



Project Elevation

Year 1 - Discovery Phase

REPORT

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Introduction

Project Elevation by Outdoor Council of Canada (OCC) is an initiative designed to boost the professionalism, skills, and standards of the outdoor industry. Thanks to funding from the Government of Alberta, the project's goal is to enhance workforce resiliency across the outdoor sector and establish an industry-wide competency profile for Outdoor Guide, leveraging the Tourism Competency Framework developed by Tourism HR Canada (THRC).

The purpose of year 1 was for THRC to gain a better understanding of the outdoor industry and potential barriers to aligning with the framework as well as to capture workforce challenges that are present in the industry, limiting its growth and contributions to labour shortages. This first year was also an opportunity to build awareness of the project and engage members of the outdoor industry.

Environmental Scan – Outdoor Training and Certification

As a first step to understanding the current structure of the outdoor industry in Canada, THRC conducted an online search of existing training and certification organizations across Canada. The intention was not to capture every course, but to identify major bodies/organizations to better understand common workforce training and certification pathways in the industry.

In total, 68 organizations were identified – ranging from certification bodies to college/ University programs to private vocational training institutes. While most training curriculum included a form of certification from major bodies, each was unique in the length and coverage of content.

Note, Wilderness First Aid and other 'supporting' certifications (such as Swift Water Rescue or Avalanche Skills Training) were not fully explored.

Major NATIONAL certifying bodies identified, include:

1. Outdoor Council of Canada (OCC)
2. Association of Canadian Mountain Guides (ACMG)
3. Interpretive Guides Association (IGA)
4. Paddle Canada
5. Canadian Association of Nordic Ski Instructors (CANSI)
6. Professional Mountain Bike Instructors Association (PMBIA)
7. Surf Canada

There were a number of provincial-level certifying bodies, alluding to the potential for overlap or confusion for a job seeker – especially those who intend to work in other provinces. In Alberta, this does not appear to be a concern where the National bodies – especially those surrounding mountain activities - maintain authority, but in other provinces, there could be confusion. An

additional observation appears to be the duplicative bodies surrounding paddling activities – potentially conflicting with Paddle Canada.

Further research would be needed to confirm, but the following are examples of provincial-level paddling bodies:

- The Seak Kayak Guides Alliance of BC
- New Brunswick’s Provincial Paddling Association
- Canoe Kayak Nova Scotia
- Fédération québécoise du canot et du kayak
- Eau Vive Québec
- Canoe Kayak Saskatchewan

Also not captured in the Environmental Scan was the training being conducted at a business-level. Many outdoor businesses conduct their own staff training – often at the beginning of a season.

In conclusion, training requirements and entry-points to working in the outdoor industry can be unclear for a job seeker. While there are strong, established ‘activity-specific’ certification bodies across the country, there is not one body who oversees all activities/ all outdoor guides. The Outdoor Council of Canada has the broadest of mandates and is likely the best positioned to advocate for the industry as a whole.

Advisory Committee

An Advisory Committee (AC) was selected in the early stages of the project. Special attention to diversity and representation was used when selecting the members (see Table 1). The Outdoor Council of Canada, with input from THRC, invited 12 committee members to:

1. Advise during key decision points of the project;
2. Connect with and support the recruitment of Subject Matter Experts (SMEs);
3. Review and provide input on materials produced; and,
4. Ratify the final validated competencies and methodological process used.

Table 1. Advisory Committee Members

Names	Organization
Josephine Baran	Outward bound
Lisa Beaudry	Government of Alberta: Jobs, Economy and Trade
Heather Black	Indigenous Tourism Alberta
Mackenzie Brown	Warrior Women
Sarah Brown	Eco-Tourism and Outdoor Leadership
Paul Chiddle	Outdoor Centre (University of Calgary)

Names	Organization
Kevin Dumba	Association of Canadian Mountain Guides
Tracey Gage	Interpretive Guides Association
Karla Handy	Paddle Alberta Society
Brenda Holder	Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada
Juanita Marois	Metis Crossing
Albi Sole	Outdoor Recreation Coalition of Alberta

An online kickoff meeting for the advisory committee was conducted on 4 November 2024. The agenda included:

1. Welcome and introductions
2. OCC introduction of the project and committee's role
3. THRC introduction of the National Occupational Standards (NOS) and Tourism Competency Framework
4. THRC overview of project work plan

Following the conclusion of the meeting, THRC emailed the NOS to the committee members – along with a short survey. This exercise was to give committee members an opportunity to review and become familiar with the NOS, but most importantly, to share their thoughts and flag potential issues THRC and OCC should be aware of, moving forward with the project and identifying areas where we needed to obtain additional information from subject matter experts throughout the consultation phase.

