CIPS Alberta
Public Engagement Program Plan
DRAFT

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1   Purpose

The purpose of this document is to outline a plan where CIPS Alberta (Canadian Information Processing Society of Alberta) will engage the general public to establish the conditions where the use of CIPS assessed (SFIA) and certified (I.S.P. (Information Systems Professional)) practitioners becomes the preferred way to acquire IT (Information Technology) services in Alberta.

2   Background

The I.S.P. was established by CIPS National in 1988, and registered under POARA (Professional and Occupational Associations Registration Act) in Alberta in 1998. The I.S.P. is the authoritative, and sole, legally authorized professional designation for IT practitioners in Alberta (and in all of Canada).

CIPS became a SFIA (Skills Framework for the Information Age) partner in the fall of 2014, and offers practitioner assessment in the framework. Preliminary work has begun promoting the use of SFIA by employers of IT practitioners, and identifying and engaging key groups, such as new immigrants, for whom a SFIA assessment will hold particular value

Despite the efforts to date to promote certification and SFIA assessment to IT practitioners, and the organizations and decision makers related to the engagement of IT practitioners, neither has achieved broad enough recognition to make either of significant value to their holders, nor to be useful as an evaluation point by consumers of IT services.

3   Principles

The need for this program, and the justification for the effort and resources that will be required to execute it, is based on the following principles:

1. The primary asset of CIPS Alberta (and of CIPS nationally) is the provincial registration of the I.S.P. and its use across Canada.

2. The core attribute of the I.S.P is to ensure ethical practice of Information Systems. This includes a commitment of certified members to only practice in their areas of competency.

3. By providing an objective, independent, and comprehensive, measure of IT skills, SFIA provides CIPS with the tool to speak with authority to competency in IT practice.

4. A recognized professional designation and skills assessment that directly contributes to the the marketability of the individual practitioner is the primary value proposition that will attract and retain sufficient membership to allow CIPS to fill its mandate.

5. The mandate and value for amy successful professional designation comes from recognition by,

and demand from, the non-practitioner.

4 Objective

To establish CIPS certified and assessed practitioners as the preferred providers of IT services in Alberta.

5 Resources

- Registration of the I.S.P. under POARA in Alberta, and the authorities and responsibilities resulting from same.

- Status as a SFIA partner organization.

- Volunteer efforts of approximately 800 members

- A membership that is skilled in authorship, technical solutions, project management, and business acumen.

- Capacity to develop and deliver IT products

- Established national organization and presence

- A substantial, and growing, awareness of the impact of unethical or incompetent practice in IT.

6 Challenges

- Limited financial resources

- Inertia of the organization, membership, and the general IT community.

- The issues that can be used to engage the non-practitioner are complex to explain, not primary to their daily concerns, and not emotionally engaging.

- A membership that is weak in marketing and promotion skills.

- The current number of certified practitioners is so small as to not offer a viable pool of candidates to draw from, given even limited success of this program.

- Limited contact points to key decision makers and influencers.

7 Risks

- Disenfranchisement, and loss, of non-certified members.

- Failure to engage CIPS membership in the program.

8   Success measures

As of 2017-06-30:

1. Five percent of the general population in Alberta who are not practitioners in IT can identify the I.S.P. and SFIA, and have a positive perception of them.

2. Fifty percent of practitioners in IT in Alberta can identify the I.S.P. and SFIA, and can outline three key aspects of their implementation and impact.

3. Twenty five percent of HR practitioners in Alberta can identify the I.S.P. and SFIA, and have a positive perception of them.

4. At least one major supplier of IT services (>$5M annual revenue) in Alberta is promoting the use of I.S.P certified practitioners.

5. At least 5 major (>$50M annual revenue) Alberta consumers of IT services/employers of IT practitioners are requesting the I.S.P. from some portion of their applicants/suppliers.

6. At least 10 major (>$50M annual revenue) Alberta consumers of IT services/employers of IT practitioners are using SFIA assessments, either for the selection of candidates for new hires, or internally for staff development.

