

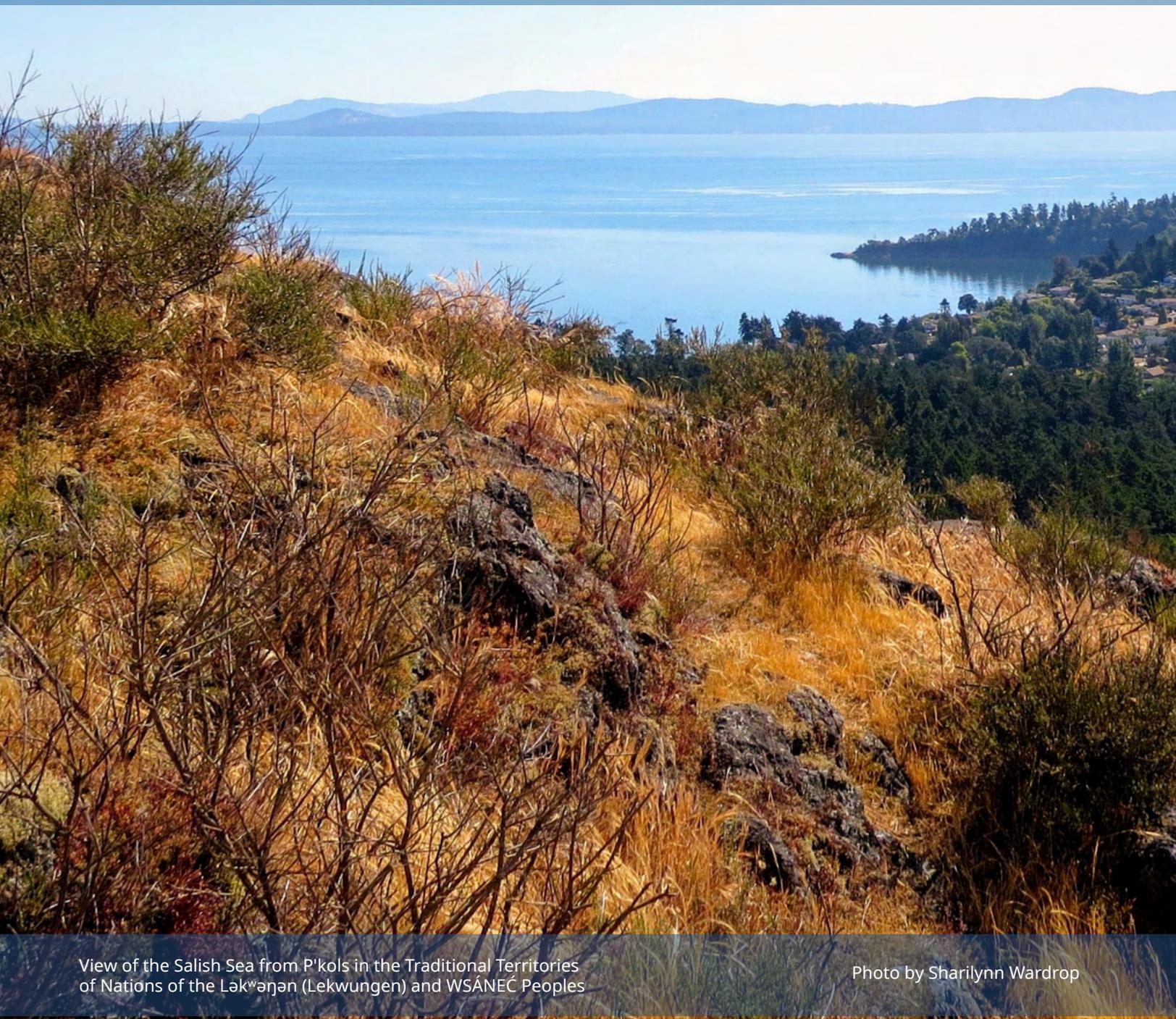
The First Four Years

Cultivating a Practice of
Behavioural Insights in
the BC Public Service



BC BEHAVIOURAL
INSIGHTS GROUP

We, the BC BIG team, acknowledge the ancestral connection to specific territories of First Nations peoples in B.C. We respect the importance of the diverse cultures, languages and practices attached to each of those territories for thousands of years.



View of the Salish Sea from P'kols in the Traditional Territories of Nations of the Lək̓ʷəŋən (Lekwungen) and WSÁNEĆ Peoples

Photo by Sharilynn Wardrop

Table of Contents

5 A Message From Carl Jensen

6 BC BIG's Beginnings

7 Getting to Know BC BIG

9 Building Evidence

11 Growing Capacity

13 Cultivating Community

15 Case Studies

30 Seven Lessons Learned

31 Looking to the Future

32 The BC BIG Team

Behavioural insights help us understand how people think, behave, and make decisions in everyday life so we can make a positive impact in people's lives.