Findings

Below is a summary of the key findings from this exercise:

- The occupation title “Adventure Guide”, is problematic and not inclusive enough as several guides do not identify with the “*adventure*” component. While it is too early to have a definitive title, THRC/OCC will proceed for now using the working title *Outdoor Guide* and collect participants’ preferences during consultations.
- For the definition, some modifications were recommended to make it more inclusive and remove the *adventure* focus. THRC will keep refining the definition throughout the early phases of the project and the Advisory Committee will have another opportunity to review and approve the recommendations of both the title and definition.
- An issue was raised that there should be more than one title and field of practice given there are several specialty areas in the outdoor industry. While this is true and important, the current project seeks to identify the competencies that would be required of any outdoor guide, a baseline or “common core” that would serve as entry-to-practice. Then the guides can specialize in one or more areas and acquire the technical/specialized skills for a

given activity. The "common core" are the cross disciplinary and general skills that are transferable in different specialized activities, whereas specific skills are technical skills assigned to a given activity.

- THRC is hoping to capture the "common core" during the career pathing exercise and be able to reference to some of the skills and training already available by some of the guiding specialties (e.g., hiking, paddling, interpretive).
- For the NOS, overall respondents felt they were comprehensive with good breadth and coverage for the general or soft skills. This said, there is currently room for improvements:
 - Some of the terminology and examples are too 'tourism' generic and do not align with the outdoor industry – some adjustments and additions would be needed.
 - Missing competencies related to Truth and Reconciliation, decolonization, understanding and acknowledging land and local communities, engagement with Indigenous communities, diversity, inclusion and belonging.
 - Missing technical skills – again, THRC will include the "common core" outdoor guiding skills that cut across specialties (e.g., hazard identification and risk management/mitigation, risk communication, emergency response preparedness, weather assessment, terrain assessment, situation awareness) without getting into the specific skills of each specialty. It may happen later, but this project is a starting point for building a standardized competency-based approach to the outdoor industry with the identification of a "common core", but development of the specialty skills is out of scope for the current project.
- The AC members suggested curriculum to consider for mapping for the next project activity: ACMG Guide (mountain, skiing, hiking), OCC Field Leader, Interpretive Guides Association (IGA), Paddle Canada. Note, OCC had already made plans to look at the first three that were identified as well as ETOL, therefore Paddle Canada curriculum was not considered.

Framework and Curriculum Mapping

Following the AC kickoff meeting, in the winter of 2024/2025, THRC conducted a mapping activity of its Outdoor Guide National Occupational Standards (NOS) against four outdoor program curricula to identify any gaps or areas that should be explored further and where development of additional competencies might be required. The curriculum mapping exercise is one source of information to help identify needed competencies.

In consultation with the Outdoor Council of Canada, with input from the project's Advisory Committee members, four programs were identified as comprehensive and were selected for comparison purposes:

1. Ecotourism and Outdoor Leadership Program (ETOL) from Mount Royal University in Alberta.
2. Interpretive Guiding courses offered by the Interpretive Guides Association (IGA).
3. Training and Assessment Program from the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides (ACMG).
4. Field Leader program offered by the Outdoor Council of Canada (OCC).

The course outlines and learning objectives provided by each organization were reviewed and mapped against the Tourism Competency Framework recently developed by Tourism HR Canada, with special attention paid to the competencies included in the Outdoor Guide NOS (the NOS for the Heritage Interpreter and for the Small Business Owner Operators were also considered).

The target of the exercise was a fully competent, “generalist” outdoor guide that demonstrates all the basic skills and knowledge expected from someone leading groups in outdoor settings. It did not include technical skills needed for specific activities (e.g., white water rafting, skiing, paddling), nor did it include supervisory or managerial roles (i.e., overseeing other guides), as these were considered out-of-scope.

