

Cross-Commodity Leadership Support Project

Progress Report for September to December 2023

Background

In early 2023, a coordinated effort to address leadership challenges and improve collaboration among industry organizations representing tree fruits and wine grapes was established by industry, with support from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food and funding provided from the Stabilization Fund. The Cross-Commodity Leadership Support Project (CCLSP) was officially launched at the end of August 2023 with the hiring of a Project Director.

The CCLSP is a 2-year pilot project that will provide the framework for industry to assume responsibility for key projects of the Tree Fruit Industry Stabilization Plan (e.g., labour, extension, new varieties). Ultimately, the CCLSP will help ensure there is a long-term leadership structure to action cross-sector initiatives and support continued collaboration. The Okanagan Kootenay Sterile Insect Release Program is administering the CCLSP, and the Partners Table¹ is providing overall guidance and accountability.

Key Accomplishments

Significant progress was made in the first four months of the CCLSP. Work focused on:

- setting up the administrative and financial systems and staffing for the project,
- launching the Partners Table,
- working with MAF on a draft plan for transition,
- taking over management of BC Fruit Works and the New Varieties projects,
- taking over administration of the domestic labour and extension subcommittees,
- planning an extension practitioners conference, and
- completing numerous communications and relationship-building activities.

Reflections and Lessons Learned

The TFISP has been underway for a few years (and is just the latest in a string of government to industry initiatives). The CCLSP intends to build on its successes but could also be hindered by any negative experiences associated with the process. Therefore, before developing a strategic plan for the CCLSP, it was important to better understand individual perspectives, mandates of the industry organizations, history, and relationships that may influence the focus of the CCLSP and our ability to collaborate. To do this, the Project Director worked hard to have open and honest conversations with as many key players as possible in the first couple of months on the job.

¹ Partners Table member organizations are the BC Fruit Growers' Association, BC Grapegrowers' Association, BC Wine Grape Council, BC Cherry Association, and Okanagan Kootenay Sterile Insect Release Program.

This active learning and open communication were especially important when transferring the management of BC Fruit Works to the CCLSP. The BCGA managed the project in 2023 and faced several challenges, including the untimely departure of the project coordinator and difficulties engaging the subcommittee, matching branch hands, and recruiting producers to participate. Budget limitations hindered a fulsome evaluation of the project at year end. This made it difficult to determine the best course of action for 2024. After reviewing responses to the evaluation surveys (completed by 9 producers and 17 branch hands) and having many discussions with BCGA, CrewDriver staff, and domestic labour subcommittee and TFISP steering committee members, the decision was made to pause the use of CrewDriver for job matching in 2024. This unfortunately will have financial and business development implications for CrewDriver, who has been a great partner in the project and really stepped up this year after the departure of the project coordinator.

Lastly, collaborating with the ministry on the transition process has been a good opportunity to build the reputation of the CCLSP, give confidence that industry is willing and able to provide leadership on issues affecting the sector, and define how the project can provide capacity and support. It was difficult at times to navigate the level of engagement needed from the Partners Table and the TFISP steering committee and to understand who has the power and authority to decide how and when the transition will take place.

Description of Progress

Details of progress made are provided in the table below.

Work category	Description of progress
Administration and project management	<p>Worked with SIR to set up administrative and financial systems and office space for the project.</p> <p>Hired the CCLSP Administration and Communications Manager, which included creating the job description and posting, reviewing 67 applications, interviewing 3 candidates, and onboarding Shelby Austen at the end of November.</p> <p>Launched and administered the Partners Table. Met individually with each member to discuss their vision for the CCLSP, prepared a Terms of Reference and made numerous revisions based on member feedback, and held first meeting in October.</p>
Leadership transition planning	<p>Collaborated with MAF to prepare a draft transition plan document and gathered and incorporated feedback on the document from the Partners Table and the TFISP Steering Committee.</p> <p>Engaged with the TFISP Steering Committee, including attending the August meeting, preparing and delivering updates on transition planning, domestic labour, and extension activities at the October and December meetings, and hosting the December meeting.</p>

Work category	Description of progress
Domestic labour	<p>Transitioned administration of BC Fruit Works to CCLSP. Attended numerous meetings with BCGA and CrewDriver to learn about the history, objectives, challenges, and opportunities of BC Fruit Works, prepared the 2023 final report for IAF, and prepared the 2024 funding application for IAF.</p> <p>Transitioned administration of subcommittee to CCLSP. Met individually with each member to discuss their vision for the subcommittee and for BC Fruit Works, prepared a Terms of Reference and incorporated feedback from members, and held two meetings (November and December).</p>
Extension	<p>Submitted a funding application to IAF for a conference for extension practitioners and began organizing the conference.</p> <p>Transitioned administration of subcommittee to CCLSP. Prepared a Terms of Reference and incorporated feedback from subcommittee members and held two meetings (November and December).</p> <p>Attended meetings of other extension groups to introduce the CCLSP and be “in the know” about extension activities (MAF regional extension committee, BCWGC KTT & RDD committee).</p>
New varieties	Transitioned administration of new varieties project (apples) to the CCLSP.
Local government	<p>Met with the Agricultural Planner and Sustainability Coordinator at the City of Kelowna to introduce the CCLSP and discuss the city’s ag initiatives.</p> <p>Began defining possible initiatives for the CCLSP to work on related to agriculture and local governments.</p>
Communications and relationship-building	<p>Completed numerous communications and relationship-building activities, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentations to the board of directors of the BCGA, BCCA, OKSIR and BCWGC, • Presentation at the District of Lake Country’s water availability workshop, • Interview for Country Life (Tom Walker), • Attendance at Ag Day in Victoria, • Participation in 2023 drought debriefing for the Thompson Okanagan Regional Drought Response Team, and • Attendance at the December Okanagan Water Stewardship Council meeting. <p>Developed a website for the CCLSP (www.crosscommodity.org).</p> <p>Prepared a draft communications plan for the CCLSP.</p>

Report on Performance Metrics

Performance metrics are under development.

Report on Expenditures

A statement of financial activity from September to December 2023 is outlined in the table below.

	Budget	Expenses	Variances
Communications	\$1,000	\$208	\$792
Meetings & Travel	\$2,500	\$2,122	\$378
Employee Expenses	\$45,175	\$46,751	(\$1,651)
Supplies, Software, & Subscriptions	\$6,500	\$3,743	\$2,757
Rent	\$0	\$0	\$0
Contract Admin (SIR 8.5%)	\$4,690	\$4,490	\$200
TOTAL	\$59,865	\$57,314	\$2,550

Looking Ahead to Next Quarter

CCLSP work in the next quarter (Jan to Apr 2024) will focus on:

- prepare draft business and communications plans for CCLSP and bring to Partners Table for review and approval,
- work with IAF to extend contract and increase funding allocation for CCLSP,
- prepare first progress report for IAF (due Jan 31, 2024),
- assist with the transition of leadership to industry as per the Transition Plan,
- hire and onboard a Project Lead for the BC Fruit Works project and launch 2024 activities,
- organize and hold the extension practitioners conference (Feb 27-29), and
- develop scope of work for an initiative focused on local government agricultural policy and processes.