This is a story of growth—of the BC Behavioural Insights Group (BC BIG), of behavioural insights (BI) across the B.C. government, and of our partnerships and local BI community. From a scrappy start-up to a mature unit, BC BIG has racked up some notable achievements and lessons learned. Read on as we highlight the work we did during our first four years, from 2016 to 2020. Here, we will showcase our efforts to improve programs and services. We will highlight our contributions to BI as a policy practice. And we will tell the tale of how we came to be, what we have done so far, and what is next for BC BIG.

We hope you find this report interesting whether you are a...

...**practitioner** of applied behavioural science. Check out our case studies and lessons learned!

...**public servant** curious about the practice of BI and how it can help solve business challenges and policy problems.

...**member of the public** interested in how government is finding innovative ways to make life better for individuals and organizations in B.C.

A Message from Carl Jensen

Head of BC BIG

The use of BI has continued to grow in governments and other sectors across the globe at a rapid pace. That growth—a key theme of this report—will continue to flourish in the months and years ahead through the passion, ingenuity, and commitment of the BI community in British Columbia.

Since 2016, innovative disciplines like BI have offered a scientific way to understand and address common behavioural barriers to successfully implementing initiatives within the BC Public Service. Since our inception, we have worked with our clients and partners to help address a diverse set of challenges facing the citizens of British Columbia: road safety, agricultural land use, tax compliance, wildlife protection, opioid prescribing, and more.

With the emergence of a global pandemic in 2020, governments around the world have accelerated these efforts to modernize—many out of necessity as they adjusted policies, programs and services in response to COVID-19. Never has it been more important for public servants to make data-driven decisions, design services with citizens in mind, and collaborate across boundaries using new problem-solving tools and approaches.

Here in British Columbia, the public sector has rapidly deployed new programs, digital services, and protocols to keep us all safe during the pandemic. Not only has BI been a helpful tool in the pandemic response locally and globally, but it is also being used to tackle other pressing issues like economic recovery, climate change, and systemic racism.

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the tireless efforts of the founder of the BC Behavioural Insights Group, Heather Devine. Heather's dedication, passion, and enthusiasm for BI served as a launchpad for the team and provided inspiration as she led as Head during the first four-plus years.



BC BIG's Beginnings

Planting the Seed

When the B.C. provincial government released its *Where Ideas Work* corporate plan (the Plan) in fall 2016, it planted the seeds for growing BC BIG. The Plan lays out the values, policies, and approaches public servants are encouraged to adopt to improve their work and better serve British Columbians.

Recognizing a need to incorporate a more human-centred, experimental, data-driven, and collaborative approach to the way we do our work, the Plan made a commitment to launch and grow a BI practice.

BC BIG began in 2016 with a team of three people working on a handful of projects. By 2020, a team of eight BC BIG staff and many partners has emerged. Together, we have expanded our portfolio, deepened our impact, and grown the community of scientists, practitioners, and supporters in Western Canada.

Where Ideas Work 2020 reaffirms the value of BI in the provincial government and commits to expanding the practice.

“Expand the adoption and application of behavioural insights, strategic foresight and other data-driven, evidence-based approaches to policy and program design.”

Where Ideas Work
2020

Getting to Know BC BIG

Our Vision

Government services driven by the needs of British Columbians and backed by the power of behavioural science.

Our Mission

To serve our client ministries by using behavioural insights knowledge and tools to improve government programs and services.

BC BIG is an applied behavioural science unit in the BC Public Service. Our team includes behavioural scientists, research advisors and communications professionals. We work across government to understand and solve challenges driven by human behaviour.

We apply insights from psychology, economics, and related disciplines to deliver projects that help save British Columbians' time, money, and lives. We start by unpacking a problem and assessing the service journey and “choice architecture”—the context within which a behaviour happens. We help people do things faster or more accurately, like completing a form or filing taxes. We also encourage people to participate in government programs that would benefit them and help them understand what government is asking of them.

Like other behavioural science units around the world, our work supports all policy and program areas. This includes education, healthcare, environment, justice, natural resources, and finance. We draw on the latest science from the academic literature. We also learn from counterparts in other jurisdictions, who work on similar problems. We work to understand the behavioural aspects of a problem using field research with frontline staff and citizens, who we invite to co-design solutions with us.