Findings

Overall, the four programs and the Outdoor Guide NOS have strong alignment. There is good foundational coverage for these major competency categories and competency areas:

- Excellence in Service Delivery
 - Deliver Excellent Service
- Professionalism
 - Exhibit Professional Conduct
 - Collaborate with Others
 - Demonstrate Personal Skills
- Communication
 - Communicate Effectively
- Health and Safety
 - Maintain Safe Working Environment
 - Follow safe work practices
 - Operate equipment safely
- Outdoor Guiding
 - Prepare for Trips
 - Conduct Trips
 - Use Skills in Emergencies
 - Conclude Trips

As a result of the curriculum review exercise, a few gaps were identified, as well as some potential areas that could be developed further or expanded on. These could lead to the update/adjustment of current competencies or the development of new competencies.

- **Leadership** – With a focus on group dynamics instead of on colleagues in a work environment. Some aspects of group management are mentioned in the Guide trips competency but could be further developed given its importance for this occupation.
- **Health and Safety** – Emergency response procedures and protocols tailored to outdoor scenarios and remote areas. Some of it is mentioned under existing competencies under Health and Safety and Outdoor Guiding but could be adjusted to reflect more of the outdoor context.
- **Winter Safety** – It could be a separate competency in the Outdoor Guiding category or could be integrated into some existing competencies under the Prepare for Trips competency area as well as under the Use Skills in Emergencies competency area.
- **Risk Management** – Risk management strategies, including risk and hazard identification and mitigation protocols in an outdoor context. Some risk management is somewhat covered as performance indicators under existing competencies but could be expanded on or have more of an outdoor focus.
- **Situational Awareness.**
- **Planning trips** – There are areas to explore further when it comes to preparing for trips in terms of planning the trip or outdoor activity (e.g. logistics management, route planning).
- **Indigenous culture** – The Indigenous knowledge and culture are missing in the competencies and could be added under the Engage with community and Promote awareness of local culture and history competencies (under the Sustainability competency category). Indigenous knowledge and the involvement of elders in the decision-making and trip-planning process could be integrated into the competencies. Some aspects of Indigenous culture could also be included as part of Cultural and Natural Interpretation \ Conduct Organizational Interpretive Planning as knowledge of Indigenous practices and respect for local traditions.

While there is a strong alignment with competencies in service delivery, professionalism, communication, and basic outdoor guiding skills, a few areas would benefit from being expanded to reflect the environment or context in which the Outdoor Guides work and some of the specific challenges or unique situations they may regularly face when leading groups in outdoor activities. By addressing the gaps identified it will allow the NOS to reflect accurately the competencies needed by Outdoor Guides on a day-to-day basis and better prepare them to work in this field.

Career Pathways Survey

As a next step, a survey was created by THRC and conducted with the goal of capturing the range of experiences and training that goes into the professional career path of an Outdoor Guide. Understanding these relationships will help support current and future guides with training requirements, credential recognition and professional development (e.g., advancement opportunities), as well as support employers with recruitment and retention of skilled workers.

In early 2025, Tourism HR Canada conducted a survey with outdoor guiding professionals – past, current, and, aspiring – about their career paths in the industry. This overview presents the findings from the survey. A total of 175 participants responded to the survey, with 165 valid responses retained for analysis after data screening.

Findings

Respondent Profile: Most respondents are based in Western and Central Canada, with 85.7% residing in Alberta (29.7%), Ontario (29.7%), and British Columbia (26.3%). Participation from the Atlantic provinces is lower, and no respondents are from the territories. The most guided non-motorized outdoor activities include hiking, overnight expeditions, and flat-water activities, with strong representation from both current and past guides.

Training: Most respondents (71.5%) hold industry-recognized certifications, with most (69.1%) having two to five. Nearly all (93.3%) are nationally recognized, and 48.7% hold certifications with international recognition.

Attraction: Most respondents developed a passion for the outdoors early, often through family outings (75.2%). The main draws to guiding are working outdoors (85.5%), a love for specific activities (84.9%), adventure (75.8%), and working with people (69.1%). The majority (67.9%) are currently guiding or will be within the year, while 10.3% are in training, and 21.8% are former guides.

