

Terms of Reference for the BC Environmental Laboratory Technical Advisory Committee (BCELTAC)

Background

The British Columbia Environmental Laboratory Technical Advisory Committee (BCELTAC) is a partnership-based advisory committee of government, private environmental laboratories, and other invited environmental industry stakeholders. The committee acts as the primary technical advisory committee to the British Columbia Ministry of Environment & Climate Change Strategy (ENV) on aspects related to environmental laboratory practice in the Province. The committee is responsible for providing guidance and assistance to the Ministry in the development and maintenance of comprehensive environmental field sampling and laboratory methods, and related regulatory issues.

Terms of Reference

1.0 Scope and Purpose

The BCELTAC has been established by the Minister of Environment to provide ongoing review and advice related to:

- technical aspects of environmental laboratory analysis and test methods, quality assurance, and other practices associated with environmental assessment, monitoring, and management within the Province, and
- provision, as requested, of recommendations to the Ministry related to how such practice can be standardized, maintained and improved within the Province.

The BCELTAC, acting in consideration of input obtained from its members and other concerned stakeholders, has the following purposes:

1. advance, encourage, and facilitate continuing technical excellence in all aspects of environmental laboratory practice affecting government and private sector environmental laboratories within British Columbia;
2. as requested by the Ministry, act within an expert capacity to provide advice and guidance in the development and maintenance of a comprehensive compilation of field sampling and laboratory analytical methodologies for the use of the Ministry and the environmental laboratory community of British Columbia;
3. Research, promote and champion the development of new and improved science based laboratory analytical methods;

4. foster, support and facilitate common accepted standards for laboratory practice and performance;
5. promote co-ordination and cooperation between and among: the Ministry, concerned stakeholders, and private laboratories related to technical ramifications associated with changes to environmental monitoring requirements and the delivery of related laboratory testing services in British Columbia;
6. as requested by the Ministry, provide expert opinion and advice concerning environmental testing practices within British Columbia;
7. act as a primary resource to assist the Ministry to facilitate effective and coordinated communication with private and public sector environmental laboratories and concerned stakeholders within British Columbia.

2.0 Guiding Principles

The BCELTAC strives:

1. to ensure that any advice, guidance, or methodologies developed or otherwise provided by the committee meets a high standard of scientific defensibility, and
2. to conduct the activities and business of the committee in an ethical, honest, objective and impartial manner.

The BCELTAC asserts, and the Ministry acknowledges that the committee:

3. has no decision-making authority over the actions, programs, regulatory functions, or professional conduct of its members, and
4. does not warrant or otherwise accept liability or responsibility for the implementation of its advice.

3.0 Membership and Organization

The members of the BCELTAC shall primarily be composed of recognized experts drawn from the field of laboratory science or other scientific discipline or profession jointly considered by the Chair and Secretary of the committee to be relevant to the scope and purpose of the committee.

At a minimum, membership on the committee shall be offered to:

- the Senior Provincial Laboratory Specialist of the Analysis, Reporting and Knowledge Services Section, representing the Knowledge Management Branch, Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy (the committee Secretary);

- representatives of government and private sector environmental laboratories located within the Province (one representative per laboratory),
- a representative of the Environmental Emergencies and Land Remediation Branch, Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy;
- a representative of Environment and Climate Change Canada;
- a representative of the environmental industry in the Province (e.g. BCEIA), and
- other invited representatives as deemed appropriate by the Committee.

To ensure committee continuity, committee members normally serve an unlimited term.

A member may elect to resign membership on the committee for whatever reason at any time. However, resignation from the committee does not take effect until such time as the Secretary of the committee has been advised in writing of the member's resignation.

The committee is expected to conduct its business to the maximum extent possible based on an approach of mutual agreed consensus. In circumstances where consensual agreement cannot be achieved by the committee, the Chair may call for a vote on the part of active committee members.

A vote shall pass based on attaining a simple numerical majority of voting members. A current list of active committee members with voting privileges shall be posted on the Ministry website. In the situation that a vote is irrevocably tied, the Chair alone may cast an additional deciding vote.

Voting privileges reside with the member organization, not with the member representative. Member organizations can designate any alternate of their choosing to attend meetings and to act on their behalf.

4.0 Committee Officers

The committee will elect a Chair and vice-Chair of the committee as principal officers. The term of office of the Chair and vice-Chair is a three years term or shall be decided by vote of the committee membership when applicable. If either the Chair or vice-Chair change their positions in the laboratories that they represent (e.g., change laboratories or industry) they automatically lose their position as Chair or vice-Chair, however, they can be re-elected by the committee.

Members of the committee representing any level of government ("government members") enjoy full committee privileges without restriction, including full voting privileges. However, government members are prohibited from holding office as either the Chair or vice-Chair of the committee.

The vice-Chair shall act for the Chair under circumstances that the Chair instructs, or in the case that the Chair is incapacitated or otherwise unable to perform the duties of office. The vice-Chair may only act as Chair of the committee for a maximum period of 1 year. Furthermore, prior to the expiry of the said 1 year period, the vice-Chair acting as Chair of the committee must ensure an election to seek a new Chair is held.

The Ministry shall provide administrative and secretariat support to the committee. The Senior Provincial Laboratory Specialist, representing the Knowledge Management Branch of the ENV, shall permanently hold the office of Secretary of the committee.

5.0 Confidentiality

BCELTAC members are expected to protect and maintain as confidential any information of a private or privileged nature that may be divulged in consequence of the work of the committee.

6.0 Reporting and Consultation

Provision of committee minutes, letters, reports, consultations, research, advisories, records, files and other communications is the primary responsibility of the Secretary, Chair and vice-Chair of the committee.

The committee is expected to be both reasonably accessible and responsive to the public. To ensure that BCELTAC has opportunity to publicly communicate or report, the Secretary of the committee shall provide access to a Ministry website, or otherwise provide means to allow the committee to publicly communicate its work.

7.0 Meetings

The committee meets on a quarterly basis, or at an alternate frequency as determined by the Chair. Although a preference to locate meetings within the locale of Vancouver, B.C. is recognized, the committee meeting location shall be at the sole discretion of the Chair. The committee may invite individuals to attend and /or contribute to its meetings as deemed necessary and appropriate.

A quorum for the conduct of business at any meeting is 50% attendance of the committee's voting members. Members may attend committee meetings either in person or by electronic means.

8.0 Interaction with other Committees and the Public

At the pleasure of the committee, the committee may respond to the request of another organized body or interested party to provide opinion, advice or recommendation related to an issue which falls within the committee's scope and purpose. The committee may form sub-Committees as needed.

9.0 Budget

The committee operates solely on a voluntary basis without an operating budget. Committee secretariat costs are borne by the Ministry. Members provide their time and expertise on a *pro grata* basis (i.e. *pro bono publico*). The committee will not compensate travel or associated business expenses borne as a consequence of any member's participation on the committee.

Committee members, including government members, may elect to fund or contract work for the committee. However, the committee assumes no responsibility or obligation related to any contract, agreement or promise in respect to paid services of any kind that a member of the committee may enter into for the committee or on its behalf.