

Mapping New Pathways for Fairness and Equity Project

By Bruce Millar

The Association of Ontario Land Surveyors has undertaken an innovative, complex and much needed project entitled “*Mapping New Pathways for Fairness and Equity*.” The project aims to develop better processes, tools and procedures to assist and support Internationally Trained Professionals (ITPs) and other candidates to become Ontario Land Surveyors. Funding for the project is being provided by the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration and Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

The aims of the project are to develop new and more efficient and effective processes for the assessment of credentials, improve support for candidates and automate the candidate monitoring processes. These elements should contribute to ensuring fair and equitable access to the profession for all applicants, regardless of their country of origin, their professional training and education, or the certification process that they have followed prior to reaching Ontario.

ITPs are and will likely continue to be the fastest growing source of new Ontario Land Surveyors. In coming years this project will positively impact on the growing shortage of Land Surveyors. AOLS statistics show that membership has been declining at a rate of over 1.5% per year for the past 15 years. Furthermore, the average age of our members is over 53. The province could face a critical shortage of professional land surveyors in the near future. Retirements, licensing requirements that are often misunderstood by ITPs, and a decline in program availability in professional programs have contributed to this pending shortage. Other factors include competition from other professions, lack of a solid system of recruitment and systemic impediments to accessing, timely, effective and available programs.

The “*Mapping New Pathways*” project will develop and implement a number of practical elements designed to mitigate some of the impediments to gaining membership in the AOLS, while maintaining the diligence and rigour required to protect the integrity of the profession. Unfortunately some of these obstacles may remain after the project due to the limits of resources and time. In this case we will make recommendations for further work.

Included in the project’s scope are the following:

A comprehensive “Triage” Process:

The AOLS has identified a need for support to ITPs that falls outside of its direct regulatory responsibilities. Many ITPs are in survival jobs that limit their ability to attend required classes, organize and locate documents, research processes and pathways and deal with the pressures of a new country, professional environment and culture. To address this issue, the AOLS is partnering with the Accreditation Assistance Access Centre(s) (AAAC). This innovative agency provides one on one interviews with ITPs. They research and develop plans or road maps that address up to 14 areas of concern. These written plans help ITPs deal with certification issues, financial problems, housing referrals (along with other settlement issues), and resumé and portfolio support. The AOLS and AAAC are committed to ensuring that ITPs interested in becoming OLSs have current, accurate and timely information and support. The AAAC’s research will go much deeper and more diligently into these issues than can be provided by a superficial Internet search. Future applicants who apply directly to the AOLS will be referred to AAAC for additional support services.

Sector Specific Language Training:

The AOLS realizes that even though newcomers to Ontario have passed language proficiency requirements, these requirements are generally neither sector specific, nor at the “professional” level. Skills for Change (SfC) and the



The first AOLS-sponsored Prior Learning Assistance and Recognition (PLAR) Practitioners Training Program Graduates are standing behind (seated from left to right) Mark Gallupe, Loyalist College, Rose Marie Reid, Loyalist College and Bruce Millar, AOLS Project Manager. Lena Kassabian, AOLS Registrar Services Coordinator is standing immediately to the left of Registrar Bill Buck (standing far right). The graduates will be available to assist Internationally Trained Professionals (ITP's) who require assistance during the process towards AOLS certification.

AOLS have partnered to develop and provide the delivery of a land surveyor-specific language and soft skills program. In addition SfC and the AOLS will explore alternate learning modalities for the delivery of these program elements. While it is recognized that language training has traditionally been delivered at a specific time and place, alternatives may be required to address the needs of ITPs who are limited by time and location issues. As with all services, adult friendly principles will be an integral part of these offerings.

Specialized Web Based Software:

Using specially designed software, the AOLS will be able to meet its requirements for documentation and intelligence gathering, while tracking and supplying ITPs with current, relevant information about their own progress. This software, presently under development and modification, will track participants from intake to employment and beyond and will automate the preparation of the numerous reports now required by the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, 2006 (FARPA). It will include information from learning service providers, project partners, government and employers. This is a significant and costly, but necessary component to the project's success. The AOLS has engaged Reform Data Systems for this work.

Prior Learning Assessment (PLAR), Portfolio Usage and Adult Learner Friendly Institution (ALFI) Practices and Principles:

Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition is the process of identifying, assessing and recognizing skills, knowledge, or competencies that have been acquired through work experience, foreign or non-traditional training, independent study, volunteer activities, and hobbies. PLAR may be applied toward academic credit, requirement of a training program, or for occupational certification.

The AOLS is exploring the application of PLAR and ALFI principles. Expert resources have been secured and all of the AAAC facilitators as well as one of the AOLS staff have received PLAR Practitioner training.

The AOLS is developing affiliations and partnerships with innovative organizations and agencies to evaluate the desirability and feasibility of using PLAR and related practices.

Adding a Competency Based Pathway to Certification as an Alternative to the Present Course Based System:

The AOLS is interested in adding a significant competency based pathway for ITPs (and others) in their pursuit of AOLS membership. To this end the AOLS has secured the services of experts to identify all of the competencies required to become an OLS. This process has been called a DACUUM (developing a curriculum). The DACUUM process is an innovative approach to occupational analysis. It is an effective method to determine quickly the competencies that must be held and mastered by persons employed in a given job or occupational area. It identifies

approximately 8 to 20 duty areas and 50 to 200 competencies that outline what a successful worker in a particular job or cluster of related jobs must be able to do. The ultimate goal of the AOLS is, after significant and rigorous consultation, to identify our required competencies, define a mastery level for each, and identify a content expert qualified to certify mastery and lastly to build competency learning modules for as many competencies as are appropriate and possible. This would allow candidates to focus their time and resources specifically on those competencies that they do not have. This is much more efficient and cost effective than the current practice of course based systems, wherein a candidate may have to take training and courses that include content that they have already mastered.

This area of the project is likely to extend beyond the time frame of March 2010. It will involve finding "champion" post-secondary institutions, discussions with the Academic and Experience Requirements Committee (AERC) of the AOLS and ultimately AOLS Council. Partnerships are being explored with several universities and colleges, but are in the very initial stages of discussion.

The *Mapping New Pathways for Fairness and Equity* project addresses several legislative requirements. The provisions of the *Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, 2006*, are designed to help skilled newcomers work in their field sooner. The legislation requires the 34 self-regulating professions in Ontario to adopt registration practices that are fair, transparent and expeditious. *The Mapping New Pathways for Fairness and Equity Project*, in addition to the elements listed above, will add other specific features, in keeping with the legislation and the Office of the Fairness Commissioner. These include the addition of at least one more certification assessor who will be available to provide an independent re-evaluation in the event of an appeal and serve as a back up in the event of the incapacity or absence of the principle assessor, and adding to the knowledge base available to the AOLS, with respect to current requirements and practice.

Conclusion and Summary:

The AOLS is committed to using the resources available through this project to achieve the innovation and modernization of our registration practices and to act as champions and facilitators for securing the next generation of OLSs. The AOLS is also committed to developing a network of partners and resources to identify and apply best practices and to improve the success of those candidates seeking membership in our Association.

The project is led by the Executive Director and the Registrar of the AOLS, and a Project Manager, Bruce Millar, has been engaged for the term of the project (April 1st, 2008 to March 31st, 2010).