Attraction – Students: In this report, respondents currently enrolled in a training program or working toward certification for outdoor guiding or tourism (17 respondents) are referred to as “students”. Among them, nearly half (47.1%) are already working as outdoor guides, primarily seasonally (62.5%) or part-time (25%). Almost all (94.1%) plan to continue guiding after their studies, with most (68.8%) intending to guide seasonally while working in another industry. Many aspire to teach outdoor skills (43.8%) or run an outdoor business (37.5%). Top destinations for guiding include the Northwest Territories (62.5%), Newfoundland and Labrador (56.3%), and British Columbia (50%), while 56.3% are also interested in international work. Recertification requirements have little impact on most students' career plans.

Attraction – Current Workers: In this report, respondents who are actively working as outdoor guides or will be within the year (112 respondents) are referred to as “current workers”. Among them, nearly half (47.3%) have over 15 years of experience, while 33.0% have been guiding for 6 to 14 years. A smaller group has 3 to 5 years of experience (13.4%), and fewer than 7% are newer to the field with less than three years of experience.

Early-career guides: Current workers with fewer than three years of experience (7 respondents) are categorized as “early-career guides”. Among them, 42.9% work part-time year-round, while another 42.9% guide full-time for part of the year. Half take on other jobs during the off-season, while 25% are unemployed and 25% engage in other activities. Most (71.4%) plan to guide seasonally while working in a different industry or switching between guiding activities year-round. Many (71.4%) are interested in working internationally, with British Columbia and the Yukon as the top domestic preferences. Recertification requirements have neutral impact on their career plans.

Experienced Guides: Current workers with three to five years of experience (15 respondents) are categorized as “experienced guides”. Among them, 60% focus on teaching outdoor skills, while 46.7% guide part-time year-round or as part of another profession.

Running an outdoor business is also common (40%). Half take on other jobs during the off-season, while 25% are unemployed and 25% are pursuing higher education. Long-term goals include teaching outdoor skills (73.3%), guiding year-round (60%), or starting an outdoor business (46.7%). Many (53.3%) are interested in working in Newfoundland and Labrador or the Northwest Territories, while 46.7% want to work internationally. Recertification requirements have not restricted their mobility.

Established and Veteran Guides: Current workers with more than five years of experience (90 respondents) are classified as “established and veteran guides”. Among them, 23.3% run their own outdoor business, and 17.8% teach outdoor guiding. During the off season, 61% work in other industries, while 7.7% are unemployed and 7.7% are pursuing an MBA. Long-term goals include teaching outdoor skills (42.2%). Popular work locations include the Yukon (34.4%), Newfoundland and Labrador (31.1%), and the Northwest Territories (26.7%). A significant number of them expressed concerns about physical health, age, industry demands, work-life balance, and low pay affecting how long they can continue guiding. Factors like family obligations, burnout, and the lack of year-round work were also highlighted. To support retention, established guides advocate for increased pay, benefits, job stability, improved access to certification, and better work-life balance. Additionally, they call for national competency frameworks, better career pathways, professional development opportunities, and greater industry recognition.