We know that what worked somewhere else may not work here in British Columbia. This is why we test our assumptions on a small scale first. When possible, we do this using randomized controlled trials. This means comparing multiple potential solutions side-by-side to learn what works (and what does not) to drive behaviour change. Testing helps us find an intervention that will work for British Columbians. It is all about evidence-based recommendations—equipping our clients with the tools they need to improve policies and programs.

Over its first four years, BC BIG matured into a program with three main areas of focus:

1. Building **Evidence** (projects and advice)
2. Growing **Capacity** (through education and awareness)
3. Cultivating **Community** (partnerships and networks)

Evidence building is our core business. But we know we are better when we work together. That's why BC BIG invests in education and awareness-raising activities like training sessions and conferences to build capacity. It is also why we value our community of partners and networks who have generously shared expertise, contacts, and resources over the years. With that support, we have been able to do more and grow more quickly.

Capacity- and community-building make evidence-building possible. They will continue to be foundational as we move forward in a post-pandemic world.

Let us take a look at what BC BIG has accomplished in each area between 2016-2020.

Building Evidence

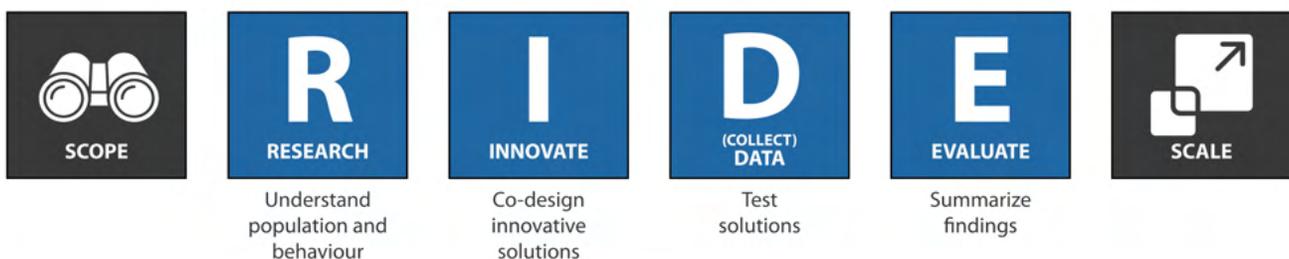
Evidence building is about using and generating insights into how and why people behave the way they do to help our provincial ministry clients design better programs and services. From climate change to the COVID pandemic to inequality—our clients are working on the big problems of the day.

We do **two types of evidence building**.

▶ 1. Behavioural Intervention

The first way we build evidence is through an **intervention (or evaluation) project**. We use the scientific method to determine which of our proposed solutions will work the best to support citizens. For examples of some of these projects, see our “Case Studies” starting on page 15.

We use our six-phase **RIDE Model for Behaviour Shift** to guide our projects. It starts with scoping the problem. We then move into RIDE, where we research, co-design, and test solutions. We end with scaling the most successful solution. This model includes checkpoints at key stages as a reminder to consider ethics and apply lenses that consider equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility, and that includes Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+).



▶ 2. Behavioural Lens

The other way we build evidence is by providing advice to clients about how to develop or improve a policy, program or service using what we know about behaviour. We call this type of work a **behavioural lens**. We might do this, for example, when there are logistical challenges, measurement challenges, or other reasons why an experiment may not be the right option.

During a lens project, we review scientific studies in behavioural science and findings from other places. We may also do field research, like interviews and surveys. We then use this information to make evidence-informed recommendations.

Building Evidence by the Numbers

NUMBER OF COMPLETED PROJECTS BY SECTOR



NUMBER OF PROJECTS BY STATUS



NUMBER OF METHODOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS



PERCENTAGE OF SATISFIED CLIENTS

100% of our project clients told us they learned a lot about BI through working with us and that the experience has changed the way they approach their work.

Growing Capacity

For BI to grow as an effective tool to improve policies and programs, we need to help public servants understand what it is and how to use it. That includes growing the skills and expertise of the public servants who make up the BC BIG team itself.

Some ways we have done this have included offering presentations, workshops, and multi-day BI boot camps. We also organize training webinars on specific topics. In 2019, we partnered with the University of British Columbia's Decision Insights for Business and Society (UBC-DIBS) to co-create Canada's first Advanced Professional Certificate in Behavioural Insights. This unique nine-month, hands-on program offers training in the science and practice of BI. Learners get the chance to complete a real BI project to apply their new knowledge and skills to a real-world challenge.

Building capacity is not just about increasing awareness or skills among existing public servants. It is also about exposing the next generation of public servants to a BI practice in the public service. Through on-the-job training of co-ops and fellowships, we encourage future BI practitioners and experts to consider a career in the public service.