9   Key target audiences

For this program to be effective, initiatives should address one of these key audiences:

	Attributes	Key message	Desired action
Users of broadly available IT products or services	Individuals who actively use personal, public, or commercial systems or services enabled by IT.	Use of certified practitioners is the best way to ensure that individual privacy is respected, the broad public good is assured, and reliability and integrity are provided, by the information systems that the general public is dependent on.	Prefer services or product that identify the use of certified practitioners.

	Attributes	Key message	Desired action
Small and medium business leadership	Decision makers in businesses who have accountability for IT mediated services, but whose primary background is not information systems.	Direct hiring or contracting, or the use of service providers who employ, certified practitioners is the best way to secure quality IT services and ensure that your customers will have confidence in your services.	Prefer services or products that identify the use of certified practitioners.
Human resource practitioners	Individuals who assist in the acquisition and retention of staff or contractors whose primary function is IT.	The I.S.P. Designation and SFIA assessment ensures that candidates for IT roles are committed to ethical practice and competency in their field.	Indicate a preference for I.S.P. holders for applicants. Use SFIA competency assessments in hiring and staff development practices.

10 Tactical initiatives

These are initiatives that provide good returns, are achievable with current resources, and lay the foundation for future strategic initiatives.

10.1 Engagement story and supporting materials

This program, if accepted and implemented, will be transformative for the CIPS organization. And given the limited financial resources available, the volunteer efforts of the membership will be vital if the program is to succeed.

To support this, a concise and engaging set of documents and materials need to be put together that state the reason why this program is required, the vision of the program, what it will mean to the CIPS organization, and the effort of the membership that will be required to proceed. This package will support the board in taking this communication to the membership and other key stakeholders through e-mail, group presentations, and individual conversations.

10.2 Member engagement and mobilization

Further to point 10.1, a formal project to engage, consult with, and mobilize the membership to support this program will be required. This needs to start early enough that members feel that they have been involved in setting the outcomes of the program, so that they will be engaged and will make their time and talents available to support it's implementation.

Components of this project would include:

1. dedicated pages on the web site to document progress, solicit input, and host artifacts related to the program

2. preparation and ongoing active management of a roster of volunteer roles

3. establishment of regular meetings in each of the major centres for the program team to engage with members

4. establishment of resources and protocols to ensure timely response to member offers of assistance, questions, and identified promotion opportunities

10.3 Web site refocus

The public web presence of CIPS and CIPS Alberta (http://ab.cips.ca) has traditionally focused on the IT practitioner as it's primary audience.

This should be changed, so that the initial landing page, and the key pages on the site, are targeted towards the consumer of IT services as it's primary audience. The objective is that when someone does a search for "IT professional alberta" or "IT services alberta", they find a site that talks about IT issues, how to use SFIA to find qualified IT resources, and outlines why, and how, they should ask for and hire I.S.P. holders.

If our web presence attracts and informs the consumer of IT services, so that they begin asking for SFIA assessments and I.S.P. holders, then practitioners will be motivated to find the information on how to become SFIA assessed or acquire an I.S.P. regardless of where on the site we put it.

10.4 Government engagement

Engage the provincial government, both administrative and legislative, in regards to the IT field and IT professionalism.

It is likely the current provincial government will be looking for opportunities for diversification, and IT is always comes up as a priority in these discussions. There is an opportunity to promote Alberta (and Canada) as a source of IT products and services that, guaranteed by certified professional practitioners, provides high quality, sophisticated IT, while respecting individual privacy and ensured

ethical practices

The provincial government has identified they will be completing a significant infrastructure program. Some of these projects will likely have an IT component. There is an opportunity for CIPS to assist in the selection and governance of these initiatives.

The Alberta legislature is completing a review of the Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA), and the Federal Government is currently drafting regulations to support recent revisions to the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA). CIPS should engage in these processes, and provide responses that outline how professional Information Systems practice could be foundational to ensuring protection of personal information.

