



## British Columbia Agri-food Innovation & Commercialization Network

Minutes  
**Resource Database Sub-Committee**  
**Meeting #2**  
April 16, 2009  
11:00am – 12:00pm

### Present

Rebecca Robertson, UBC, Chair (RR)  
Jenn Whelan, BCIC (JW) for Richard  
Hallman

Nelson Barsi, SSFPA (NB)  
Debbie Hellbach, BCMAL – minutes (DH)  
Ron Wasik (RW)

### Apologies

Andy Dolberg, BCAC (AD), Greg Edgelow, WCFN (GE), Paula Brown, BCIT (PB)

### Guests

Mark Kowal (MK)

Mario Anda (MA), BCMAL

### 1. Welcome

### 2. Guest Speaker - Mark Kowal

We have invited Mark to provide us with some guidance on hiring an information Technologist for the resource database project. He runs his own IT consulting firm and is the Senior Software Engineer for INgrooves out of San Francisco. INgrooves is the #1 digital music distributor in the world for digital content to retailers such as iTunes, Napster, ATT, Sprint, etc. Mark has lead and designed software solutions from low-level system concepts to high-level user concepts and has worked on all facets of software products: web based, windows based, user interfaces, databases, distributed environments, scaled from enterprise to single use, etc. An example of his work is [www.realestock.com](http://www.realestock.com).

Mark described himself as a representative of “the other side”. His main suggestion was to include a business analyst in our project team. A business analyst acts as the “go between” because the analyst speaks both the client’s and info technologist’s languages.

Mark recommended that our group should focus on the behaviours that we want out of our end product. He cautioned us about using the term “database” as this means many things to many people. He suggested that we be “agnostic” with regard to technology. A good Business Analyst will either find the technology we need or be able to direct ITs on what to build. Mark also advised that we will want deal with integration desires up front, i.e. Figure out how our product will integrate with existing information products.

## **Discussion**

NB gave an overview of the development of the SSFPA's Specialty Directory. .  
<http://www.ssfpa.net/bcsfd/> The main message is that to build a good product it must be a group effort, all having equal say and a "can do it" attitude

RR asked where we could find a good Business Analyst. Mark indicated that he might be able to provide some names – they would be out of province. RW responded that he was able to provide a list of potential vendors. RW recommended and Mark agreed that we should be looking at established companies.

### **3. Similar projects in BC**

Mario Anda, BCMAL described the Agri-Food Knowledge Mobilization Web Platform project he is working on. BCMAL is working on identifying tools (web platform) that will help make it easier to get information out to end users. BCMAL current product, Infobasket, is becoming obsolete. Wiki type systems are being explored. BCMAL wants to create a base platform that all Agri-Food sectors could use to enter and disseminate their own information. BCMAL does not want to house/own the platform and is currently negotiating an MOU with the BC Innovation Council. The timeline for this project is 6 months for the needs assessment which include identifying the Agri-Food groups that would use the platform and what they are looking for. Mario estimated that it would take 1-2 years to develop the end product.

## **Discussion**

All subcommittee members agreed that there seems to be a lot of parallels between BCMAL's project and the BCAFICN's resource database project. The end users of both are the same. RR and MA are to meet and explore the synergies between the two projects. Jenn is going to discuss with RH.

### **4. Next steps**

- a. RW to provide a list of potential vendors for Business Analysts.
- b. RR and MA are to meet and explore the synergies between the two projects.
- c. All members to review & comment on existing websites/databases

## **Information gathered in response to April 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting**

Other resources

FoodTECH Canada – DH has been speaking with Joy Shinn, CEO Food TechCANADA. Joy is tasked with developing the network of Food & Bio-Product Technology Centres across Canada. There are a lot of parallels between her project and ours as well. They launched their website this week and are working on a database (information dissemination product) as well. Joy and I are discussing the possibility of her and her Chair, Dan Prefontaine, of the Saskatchewan Food Tech Centre to come out and meet with us.

## Existing databases

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Name	Web address	Pros	Cons
BC Food Processors Directory	<a href="http://www.agf.gov.bc.ca/foodprocessing/documents/bcfd_directory/bcfd_directory.htm">www.agf.gov.bc.ca/foodprocessing/documents/bcfd_directory/bcfd_directory.htm</a>	Fairly comprehensive Full listing of BC processors	Hard to find Not searchable Out of date
Specialty Food Directory	<a href="http://www.ssfpa.net/bcsfd/">www.ssfpa.net/bcsfd/</a>		
FoodTECH Canada	<a href="http://foodtechcanada.ca/">http://foodtechcanada.ca/</a>	Brand new, Network of all Canadian Agri-Food Tech Centres B2B portal	
Ontario Functional Food & Natural Health Product Sector Directory	<a href="http://www.marslanding.ca/ffnhp_profiles.aspx">www.marslanding.ca/ffnhp_profiles.aspx</a>		
Bioaccess Commercialization Centre, Saskatoon	<a href="http://www.bioaccess.ca/">http://www.bioaccess.ca/</a>		
Canadian Technology Network	<a href="http://ctn-rct.ca/en/">http://ctn-rct.ca/en/</a>		
Wellness West	<a href="http://www.agwellness.ca/wellnesswest/">http://www.agwellness.ca/wellnesswest/</a>		
Advanced Foods and Materials Network	<a href="http://www.afmnet.ca/">http://www.afmnet.ca/</a>		
Ontario Centres of Excellence	<a href="http://www.ontario.org/Pages/About.aspx">http://www.ontario.org/Pages/About.aspx</a>		

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### Next meeting

Thursday April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2009  
11 am -12 pm  
Teleconference Coordinates  
1-866-596-5277  
Conference ID 7293483