Training & Workshops



Growing Capacity by the Numbers

Trained **6,500+** public servants
in behavioural insights

Hired

2



MITACS
fellows

3

co-op
employees

Hosted

10

policy schools
and boot camps



Created

1



corporate
blog site

Published

77

blog
posts



A Top

5

BC public servant
community by
membership

Co-created Western Canada's
first BI certificate program:
**UBC's Advanced Professional
Certificate Program
in Behavioural Insights**



Cultivating Community

At BC BIG we know we are better together. So we take time to foster collaboration and partnership among scientists, practitioners, students, and enthusiasts.

There are lots of ways that we have invested in building our BI community. For example, we co-host the annual [BIG Difference BC conference](#) with UBC-DIBS and other partners. We also host virtual webinars, meet-ups, and book talks on the latest theories, case studies, and topics of interest.

In 2020, we established the BIG Difference Advisory Board with our partners at UBC-DIBS. The Board has broad representation that reflects the diversity of the BI community we are a part of. The Board will advise on community- and capacity-building activities. With the Board's help, we will make sure we are delivering training and events that align with our corporate goals and meet the needs of the BI community in British Columbia.

► **BIG Difference BC Conference Partners**

These partners who have supported BIG Difference BC represent just a few of BC BIG's many amazing collaborators over our first four years.



DIBS

Decision Insights for Business & Society



THE
**BEHAVIOURAL
INSIGHTS
TEAM**



Cultivating Community by the Numbers

Co-hosted

1

national BI
conference

4

BC BI
conferences

Hosted

45

BI speakers through annual
BIG Difference BC conference

Gained **1,971** subscribers through
BIG Difference BC
network

Participated in **4** partnership grants.

Through these grants, we **collaborated** with
20 academic researchers, **3** academic institutions,
3 Crown corporations, **2** industry organizations,
2 non-profit organizations and **1** local government.

Worked across **12** research areas.

Attained Affiliate status with
The University of Victoria.

Partnered with **DIBS** at **UBC Sauder**
for **4** years to build a BI community.



Case Studies

A sample of projects completed in BC BIG's first four years.

- ▶ Improving the Income Assistance Experience
- ▶ Protecting Southern Mountain Caribou
- ▶ Managing Groundwater in B.C.
- ▶ Improving Tax Collection Efforts
- ▶ Improving Information Collection in the Seafood Industry
- ▶ Supporting Unemployed British Columbians During COVID-19
- ▶ Expanding Farming Opportunities in B.C.

Improving the Income Assistance Experience

Using behavioural insights to reduce errors on monthly report forms

We compared errors made on an original reporting form with forms where similar questions were either grouped by...



Task



Applicant

We found...

errors reduced by $\frac{1}{2}$

on forms grouped by task

The Challenge

British Columbians who receive income assistance must submit a form called the *Monthly Report* to declare changes in their financial situation.

Even small errors on this detailed form can lead to delays in income assistance.

The Approach

Working with the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, our team spoke with clients and frontline staff. We heard that an improved form might reduce the error rate and improve client experience. We analyzed administrative records to validate what we heard.

Behavioural Insights

► Chunking

To visually separate fields and reduce cognitive load, we chunked—or grouped—similar questions by task (prototype #1) and by applicant/spouse (prototype #2).

► Defaults

By pre-filling a “\$” in income fields, we prompted clients to fill in “0” when there is no income to report.

► Salience

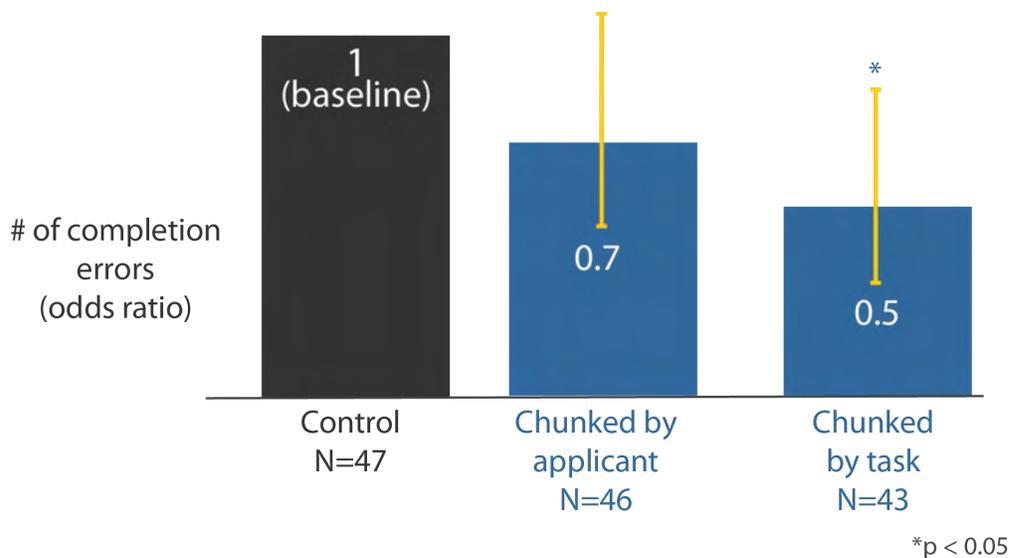
We used a calendar icon as a call to action to increase the salience of the due date.