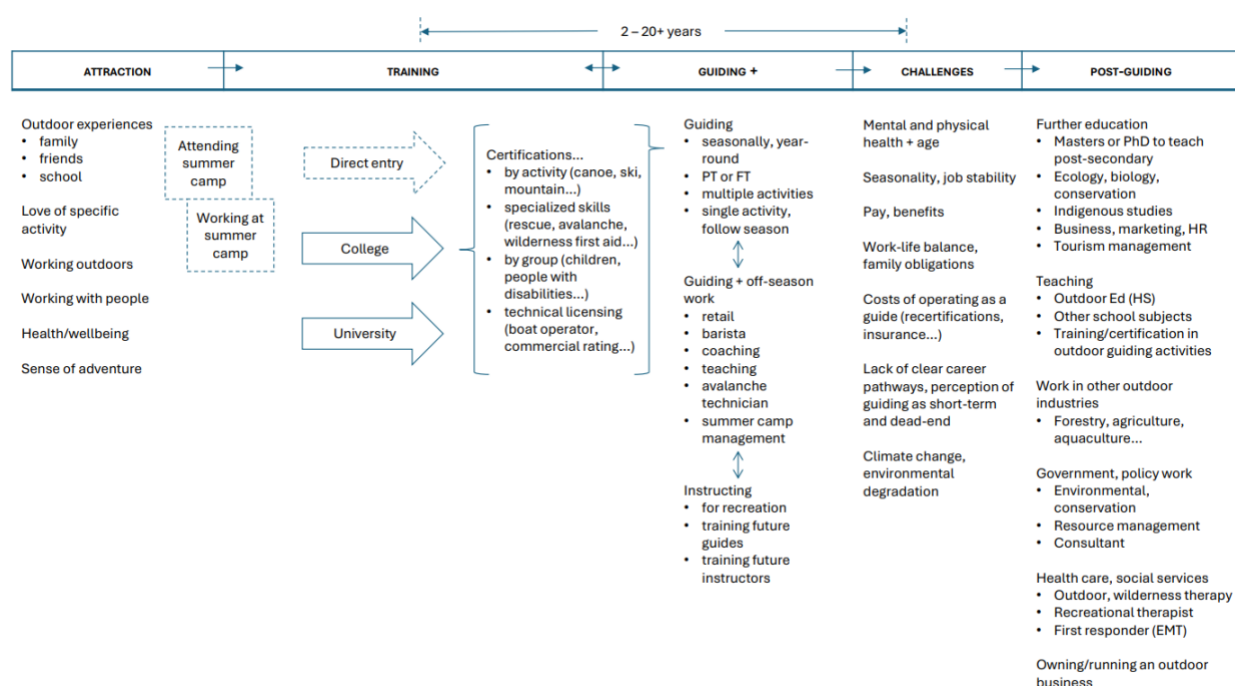
Attraction – Exiters: Respondents who no longer work as outdoor guides (36 respondents) are referred to as “exiters”. Among them, most (41.7%) left five to ten years ago and 33.3% worked as guides for five to ten years before leaving. Many exiters transitioned to teaching outdoor skills (50%) or non-outdoor subjects (38.9%). Reasons for leaving include low pay, job instability, and the seasonal nature of the work. Others cited the need for more financial security, better work-life balance, physical limitations, or burnout. Exiters suggest improving pay, benefits, job stability, and offering year-round opportunities to retain talent. They advocate for more accessible training, affordable certifications, and greater societal recognition of guiding as a legitimate career. Support for systemic barriers, such as high certification costs and inadequate insurance, is also essential. Government subsidies for insurance and grants for skill improvement could provide guides with more stability, helping them balance work and personal life while ensuring long-term success in the field.

Further Training: Many respondents are pursuing certifications for general wilderness skills and specialized technical skills (e.g. swift water rescue, avalanche training, rock climbing, gps and navigation skills). There is also interest in certifications for specific groups, like children or individuals with disabilities. Many guides aspire to further education, with 28.7% aiming for a Master's or PhD to teach at the university level and 23.3% considering studies in ecology, biology, or conservation.

Future shortages: Over half of respondents (58.1%) anticipate a shortage of qualified outdoor guides in the next five to ten years.

Career Map

A visual representation of the survey results was created in an attempt to depict how an outdoor guide enters and moves through the occupation. This analysis identified five distinct phases, although it is important to note that there is no singular, linear path through these phases, and no set schedule by which people move through them. Some respondents had spent a relatively short period of time working as a guide in the field, while others had spent more than two decades. Of those who were no longer actively guiding, a small number had moved onto entirely unrelated career tracks, but most had transitioned their skills and passion into a new direction that extended or broadened their experience rather than making a clean break.



Through this lens, it may make sense to reframe outdoor guiding as one stage in an outdoor career, rather than seeing the guiding phase as a distinct career in and of itself. This approach may help redirect narratives of outdoor work, which may help address some of the challenges that the sector is facing around attraction and retention. Understanding these five phases, and how they interact, will be key to this exercise of re-narrativization.

Attraction

There are a number of paths into the outdoor industry, many of which start in childhood. Trips with friends and family and outdoor experiences organized by schools are two of the most common sparks that can ignite a lifelong sense of adventure. Summer camp is another early

exposure to outdoor activities, either as a camper or as a counsellor. A focus on health and wellbeing, as well as a passion for working with others, can steer people towards an outdoors career.