CIPS should identify members who should be able to effectively engage key government decision makers (Ministers, Assistant Deputy Ministers) to seek out opportunities where CIPS members can actively participate in government programs and initiatives.

Finally, the provincial government should be a receptive candidate to using a formal certification and assessment process to help ensure the quality of their own IT operations.

There is value for CIPS Alberta to advance it's profile in this environment, even when there is no immediate opportunity to promote professional practice in IT.

10.5 Social media campaign

CIPS will work to enhance its profile on various social media.

Some work has already been done in this area. Board members William Turgeon and Mark Olson are bloggers on IT World Canada, and CIPS National has a presence on LinkedIn..

This work should continue and be expanded where opportunities exist, particularly looking out for opportunities to engage non-practitioners.

It needs to be recognized that there is significant effort involved to securing and maintaining a social media presence. Content needs to be fresh, relevant, pervasive, and reliable if it is going to have an impact.

The current CIPS Alberta LinkedIn group has gone dormant, and it's ownership and management by an individual member has become a liability. The necessity, and nature, of a CIPS Alberta profile on LinkedIn needs to be reviewed. If it is confirmed to be of value, then a plan needs to be set and executed to define and establish a presence for CIPS Alberta on LinkedIn, and ways found to maintain currency and relevance of this presence on an ongoing basis.

10.6 Peer professional association engagement

There is an opportunity to present the I.S.P. and SFIA as an easy way to identify quality IT service providers to decision makers whose primary accountability is not IT. Specifically, there are opportunities to promote the I.S.P. and SFIA to members of associations in the fields of:

- human resources

- finance

- management consulting

- law

This work should be done in conjunction with the initiative to explore "dual" holding of the I.S.P. and an appropriate technical certification.

Likely the best way to do this is to offer the content drafted as part of 10.4 for inclusion in internal communications, and to offer members as speakers on IT and technology issues.

11 Strategic initiatives

These initiatives will require resources that are not immediately available to the board, will require more than a single board mandate to achieve, or will require substantive changes that CIPS Alberta cannot achieve in isolation.

11.1 Written content campaign

Issues which have an IT component are regularly featured in the general media. There is an opportunity for CIPS to establish a reputation as a pragmatic, trusted, and qualified, organization that advocates for the interests of non-practicing individuals and the Canadian IT practitioner in these discussions.

Opportunities exist for CIPS to actively participant in the following current issues:

- net neutrality

- broadband access

- privacy

- funding models for on-line content (ad blocking)

- wireless spectrum allocation

- police access to ISP subscriber data without warrant

- unsolicited communications (spam)

- on line identity management

- Bill C 51 (Anti-terrorism Act, 2015)

- sale of subscriber data by data carriers

- on-line surveillance

It is proposed that CIPS establish a bank of current, edited, concise articles related to these and other IT related topics. These articles must:

- be authored by a certified member who has credibility in the field

- be addressed to, and approachable by, the non specialized practitioner

- be written in an active voice, and establish and advocate for an unambiguous position

- be professionally edited

- actively advocate for ethical IT practice

- actively promote the broad general public interest

- promote the use of certified IT practitioners wherever appropriate

- be attributed to the author as a CIPS member or certified practitioner.

Once a bank of 15-20 quality articles has been established, these can then be promoted to media outlets as no-cost copy for their use as long as they retain attribution to CIPS. They can also be featured on the CIPS website.

11.2 Naming and imaging review

It is well past time to address the unfortunate history that has resulted in the same acronym being used for Information Services Professional (I.S.P.) and Information Systems Provider (ISP).

That fact that CIPS made use of the acronym first is irrelevant. For most individuals, I.S.P. means Information Services Provider, regardless of the periods. And for most individuals, their relationship with their Information Services Provider is a negative one, associated with high costs, poor customer service, and oversold, unreliable, infrastructure. The general perception of Information Services Providers as an industry is anathema to what we want for an IT professional designation.