The Design and Results

We used volunteers from the BC Public Service to test the prototypes. We asked them to imagine they were someone applying for income assistance. They were given the same information a client would have to complete the *Monthly Report* form. We randomly assigned each volunteer to one of two prototype forms or to the control version. Prototype 1 grouped information by task. Prototype 2 grouped information by applicant.

Prototype 1 reduced the number of errors by half. Even better, it took people the same amount of time to complete this version as the control—indicating the reduction in errors did not come at the expense of participants' time. While prototype 2 also reduced errors, the difference between this prototype and the control or prototype 1 were not statistically significant.

The results of this project are helping the Ministry build an evidence base to improve the experience of income assistance clients.



Our behaviourally informed prototype that chunked the report by task reduced completion error by half.

Protecting Southern Mountain Caribou

Using behavioural insights to encourage snowmobilers to ride only in approved areas

We surveyed...

450 snowmobilers including

members of five snowmobile clubs and learned they found it hard to know when they were in restricted areas.

So we worked with partners to create simpler tools...



Trailhead maps



Mobile app

The Challenge

The British Columbia Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations, and Rural Development is responsible for protecting Southern Mountain Caribou by reducing disturbance in their habitat. The Ministry monitors over one million hectares of caribou habitat. While most snowmobile riders avoid closure areas, even a minor disturbance can force caribou into areas with increased risks, such as exposure to predators, avalanches, and reduced access to food.

Encouraging riders to stay out of closed areas will help protect caribou.

Behavioural insights

▶ Timing

We created the app and maps to enable snowmobilers to access the necessary information when they need it.

▶ Simplification

We simplified the posted maps to contain only key information. We designed the app to show only the details needed by the riders by default. We used consistent icons between the app and the map.

▶ Framing

Previous maps displayed a large area, which focused attention on surrounding closures (where to avoid). Our revised maps zoom in to focus attention on open areas (where to go).

▶ Salience

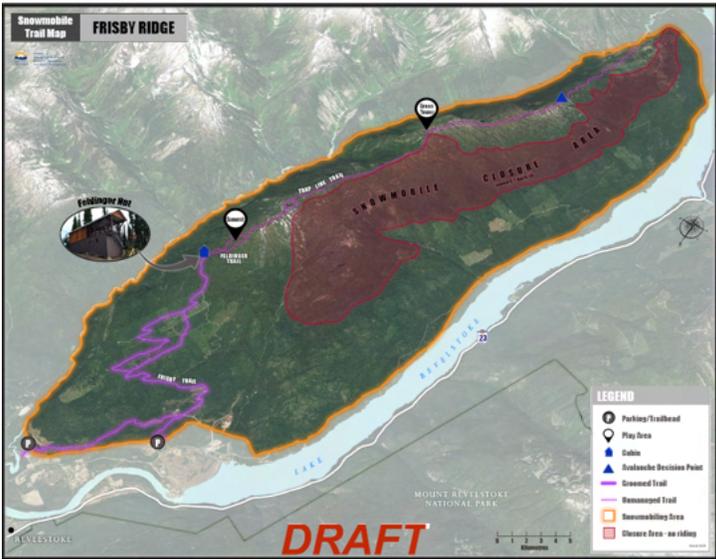
We used 3D satellite images so riders can recognize landmarks and reference where they are relative to closure boundaries.

The Approach

BC BIG conducted research with the snowmobiling community in British Columbia to learn more about their experience with closure areas. This research included interviews, site visits, and an online survey with over 450 snowmobilers. From this research we learned that most snowmobilers want to follow the rules, but they either do not know what the rules are or where the boundaries are for riding. To address this, we worked with GeoBC, a government unit that manages mapping information, to develop prototypes of two mapping products: 1) a digital planning and riding app, and 2) simple, user-friendly maps posted in riding areas. Through feedback sessions with snowmobiling clubs and a second online survey with riders, we learned what riders liked and disliked about the prototype solutions, helping us further improve the app and maps.

