCC in a more strategic way, to achieve province-wide outcomes and common standards. For that to happen the Colleges need be at the table when the government discusses labour market needs with employer groups.
- Education pathways that are successful for the different types of learners need to be considered. Ongoing, Predictable and sustainable funding to properly support those pathways is essential.
- Increased incentivizes (and direct support) for system-wide collaboration – particularly in the areas of curriculum development, international recruitment and shared services would significantly strengthen the post-secondary sector in BC and provide great opportunity to learners throughout the province without disadvantage of physical location.

We applaud the work done to date on this critically important initiative and we look forward to continuing to be involved through future consultation.



Paul Vogt
President & CEO
College of the Rockies