Training

Training in outdoor leadership can begin very early, particularly for those who attend or work at a summer camp, which can act as a bridge into to the industry. Training in specific activities – and ultimately certification – is a prerequisite for most outdoor guides in Canada, and can be accessed via different routes. Targeted training courses can be accessed directly via dedicated training organizations, and may be dependent on having already accrued a lot of experience in that activity. There are also a number of college and university programs across Canada, many of which offer technical training and certification alongside leadership, business, and other more generalized skills.

Guiding +

Guiding year-round is possible, with the right combination of technical certifications to enable work in different seasons. Alternatively, it is also possible to specialize in one activity, and work internationally to follow the seasons. More common is a combination of guiding and other work in off seasons. This can include outdoor-oriented work, including instructing and working in search and rescue, as well as working in retail or teaching in schools. Many guides will continue to pursue further certifications throughout their guiding life, expanding the range activities in which they are proficient, or adding extra qualifications such as technical licensing to operate a boat commercially, or specialized skills in working with specific populations. Guides may return to further education in one form or another throughout their active guiding phase.

Challenges

While the outdoor lifestyle appeals to many people, it does come with many challenges. The inherent job instability of seasonal activities can create conflict with family obligations or with a desire for a more financially stable footing, and the costs of recertification can disincentivize people from staying in the field. As outdoor guides age, they may also find it more difficult to continue working in extreme conditions. Unawareness of the career possibilities, and a longstanding narrative of guiding as a part-time gig for the young and adventurous, can also persuade people to leave the occupation.

Post-guiding

The decision to stop guiding may be an abrupt change in career, but more often follows a related trajectory of some sort. Teaching – in school, or in colleges and universities following graduate studies – is not uncommon, nor is opening and running an outdoor business. Work in other

outdoor industries, in government and policy, or in health care and social services are also not uncommon and allow people to continue to stay engaged with the outdoors even though they have stopped guiding professionally.

Working Sessions

On April 30 and May 1, 2025, THRC travelled to Alberta to facilitate two working sessions with Subject Matter Experts, guides and outdoor professionals, that is Outdoor Guides to share information about Project Elevation and the National Occupational Standards (NOS), as well as, gain additional input with respect to:

1. title to be used when referring to the occupation/profession,
2. the job definition,
3. career path and entry-level training requirements, and
4. additional competencies to be included in the NOS.

In total, there were 21 participants who shared their thoughts and feedback on the occupation (see Table 2).

Table 2. Working Sessions' Participants

Participant	Company	Role
30 April 2025		
Cassie Ayoungman	Soul of Miistaki	Co-founder
Brandon Boltz	Outward Bound	Guide
Keri Bowzaylo	Independent	Guide / Business Owner
Kim Cosman	Rocky Mountain Adaptive	Program Manager
Heather Davis	Uplift Adventures	Owner
Laura Dowling	Canadian Rockies Experience	Owner
Leith Monaghan	Path Less Taken Education	Guide
Marc Niehaus	Bow Valley Canyoning	Guide/Business Owner
Gordon Stermann	White Mountain Adventures	Owner / Guide
Daniel Vanderpyl	Crowsnest Pass Camp	Technical Director / Trainer
1 May 2025		
Jereme Arsenault	Snowy Owl Dog Tours	President
Lauren Chown	Outdoor Centre	Program Coordinator
Jeff Douglas	Mountain Goat	Guide / Instructor
Etienne Labelle	Rocky Mountain Cycle Tours	Owner / Operator
Robert McClaine	Moose Mountain Adventures	Guide
Jame McCutcheon	Timberline Academy	Director

Participant	Company	Role
Sophie Norton	Marmot Basin	Ski Instructor/Guide, Assistant Director
Andy	Marmot Basin	Rafting Guide, Ski Instructor
Ronna Schneberger	Forest Fix	Guide / Business Owner
Santana Shukin	Independent	Guide
Laura Underschultz	ACMG	Guide

Title and Definition

One of the first task was to identify an occupational title that was **inclusive** - that is applicable to the majority of guides working in the outdoor industry regardless of their specific specialties or activities in which they guide - and **representative** of what they did such that clients or stakeholders would know immediately what they did, without having to provide additional explanation or definition. The target guide was a fully competent, “generalist” outdoor guide that demonstrates all the basic skills and knowledge expected from someone leading groups in outdoor settings. It did not include technical skills needed for specific activities (e.g., white water rafting, skiing, paddling), nor did it include supervisory or managerial roles (i.e., overseeing other guides, owning their own business), as these were considered out-of-scope.