The Product

The posted maps present closure information in a 3D format that helps riders orient themselves to the location of closures, while drawing attention to relevant terrain details. Through geolocation, the riding app allows riders to determine where they are in relation to closures and other points of interest. The Ministry plans to launch the app and the redesigned maps for the 2021/22 snowmobiling season. Due to logistical challenges, it is not possible to run a rigorous evaluation. As such, data on the effectiveness of the tools will be gathered through qualitative feedback with the snowmobiling community. This feedback will be used to further improve the final products and inform future initiatives. Our behaviourally informed prototypes give snowmobilers the information they need when they need it.



Our behaviourally informed map and app give snowmobilers the information they need when they need it

Managing Groundwater in B.C.

Using behavioural insights to increase the number of non-domestic groundwater users that apply for a groundwater licence

We designed...

New letters to groundwater users with loss- and gain-framed messages.

"Offenders may be fined, ordered to cease using water, or refused a licence"

"This gives you priority over newer users during times of scarcity and drought"

The new letters resulted in...

2x the number of licence applications submitted

The Challenge

B.C.'s new Water Sustainability Act requires non-domestic users to licence their groundwater use. When the Act came into force in 2016, existing groundwater users were required to apply for a licence within a defined timeframe. Groundwater licensing ensures there is a fair and transparent process in place for determining who uses the water, including during water shortages. Existing users who do not apply for a licence before the deadline may lose access to groundwater and could be fined. We focused on how to encourage applications from rural business owners who use groundwater.

Behavioural Insights

► Personalization

To ensure businesses recognized that the notice was intended for them, we included the recipient's name, property type, and their parcel ID number in the new letters.

► Gain Framing

To encourage applications, we created one version of the letter emphasizing the rights and legal protections gained by having a licence.

► Loss Framing

To discourage inaction, we created another letter emphasizing the penalties and costs of not applying for a licence.

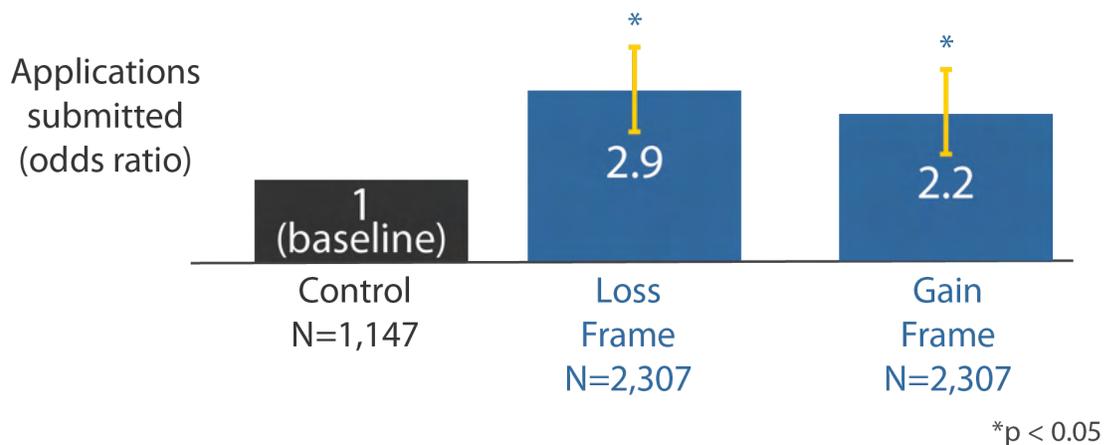
Licensing groundwater helps protect aquifers and streams, as well as the businesses and livelihoods that depend on reliable access to groundwater.

The Approach

We worked with the BC Public Service's Service Design Team. We interviewed over 50 rural business owners and frontline staff to identify barriers to groundwater licensing. The research found that many businesses did not know they needed a licence and did not know how to apply. We designed two different versions of a letter that was mailed to business owners to notify them of their legal responsibility to apply for a groundwater licence and to inform them of the process.

The Design and Results

We randomly assigned "gain"- and "loss"-framed letters to rural business owners who use groundwater in B.C. Another smaller sample of business owners received no letter. The new BI letters more than doubled the rate at which people opened and submitted licence applications. We found no evidence of a significant difference between the gain- and loss-framed letters. This simple, inexpensive paper letter encouraged rural business owners to complete an online licence application.



The new letters significantly increased the number of licence applications submitted compared to the control.

Improving Tax Collection Efforts

Using behavioural insights to increase tax compliance among small business owners in B.C.

We sent...

reminders closer to the due date. We also included incentives for paying on time.

March 2017						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			30d			
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	
	5d			1d	DUE	

The new reminders resulted in ...

40%

Reduction in delinquent PST payments

2500+

hours in compliance-related time saved

The Challenge

Businesses in British Columbia are required to submit monthly Provincial Sales Tax (PST) payments. Not all businesses submit their monthly payments on-time.

