

BCAC Training for Agriculture Support Positions within Local Authority/First Nation EOCs

Request for Qualifications & Expressions of Interest

Background and Intent

The BC Agriculture Council (BCAC) is seeking expressions of interest from persons willing to participate in a one-day training session covering the activities associated with being an Agriculture Coordinator (formerly called an Agriculture Liaison) in a Government of Jurisdiction (Local Authority/ First Nation) Emergency Operations Center (EOC).

When farms and ranches are impacted during an emergency, Governments of Jurisdiction benefit from having dedicated personnel in their EOCs who understand agriculture operations and can support the EOC in assisting farmers and ranchers. The Governments of Jurisdiction may fill the agriculture role from within using their own staff or they may need to hire agriculture contractors with the appropriate knowledge, skills and abilities. Ideally this would include contractors with strong knowledge of the local agriculture industry, and a working understanding of emergency operations centers and the Incident Command System.

The intent in providing this BCAC training is to expand the pool of people available to assist Government of Jurisdiction EOCs as Agriculture Coordinators and promote enhanced support for agriculture during emergency events.

Agriculture Activities in an EOC

Every EOC and every emergency event is unique. Similarly, the agriculture industry in each Government of Jurisdiction area is also unique. This results in a range of activities being needed within EOCs to support agriculture which could include:

- Working within the EOC structure utilizing the established lines of communication and working in the best interests of the response.
- Connecting with producers, as well as other agriculture stakeholders (e.g. Rancher Liaisons, allied trades, agriculture associations, etc.), to maintain agriculture related situational awareness for the affected community including the needs for agriculture support.
- Providing the EOC with regular, accurate, up-to-date information on current impacts to agriculture (e.g. number and types of farms/ranches impacted, the nature of the impact, the number and types of animals in Evacuation Alert and Order areas, etc.), potential for escalation of impacts, and the risks and potential consequences to the agriculture sector. Advising on any support that may be needed by agriculture and possible mitigation measures. These will support EOC decision making.
- Making contact with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food representative in the PREOC to provide regular updates and utilize them for advice and assistance.

- Keeping producers and agriculture stakeholders informed by sharing emergency information, in accordance with EOC Action Plans.
- Connecting producers and agriculture stakeholders with external supports or resources that may be provided by the Province of BC, agriculture associations, or other sources.
- Supporting the EOC with emergency response contingency planning for agriculture, including the identification of evacuation routes, reception areas, and transportation methods.
- Working with the EOC Emergency Support Services (ESS) Coordinator and EOC Planning Section to ensure evacuations of people and livestock are aligned and mutually supportive.
- Supporting the protection of livestock through livestock relocation (EMCR Policy 2.01), limited strategic movement, or safe retention of livestock on or near farm/ranch lands or range.
- Facilitating support for livestock watering, feeding and health (animal welfare). This may include assisting the EOC with the issuance of permits enabling temporary access to farms and ranches.
- Managing the EOC Agriculture Branch and positions (if more than 1 person in the Branch), including the development of agriculture objectives, status reports, and resource tracking.
- Informing the EOC about issues related to disaster recovery for the agriculture sector.

Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities Required of an Agriculture Coordinator

The Agriculture Coordinator must work effectively, both within the EOC structure and with the agriculture industry, to be of greatest value. It is usually a high stress environment which can become intensely personal when dealing with the individuals impacted. Past events have shown the need for individuals with many of the following desired attributes:

- Has experience communicating with farmers and ranchers and their associations, preferably from within the affected region. Professional experience working in the agriculture sector is an attribute.
- Has a working understanding of the emergency response structure in BC. Some training in EOCs and the Incident Command System (ICS) is preferred.
- Is aware of what constitutes professional (e.g. veterinarian, agrologist, insurance agent) advice and services and where professional support is needed by the EOC (often via the PREOC). Is willing to seek and heed such advice.
- Has excellent interpersonal skills and is a problem-solving team player. Can work cooperatively and constructively in a fast-paced, deadline-driven environment.
- Must be able to work within the Incident Command System and be respectful of legal authorities and jurisdictions. This includes engaging through the EOC Liaison Officer or EOC Operations Chief, signing in and out of the EOC, and participating, as invited, in meetings and other activities.
- Can communicate respectfully and convey technical or detailed information relevant to agriculture clearly both orally and in writing. Can be the communication link between producers, the EOC and others involved in the response.
- Can handle difficult situations, provide constructive input, and seek experienced advice as needed.
- Has compassion, empathy, and the capacity to explain the rationale of decisions made within the EOC.

- Must be able to handle phone calls, accurately prepare documents in a timely manner (electronically), maintain records and logs, and ensure constant current agriculture information is provided to EOC Planning.
- Has the ability to assess a situation and provide recommendations and potential solutions based on complex or incomplete information. Willing to seek and heed advice from others when beneficial. Able to maintain a good record of input provided by self and of input received from others.
- Understands and is respectful of the confidentiality of incident information including protecting the privacy of personal information shared in the EOC as part of the response support.
- Can work in a professional manner and be respectful of farmers/ranchers, the other EOC staff and other responders.
- Is calm, not easily overwhelmed, and able to multitask.

Additional Considerations for Potential Agriculture Coordinators

There are things to consider before volunteering to serve as an Ag Coordinator. These include:

- If working as a contractor, you may be required to have your own Commercial and General Liability Insurance, Errors and Omissions Insurance and automobile insurance.
 - It is recommended you take the Justice Institute’s online “Intro To EOC” course if you don’t have training or experience working in EOCs.
 - You will need to be available to respond on short notice.
 - You may be required to work long shifts and/or commit for the entire event.
 - Individuals must be at least 19 years of age.
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Application for Training

Expression of Interest Instructions

Interested participants are invited to submit expressions of interest to projects@bcac.ca. There are capacity limits so please submit as early as possible.

BCAC will review expressions of interest and contact the selected participants to coordinate course dates and locations. It is expected that up to 10 regionally-situated training sessions will be held in the October – December, 2024 period.

A per diem of \$200 will be available to the selected participants not being paid to attend by their employers or those eligible for per diems through their respective industry associations.

Requests for travel expense support will be considered on an individual basis and only for those selected participants needing to travel more than 100 km, round trip, to the nearest session.

Requests to attend a session for information only (not as a selected participant) will be considered without an expression of interest and will be subject to session capacity limits.

There is no guarantee that there will be work available for those who successfully complete the training as that is dependant on the needs of individual Governments of Jurisdiction.

Qualifications & Expressions of Interest

To submit an expression of interest, please provide the following in a single PDF file.

- **A Cover Letter** (short), identifying the applicant and contact information
 - Include which region(s) you have lived/worked, and
 - Which region(s) you would consider supporting as an Agriculture Coordinator

- **Your Resume** (maximum 1 page) highlighting relevant experience
 - Please review and address the Knowledge, Skills and Abilities section above
 - Make sure you describe the extent of your connection to the local agriculture industry and your previous experience/training in emergency management

- **A Reference** – please include an expression of support (correspondence including the position and contact information of the referrer) for your application from any of the following:
 - a BCAC member organization
 - a Government of Jurisdiction (Local Authority / First Nation)
 - BC Ministry of Agriculture and Food emergency management or regional staff
 - AgSafe or Ownership Identification Inc. management if on staff or under contract with them.

Questions can be emailed to: projects@bcac.ca.

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The Government of British Columbia and the Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC are pleased to participate in the delivery of the project. We are committed to working with our industry partners to address issues of importance to the agriculture and agri-food industry in British Columbia. Opinions expressed in this presentation are those of the presenter and not necessarily those of the Investment Agriculture Foundation or the Government of British Columbia