While a variety of titles were initially suggested (see Table 3), both groups seemed to prefer **Outdoor Guide, with a strong emphasis of professionalism to be included***. Discussion took place around the inclusion of *professional* in the title but, after reflection, it was agreed that including it would serve to legitimize and elevate this occupation, to have it recognized as a profession with its members having participated in various training, educational opportunities and certifications.

Table 3. Examples of Occupational Titles

● Outdoor activity leader	● Outdoor instructor
● Outdoor adventure guide	● Outdoor leader
● Outdoor certified guide	● Outdoor professional
● Outdoor experience professional	● Outdoor professional guide
● Outdoor experience providers	● Outdoor recreation facilitator
● Outdoor experiential guide	● Outdoor recreation manager
● Outdoor experiential program leader	● Outdoor recreation professional
● Outdoor facilitator	● Outdoor recreation specialist
● Outdoor guide	● Outdoor specialist
● Outdoor guide specialist	● Professional outdoor guide/leader

In terms of the definition for the occupation, the result of two days of discussion culminated in the following definition:

Outdoor guides facilitate enhanced and meaningful outdoor experiences for their guests for the purpose of education, recreation, adventure and tourism.

They ensure that activities are safety-focused while managing risk and promoting environmental stewardship.

Recommended Training Requirements

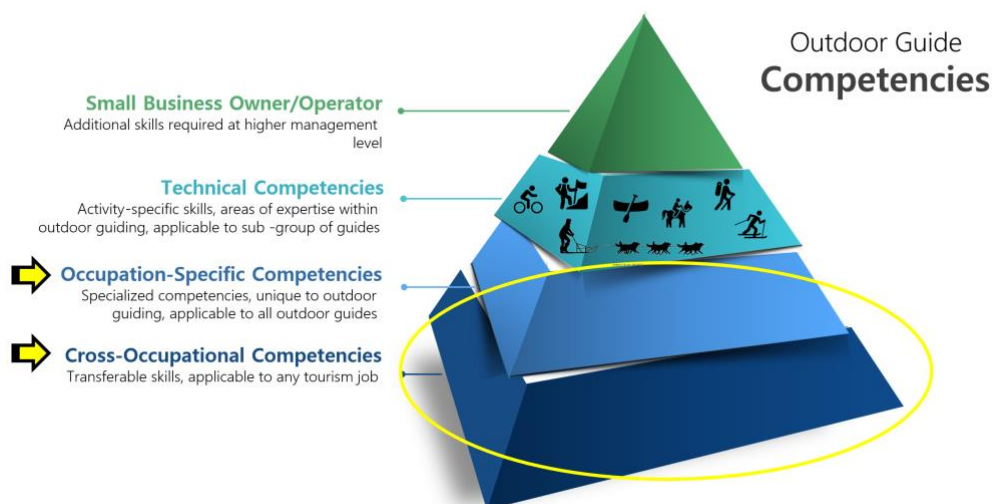
With respect to recommended training an Outdoor Guide should have when entering the profession, a wide variety of suggestions were made but the recurring ones across both days were:

- Wilderness first aid (40 hours)
- Group management / dynamics
- Interpersonal skills
- Participant focus (e.g., “reading the group”)
- Leave no-trace (e.g., interacting with wildlife, stay on path, what you pack in you pack out)
- Driving license (size of vehicle, trailer driving)
- Risk management (e.g., weather hazards, situational awareness)

While this exercise generated interesting and fruitful discussions that will eventually feed into a list of recommended training, it is too early in the process to establish a definitive list; once the NOS are established, we will be in a better position to align to existing training and skills requirements expected for an Outdoor Guide.

Competencies and National Occupational Standards

Participants reviewed the NOS to identify potential gaps for which competencies should be developed and noted adjustments required to current competencies. The focus of the NOS is to identify both cross-occupational and occupation-specific competencies required from a fully competent generalist outdoor guide.