Payment deadlines are easy to forget and new businesses often do not know about them.

The Approach

Interviews revealed that many businesses intend to file on-time and would benefit from more timely reminders. Working with the B.C. Ministry of Finance, our team implemented new, carefully timed reminder notices.

Behavioural insights

► Prompts

We sent reminders close to the time that payments were due.

► Social Norms

To give people the push they needed to make their payment on time, we emphasized in the first prompt (30 days prior) that most B.C. businesses make their payments by the deadline.

► Loss Framing

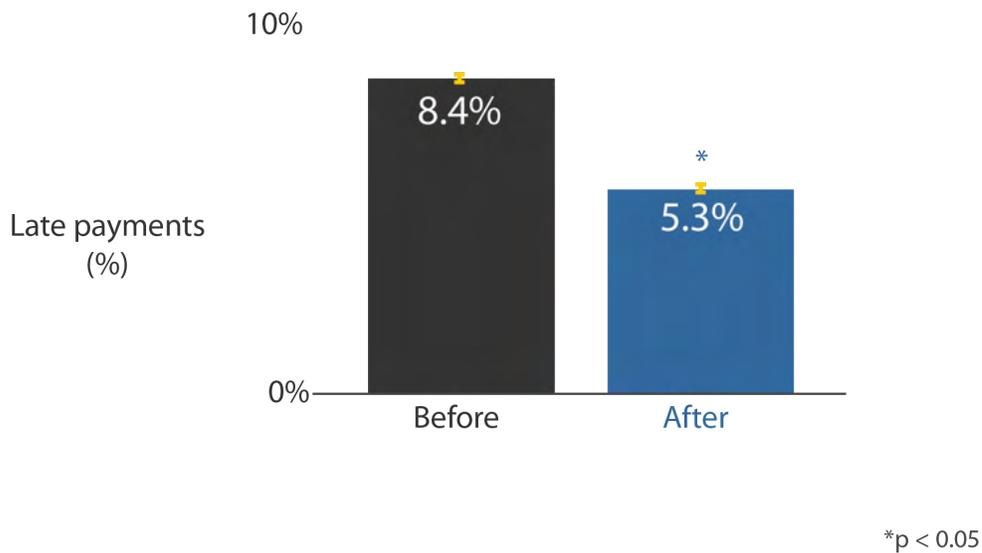
In the final prompt (one day prior), we reminded registrants of the late payment penalties.

► Incentives

To further encourage action, in the second prompt (five days prior) we noted that businesses could receive a monetary commission for submitting their taxes on-time.

The Design and Results

Our team sent reminders to all business owners registered through an online payment portal (about 47,000). We sent one email at the beginning of the 30-day PST payment cycle (standard notice). We sent new additional email reminders five-days and one-day before the deadline. The reminders were tested using a pre-post design. Data on PST submissions were collected over 24 months. Behaviourally informed and timely reminders reduced PST payment delinquency by 35%, with the biggest decrease in the month of February (a reduction of about 50%). These reminders saved more than 2,500 hours in compliance-related staff time over the first six months.



Late payment rates were significantly lower from those who received the adapted letter.

Improving Information Collection in the Seafood Industry

Using behavioural insights to make it easier for seafood producers to submit their annual census data on time

We designed...

more clear notices to seafood producers, reminding them to submit their census data.

We sent these at appropriate time intervals to make sure they had the information they needed at the right time.

The new reminders resulted in...

 **35%** Increase in reports submitted on time

Most producers submitted their reports after the intervention

The Challenge

Each year, seafood producers in British Columbia are asked to report the types and amount of seafood they processed the previous year. Producers may not submit their census on-time (or at all). This could be because the process is too complex or the incentives to do so are not clear. Or it could be that they forget and need a reminder.

Knowing how much seafood is harvested will help make better decisions in future years.

The Approach

The project team changed the frequency and content of email reminders.

Behavioural insights

▶ Prompts

We sent producers emails to remind them about the census 30 days, 5-7 days, and 1-2 days before the deadline.

▶ Personalization

We included the recipient's name and key company information in all emails.

▶ Simplification

We removed nonessential text, added a call to action, and formatted emails to focus on critical information.

▶ Incentives

We included the rationale for soliciting this information and the potential consequences for not responding.

