# BC Open Textbook Project Sustainability

### Introduction

There is a significant investment being made in the production of the open textbooks associated with the BC Open Textbook project. The Ministry of Advanced Education has committed $1 million for the production of the 40 texts and associated supports. BCcampus and AVED staff have and will continue to spend significant time and effort developing the project. Many system partners have contributed to the effort through feedback at various stages. Faculty have contributed time and expertise to reviewing, adapting and creating texts and will continue to do so. Ensuring a return on the investment is vital and part of that return is long-term adoption and reuse of the texts. For that to come to fruition, we must find ways of maintaining the relevancy and quality of the texts. Others working in this area have proposed a number of models, some of which are relevant to our project and are documented below, along with other proposed models conceived of by BCcampus.

Much of the literature related to OER sustainability is specific to institutions rather than government funded and managed projects. As with other aspects of this project, we are forging new ground, which is challenging but will ultimately contribute to the knowledge of the Commons.

In addition to ensuring the continued relevance and quality of materials produced in the first 40, we want to enable the production of new resources. This scalability aspect is crucial to British Columbia continuing to be a leader in the area of OER, specifically Open Textbooks.

### Community is key

Regardless of the model chosen, much of the literature points to the necessity of community. Through our outreach efforts, we have begun to build a BC community of educators who are interested in OER and in being part of our project. While the importance of this effort cannot be underestimated, nor can the effort required to build the community. Community stewardship will be crucial to the sustainability of these resources.

## Some potential models for consideration:

No one model needs to be the ultimate solution, in fact, a combination of models is probably more likely to bring success. What follows is a number of suggested paths forward with some of the associated perceived risks and benefits. Depending on the model, work on sustainability could begin as soon as spring 2014.

### Model 1: Funded Centralized Coordination

Year over year funding is provided to BCcampus over a period of 3-5 years to engage in a process in which texts requiring updating are identified through a process of consultation with educators. Faculty and support staff are funded to do the updates, and BCcampus manages the process. This process could also include more innovative practice both from a pedagogical and technical standpoint since BCcampus would have more direct involvement and thus be positioned to supply tools, expertise and resources.  Continued outreach could happen such that adoption rates continue to increase, bringing the overall ROI higher. This model could include evaluation of the model and serve as an exemplar for the OER community.

Risks:

* Higher cost
* Potential lack of true ownership of resources by faculty and institutions

Benefits:

* Potentially for higher quality resources
* Potential for more innovative texts being produced
* Sustainability practices are researched, documented and contributed to the Commons
* Greater likelihood of consistency of texts
* Assurance of sustainability focus

### Model 2: Centralized/Decentralized Hybrid

BCcampus is provided funding to supply technology and limited associate technical support to enable faculty to update resources themselves. Staff would provide both technical support for those doing revisions and remixes. In this model, the decisions about what needs updating would be left in the hands of faculty, as would the revisions needed. BCcampus would provide the technical infrastructure to update and host the texts.

Risks:

* Updates may not have system relevance (i.e. an instructor would only be doing a revision for their own course)
* Faculty may not have time to update resources so they stagnate and as a result are not adopted
* It may become easier for faculty to just use a traditionally published text, particularly when publishers are offering to create custom versions

Benefits:

* Relatively low cost
* Consistent with previous BCcampus operations per the Online Program Development Fund
* It is possible that faculty may begin to feel more ownership over the materials

### Model 3: Cost Recovery

Ways of generating income are explored in this model. One example is that print on demand prices could be increased to provide funding for further development.

Risks:

* Not enough funding generated
* Perception of project is diminished

Benefits:

* Funding is generated

### Model 4: Sponsorship

In this case, we would work with organizations wanting to advertise via the BC Open Textbook Project in exchange for funding. Some examples are educational technology companies such as Desire 2 Learn, Canvas and BlackBoard.

Risks:

* Not enough funding generated
* Perception of project is diminished due to reliance on or partnerships with the corporate world

Benefits:

* Funding is generated

### Model 5: Institutional Sponsorship

Institutions are given responsibility for a given set of resources (perhaps based on institutional mandate) and are responsible for ensuring those resources are up to date. Resources are hosted in institutional repositories which all feed to a central repository which is accessible by all. This model would require initial funding to BCcampus for coordination, implementation and hand-off.

Risks:

* We are downloading costs to institutions already strapped for resources, and therefore sufficient resources may not be dedicated to produce high quality texts.
* Decentralization will mean variety of quality overall, as well as variety of format.
* In an institutional setting there are many competing demands for staff time. If the initiative were not prioritized, it could die on the vine.

Benefits:

* Potentially a feeling of ownership of the resources

### Model 6: Subject Matter Group Ownership

Articulation committee/Professional membership group ownership model - subject groups such as articulation committees or other formal faculty groups which are united by subject matter expertise take on ownership of a given text and ensure its relevancy and long term sustainability. This model would require initial funding to BCcampus for coordination, implementation and hand-off.

Risks:

* Decentralization will mean variety of quality overall, as well as variety of format.
* Maintaining the resources may not be a high priority

Benefits:

* Potentially a feeling of ownership of the resources

**Other considerations for further development of this document**

Derivatives:

* how are they hosted?
* how is quality ensured?
* how are versions tracked?