It is also confusing for CIPS to have two designations (I.S.P. and ITCP) that, to the layman and casual observer, appear to cover the same thing.

Perhaps we can come up with a method by which a more marketable name or acronym can be use for general promotions, but retain the current name for legal purposes, to avoid the cost and effort of re-registering the designation in each province.

Alternatively, CIPS could explore setting a plan to deprecate the I.S.P. and move all certified members exclusively to the ITCP.

This issue needs to be resolved. If our conversation with non-practitioners has to begin with a confusing explanation that an I.S.P. is not an ISP, we will not retain their attention long enough to get to our value proposition.

11.3 Rapid mobilization plan

The number of certified members is small relative to the number of IT practitioners and as a result requesting certified practitioners is a non-starter for most organizations, as doing so would severely restrict their candidate pool

CIPS needs to come up with a streamlined, short turn around, automated, and perhaps provisional, process to rapidly certify significant numbers of practitioners. We need to be in the position where, for example, the Government of Alberta were to commit to requiring the use of certified practitioners for IT work, which resulted in a major service provider wanting to certify their staff so that they would be a preferred bidder, CIPS would be able to certify several hundred practitioners in a matter of weeks, if not days.

One potential solution to this issue may be to expand the application of the exam route to the I.S.P. Another option to explore would be a "Provisional I.S.P.", who was immediately subject to the ethics of the designation, but whose certification was conditional on review, and remediation, of the experience and education components.

Similarly, we need to establish plans to rapidly expand the number of SFIA assessors, and to complete SFIA assessments quickly and cost effectively.

11.4 National program

Ideally, this program would be initiated and lead by the national CIPS organization, and operate across the country. However, this is unlikely.

CIPS Alberta should proceed with this program regardless of national involvement. However the national organization should be given every opportunity to participate, including being involved at the planning stage. Obviously, all materials produced by CIPS Alberta would be available for other provincial, and the national, organization to make use of.

11.5 Issue and policy register

This would be associated with initiative 11.1, but would be intended to be more comprehensive, and would contain content that is addressed to the IT practitioner as well as the non-practitioner. The intent is to ensure that a comprehensive, vetted, and consistent response can quickly be provided to public, government, and/or media inquiries related to IT issues.

11.6 Audio content campaign

This would be an extension of initiatives 10.6 and 11.1, however is considered a strategic initiative due to the higher production cost associated.

The inspiration for this initiative is the "Legal Lawtte" program on CKUA (http://www.ckua.com/programs/legal-lawtte/). These would be short audio programs on IT topics, which could then be made available at no-cost to broadcast organizations, and provided as podcasts.

11.7 News organization engagement

Establish a formal news engagement program. This would include regular drafting of press releases, proactive engagement of news editors and journalists, formal training in media relations for CIPS personnel, and perhaps hosting media events.

It should be noted that CIPS has had limited success in past providing reactive response to press requests for comment or input. Providing quality responses to these requests in a timely manner is difficult, and the final representation of the input as published can be different than intended. Response to press requests should only been done when the issue is core to our broader objectives, and only provided by CIPS representatives who are authoritative in the field and competent in dealing with the media.

There would likely be limited progress on this item without also addressing initiative 12.2

12 Stretch initiatives

These are initiatives that, while they would have significant returns, are probably beyond the capacity of the organization to execute in the current planning horizon.

12.1 Establish mandated application of certified practitioners

Work with the government of Alberta to establish the requirement that a certified practitioner be accountable for any activity:

1. That involves the identification of a specific individual or a physical location.

2. That is implemented, offered, funded, or regulated by the the province or a municipality in Alberta, or any of their agencies.

3. That is related in any way to a provincial or municipal election held in Alberta.

4. That involves any participation by any individual under the age of majority.

Explicitly excluded from this requirement are:

1. Any IT service which is implemented strictly for the internal use of a private organization, whose use is restricted to employees, contractors, or ongoing business partners of the organization.

