

Purpose: This memo outlines key features for a transitional leadership model that will ultimately lead to longer term collaborative governance of the Niagara Escarpment Biosphere Reserve (NEBR).

Background: The model below has been informed by an environmental scan of biosphere reserves across Canada, 24 telephone interviews with NEBR participants and an online survey of NEBR Network members completed by 16 individuals, activities which took place between May and July 2019.

Long-term leadership: Ultimately, the recommended leadership model, based on the priorities expressed by NEBR participants, is fully independent (e.g. a non-profit corporation) and led by an appropriately-sized team with 9 - 11 voting directors (odd number being key), and a small number of additional non-voting members.

Priorities for leadership would include:

1. Demonstrated commitment to maintaining the biosphere reserve designation and ensuring successful leadership, long-term sustainability, effective programs for environmental protection and economic development, and strong collaboration among NEBR Network members; and,
2. Representation of diverse perspectives, including from Indigenous communities, various regions, sectors, genders and the necessary skill sets to fulfill organizational objectives.

Initially (transitional phase) membership can be comprised of the organization's founding directors. Non-voting members could include: a representative from the Niagara Escarpment Commission (NEC) and the Executive Director. At the formal launch of the new organization, we suggest membership that is open to individuals and organizations who support the organizations' vision, mission and values.

Transitional model: To meet the challenge of launching a new organization that is led outside of the Niagara Escarpment Commission, a transitional plan is desirable. We propose starting with a small (3-5 person) transitional leadership committee (TLC). A process to identify prospective TLC members should begin at the July 30th meeting, centring around four transitional priorities, including:

- Formalizing the longer-term leadership structure, overseeing not-for-profit incorporation and development of initial by-laws. We suggest a target timeline for a launch of the new organization (including incorporation) of July 30, 2020. Ensuring optimal representation for leadership is achieved will be key, including from:
 - Indigenous communities;
 - Diverse regions of the Escarpment; and,
 - Relevant sectors active on the Escarpment (e.g. conservation, tourism, agriculture, wineries, academia, aggregate).
- Establishing program directions and key activities consistent with:
 - meeting the expressed needs and priorities of Network members;

- implementing the goals of the Lima Action Plan for UNESCO's Man and Biosphere (MAB) Programme and its world network of Biosphere Reserves (2016 - 2025);
 - responding to calls to action arising from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada; and,
 - achieving successful renewal of the NEBR's biosphere reserve designation through UNESCO (through 10-year review starting in 2022).
- Establishing communication standards and systems to articulate NEBR priorities, activities and impacts:
 - Among NEBR participants;
 - With funders;
 - With the public; and,
 - With the Canadian Biosphere Reserves Association.
 - Fund development, including:
 - Establishing a compelling case for support; and,
 - Securing initial financial investment to support transitional and longer-term goals (e.g. grant funding from governments, foundations, donations from individuals).

Working groups: The transitional leadership committee will benefit from the establishment of volunteer working groups to focus on each of the above four activities.

Selection of the TLC and working groups: Network members not present July 30th will be given an opportunity to express their interest to participate in the TLC or in a working group. Regarding the TLC, after receiving expressions of interest, a brief web-based form and selection criteria will be shared with interested parties. The slate of candidates who submitted application forms will be presented at a **September 2019 NEBR meeting** – where NEBR participants will be asked to approve (and if necessary vote on) candidates. We propose this September meeting be framed as the launch of the transitional NEBR leadership phase. Working group members will be accepted without a formal selection process, but with the intention to achieve a balanced number on each group.

NEC as secretariat: Both the TLC and working groups should be supported by the NEC in a secretariat role - providing technical expertise, administrative support and institutional memory.

Indigenous leadership: It is the sincere desire of the Niagara Escarpment Commission, Niagara Escarpment Foundation and other founders (and by edict of UNESCO¹) that a new community-based NEBR be relevant and valuable to Indigenous communities along the Niagara Escarpment and that Indigenous communities choose to actively engage in its leadership. The extent and nature of Indigenous leadership in the NEBR will ultimately need to be determined by representatives from the various Indigenous communities upon whose traditional lands the NEBR is located.

¹ Per the 2012 Niagara Escarpment Biosphere Reserve designation renewal process.