

THE HISTORY OF THE S & Gs

In the fall of 1996, a National Assembly on Career Development Guidelines was convened. Stakeholders drawn from a broad cross-section of sectors involved in career development explored establishing a collaborative process for creating national standards for practitioners. The Assembly elected a National Steering Committee to manage a process that included the following:

- creating a draft framework for guidelines and standards;
- mapping out one model for conceptualizing the scope of career development; and
- identifying some potential uses, benefits, risks, and disadvantages of guidelines and standards.

The process followed these principles:

- build on consensus;
- focus on practitioners providing services directly to clients;
- recognize existing best practices; and
- include the diversity of roles and skill sets existing in the field.

The Steering Committee operated according to a stewardship model rather than a representative model. In a stewardship model, members present their unique perspectives as professionals in the field. They are not official voices of the organizations or associations with which they are involved. Members of the Steering Committee were drawn from a wide variety of areas so that multiple views would result.

In the fall of 1997 a series of regional consultations were held. Approximately 1,250 people participated. In all, 70 consultation groups were conducted in eight provinces and one territory. Almost 900 feedback forms were returned, representing a return rate of about 70%. About 27% of the respondents were from community-based agencies, 23% were from the education sector, 15% were from mental health or rehabilitation settings, 10% were in private practice, and the rest were from a wide variety of sectors that provide career development services as part of their mandates.

Feedback from participants was overwhelmingly in favour of proceeding to develop the Standards and Guidelines. Key findings were:

- Over 80% of respondents thought that developing guidelines and standards would be in the best interests of themselves, their clients, the organizations for which they worked, the profession, and the general public.
- The proposed framework made sense.
- They supported the idea of a framework based on what practitioners actually did, rather than the training they took.
- They supported a code of ethics as the foundation of the framework.
- In response to the question, "Would you support the next step, namely to develop, field-test, and validate national guidelines and standards for career development?" 93% indicated they were in favour of proceeding.

In the spring of 1998 a second Assembly on Career Development Guidelines was convened to review the results of the Phase 1 consultations and discuss a draft process for Phase 2. The Assembly gave support for the open and inclusive manner in which Phase 1 was conducted and endorsed continuing with a stewardship approach in Phase 2. Based on the suggestions of the assembly, a new National Steering

Committee was selected, having about 50% representation from the first steering committee to promote continuity and 50% new people to provide a fresh perspective. A Stakeholder Liaison and Advisory Council was formed to provide an explicit link to professional associations and other organizations that ultimately could adopt the Standards and Guidelines. The Stakeholder Council met in the fall of 1998 to review the work plan for Phase 2 and plan strategies for promoting the Standards and Guidelines to their members. The work of developing and validating the standards was sub-contracted to ATEC, an Edmonton firm with extensive experience in developing professional standards.

The process of developing the Standards and Guidelines began with a profile meeting to elaborate the basic framework that had been developed in Phase 1. This was followed by five regional focus groups, where the standards were fleshed out, competencies for each standard were developed, and sample performance indicators were identified. During this time, the Steering Committee was developing a set of ethical principles, a glossary of key terms, and an extensive communication strategy to keep the career development community involved with the project.

The first draft (English and French) of the resulting Standards and Guidelines document was distributed to the career development community for consultation in December 1999. A consultation kit was prepared to provide facilitators with background information on the project and to outline a suggested facilitation process for obtaining detailed feedback on the Standards and Guidelines document. About 600 participants, from all geographic regions of the country, returned response forms from the consultation process. In response to the “big picture” questions, 95% said the Standards and Guidelines did depict accurately what could be considered as good practice. Additionally, 86% found the structure of the Standards and Guidelines sensible and relevant, and 90% said that as a whole, the standards were accurate and comprehensive.

Based on feedback from the consultation, the Standards and Guidelines document was revised, given a “plain language” edit and, in November 2000, distributed for endorsement to participants in the regional focus groups, people who participated in the consultation process, and the organizations represented on the Stakeholder Liaison and Advisory Council. Overwhelming support was provided by the career development community. The contractor who developed and validated the standards commented on the process as follows:

ATEC has been involved in the development of occupational standards since 1990, completing over 60 sets for a variety of organizations. In our years of experience, we have never worked with a group that has designed and implemented such an extensive consultation with the job incumbents as the Steering Committee for Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career Development Practitioners. ... We would like to congratulate the Steering Committee on the effort that they have put into consultation with practitioners in the field. This will have a huge impact on the successful implementation of the standards and guidelines and the resulting benefits for career development across Canada.

Based on that validation, the Standards and Guidelines document was prepared for distribution. The Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career Development Practitioners was formally released at NATCON in January 2001. In order to reduce the environmental impact of producing and distributing a large document, and to make the final product easily used by practitioners, the Steering Committee decided on a CD-ROM format as the primary publishing medium. Thus, the Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career Development Practitioners were launched on CD (CD-ROM).

A third Assembly on Standards and Guidelines was held in conjunction with a meeting of the Stakeholder Liaison and Advisory Council in February 2001. This meeting enthusiastically endorsed the work done to date, selected a new Steering Committee for Phase 3 of the initiative, and explored possible solutions to issues that had been identified. Phase 3 was to focus on the implementation of the Standards and Guidelines. To this end, a series of field tests were conducted in various regions of the country where participants explored creative uses for the standards document. A self-assessment and professional development planning tool was developed and pilot tested. An extensive marketing kit also was prepared to assist individuals and associations in promoting the Standards and Guidelines, highlight best practices from the field tests, and provide guidelines for using the Standards and Guidelines in a Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition process.

After the completion of this third phase, the [Canadian Career Development Foundation \(CCDF\)](#) <link> was elected to be the voluntary “guardians” of the S & Gs. In 2008, discussions were initiated by provincial associations in British Columbia, Alberta and Ontario regarding the formation of an alliance of career development associations. In March of 2010, the [Canadian Council of Career Development Associations \(CCDA\)](#) <link> was officially launched. Working together with the CCDF, they are committed to ensuring that the S & Gs remain vital and reflect our ever-evolving practice.