2. Any IT service that is provided by a not for profit organization which involves less than 100 users.

12.2 Advertising

Purchase advertising on mass media and online. The challenge is that a budget in multiples of $100k would be required to have any meaningful impact.

12.3 Proactive application of authority under POARA

Seek out a high profile opportunity to apply our authority under POARA. The ideal opportunity would be a situation where an individual or organization was explicitly claiming the use of professional practitioners of IT , but acted unprofessionally towards an organization or individual for whom there would be broad and unambiguous public sympathy. Such an opportunity is going to be hard to come by.

13 Initiative summary

Type	Name	Volunteer effort (hours)	Cost ($)	Return	Risk	Comments
Tactical	10.1 Engagement story and supporting materials	100 one time	0	High	Low	
Tactical	10.2 Member engagement and mobilization	120 annually	0	High	Medium	
Tactical	10.3 Web site refocus	300 one time	0	High	Low	Coordinate with in progress web site rebuild.
Tactical	10.4 Government engagement	300 one time 120 annually	0	High	Medium	
Tactical	10.5 Social media campaign	480 annually	0	Medium	Low	
Tactical	10.6 Peer professional association engagement	240 annually	0	High	Low	Coordinate with initiatives in progress.
Strategic	11.1 Written content campaign	200 one time 240 annually	0	Medium	Low	

Type	Name	Volunteer effort (hours)	Cost ($)	Return	Risk	Comments
Strategic	11.2 Naming and imaging review	500 one time	$5,000 one time	High	High	Coordination with National required.
Strategic	11.3 Rapid mobilization plan	300 one time	0	Low	Low	Coordination with National required.
Strategic	11.4 National program	120 annually	0	Medium	Low	Leadership by National required.
Strategic	11.5 Issue and policy register	600 one time 240 annually	0	Medium	Low	
Strategic	11.6 Audio content campaign	200 one time 240 annually	$3,000 annually	Medium	Low	
Strategic	11.7 News organization engagement	150 one time 240 annually	$5,000 annually	Medium	Low	
Stretch	12.1 Establish mandated application of certified practitioners	600 one time	0	High	High	
Stretch	12.2 Advertising	300 one time 120 annually	$200k annually	Medium	Low	

Type	Name	Volunteer effort (hours)	Cost ($)	Return	Risk	Comments
Stretch	12.3 Proactive application of authority under POARA	400 one time	0	Medium	High	

14 More information

To receive more information on, to comment on, or volunteer your efforts towards the implementation of, this plan contact Mark Olson, I.S.P. at olsonm@cips.ca.

15 Next steps

Date	Status	Activity
2015-10-28	Complete	Initial draft circulated for review
2015-11-01	Complete	Second draft circulated for 11-05 board meeting
2015-11-05	Complete	Review at board meeting
2015-11-17	Complete	Third draft reviewed by board
2015-11-25	Complete	Fourth draft made to reflect input from board
2015-12-03	Complete	Discuss strategy at CIPS Board meeting
2016-04-13	Complete	Circulate program plan to membership for review
2016-04-29		Membership comments close
2016-04-14		Mobilization meetings in Calgary, Edmonton, Red Deer begin
2016-05-30		Mobilization meetings in Calgary, Edmonton, Red Deer complete
2016-05-01		Call for volunteers sent

16 Revision history

2015-10-28: First draft issued for review. Authored by Mark Olson, I.S.P.

2015-11-01: Second draft issued for review by board. Revised by Mark Olson, I.S.P.

2015-11-16: Third draft issued for review by board for consideration for membership review. Revised by Mark Olson, I.S.P.

2015-11-26: Fourth draft prepared based on input from board. Revised by Mark Olson, I.S.P.

2015-12-09: Fifth and final draft for circulation to membership. Revised by Mark Olson, I.S.P.

2016-04-13: Plan issued for member feedback