A few gaps were identified and recommendations were made as to which competencies should be further developed and/or added to the NOS:

- Review all the outdoor guiding competencies to build in the notion of **meaningful experience** for participants to link back to definition of outdoor guide;
- Need a competency around **Manage Client Care** and/or **Group Management**;
- Need competencies for **Use equipment** and **Store equipment**;
- Need **Risk Management** competency area specific to Outdoor Guide (assessment/analysis and prevention/mitigation);
- Need something around **scope of practice**;
- Need to further develop or add new competency around **environmental stewardship**;
- Include **Indigenous perspective** (e.g., cultural appropriation, story telling, involvement in development);
- Expand on **Diversity and Inclusion** competencies (e.g., remove barriers, inclusive programming options, working with youth);
- Should have something around maintaining a **logbook**;
- Should have something about **Maintain relationships** with hotels and restaurants (e.g., staff at Parks Canada, parking staff);
- Should have something about **Report suspicious activities** (e.g., fire in wrong spot, not following leave no trace, arms, dead animal/carcasses);
- Include a competency around training of someone new to the team (e.g., mentoring students, support to new team members).

Some minor adjustments such as the addition of performance indicators or different examples were also made to current competencies. The group also recommended the addition of a few competencies already available in the Tourism Competency Framework to the Outdoor Guide NOS.

Report to the Advisory Committee

Report on all the activities in Year 1 was presented to the Advisory Committee at a meeting held virtually on 23 June 2025. The Advisory Committee members had the opportunity to further feed into the occupational title and definition before approving them. As a result, they opted to use the title **Outdoor Guide** to designate workers in the outdoor field and further refined the definition:

Outdoor guides facilitate meaningful experiences for participants by managing risks and enhancing the experience beyond what participants typically achieve on their own. These experiences support recreation and

tourism, contribute to well-being, create opportunities for learning, and foster connections with community and the environment.

Members were also presented with a summary list of potential competencies to be developed and concepts to be integrated in current competencies as identified across the various activities conducted in the Discovery Phase. While some discussion arose to clarify content, overall they seem to agree with what was presented:

- Manage client care / Group management / Leadership
 - Building rapport with clients
 - Keeping group together
 - Situational awareness of how the group feels
 - Adjusting activity
 - Making a safe space, making everyone welcome
- Risk Management (specific to the outdoors)
 - Assess/analyze risk (e.g., situation awareness/environment, terrain, weather, injuries, equipment, heights)
 - Develop plan to prevent or mitigate
- Environmental stewardship (leave-no-trace principles)
- Diversity and inclusion
 - Removing barriers
 - Offering more inclusive programming options
 - Working with varied populations (e.g., youth, neurodivergent)
- Indigenous representation
 - Cultural appropriation
 - Decolonization
 - Engagement with communities, elders
 - How to approach things from a reconciliation perspective
 - Involvement of Indigenous people in development
- Use of equipment
- Storage of equipment (conducting inspection, cleaning, reporting damages)
- Meaningful experience for participants, being proactive, going beyond expectations, value-add
- Scope of practice
- Maintain a logbook
- Maintain relationships (e.g. staff at parks, hotels, restaurants)
- Report suspicious activities
- Provide meals □ storage, food safety, water filtration
- Monitor alcohol and drug consumption to prevent intoxication

Ongoing Project Support

In addition to the activities and deliverables described earlier in this report, THRC provided ongoing project management and project support to OCC. A key role for THRC is to support OCC's knowledge of competencies and National Occupational Standards. The OCC's key role is to engage stakeholders and support THRC with identifying potential opportunities for the industry to align with the Tourism Competency Framework. A number of resources were created and provided to OCC to help them better communicate the project's goals with stakeholders.

Next Steps: Engagement and Development Phase (Year 2)

Over the Summer months into the Fall, Tourism HR Canada will proceed with the review of the competencies and the development of 2-5 new competencies to address some of the gaps identified in this report. The resulting NOS will then be presented to subject matter experts in a series of 4-6 in-person consultation sessions to be held across the province of Alberta. The goal of these sessions is threefold: 1) Communicate about the work being done and share the Project Elevation's goals and objectives, 2) Review and validate the NOS, securing participants' buy-in, and 3) Initiate discussion into how they can take advantage of the NOS and what tools could support their successful implementation. Once the NOS has been reviewed and ratified by the Advisory Committee, further validation, at the national level, will take place.