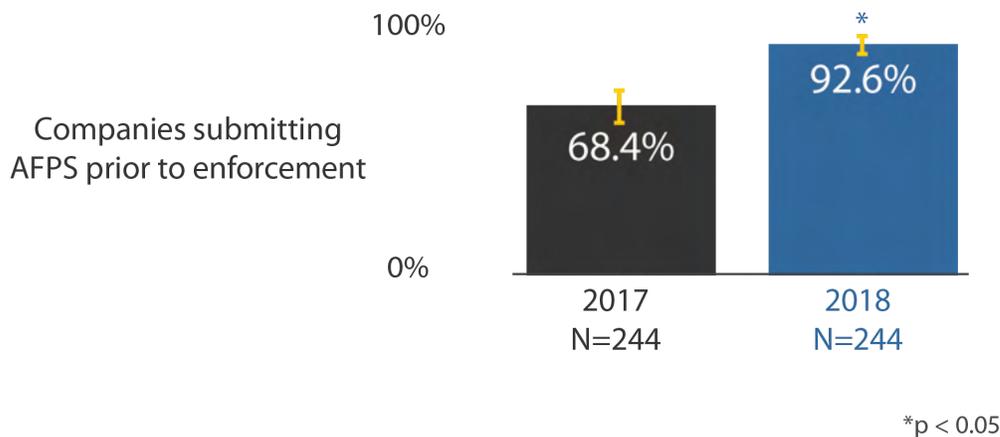
▶ Step-by-step process

We included a flow diagram in the final reminder and subsequent emails to indicate the current point in the process and upcoming enforcement action.

The Design and Results

For the 2017 reporting year, we sent 244 producers the standard email. For the 2018 reporting year, we sent those same producers the behaviourally informed email. We then conducted a pre-post test to estimate the change in timely submissions due to the new email.

In 2017, 68% of seafood producers submitted their report before any enforcement actions were needed. In 2018, this figure was 93%—an increase of 35 percent.



People who received the behaviourally informed letter were significantly more likely to complete and submit their census on time.

These improved submission rates are important because they

- Reduce staff time spent responding to requests for help
- Reduce costs associated with database and data estimates
- Reduce the administrative burden for enforcement
- Provide a more complete annual seafood census, which is crucial for economic analyses, sector funding decisions, program development, and international fisheries treaty negotiations

Supporting Unemployed British Columbians During COVID-19

Using behavioural insights
to connect the recently
unemployed to free job
services

We tested...

the impact of two behaviourally informed
prototype emails on enrollment in WorkBC.

"Join 1000s of British
Columbians accessing
WorkBC Services!"

Social Norms

"You're one step
away from valuable
job resources!"

Checklist

The checklist email resulted in...

3x More enrollments in WorkBC
than with no email

Faster submissions than the social norms email by

1.5 days

The Challenge

The early weeks of COVID-19 saw mass layoffs across British Columbia. WorkBC has a great record of success, but for several reasons, some clients delay applying. In interviews, we heard that people might not understand what the program is about or what is expected of them after losing their job. We also heard that people sometimes underestimate the popularity of WorkBC.

Behavioural insights

► Social Norms

By letting people know how many people use the service and find employment, we helped clarify its popularity.

► Checklist

By providing a simple checklist, we helped people see how close they were to accessing support.

*The WorkBC program helps people access valuable
job support services.*

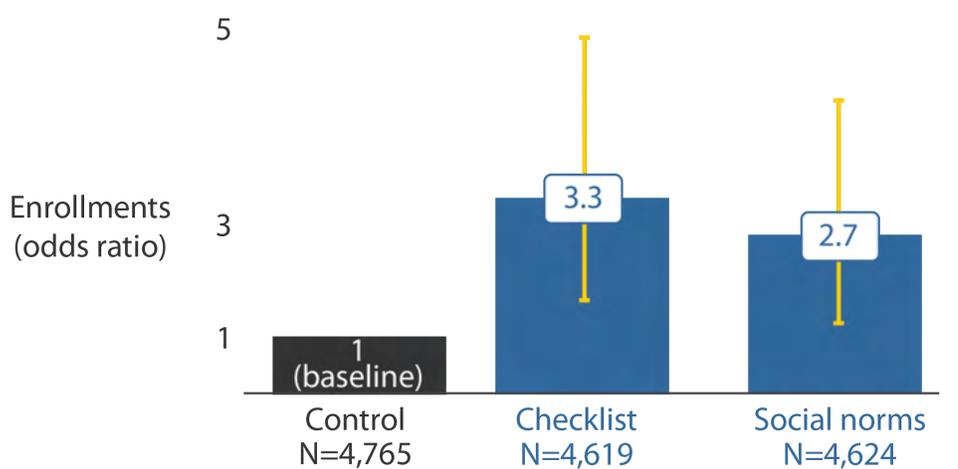
The Approach

We collaborated with the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction to conduct an email-based randomized controlled trial. Our goal was to help British Columbians return to work whenever they were ready. We designed two emails. One presented social norms, introducing the letter with “Join 1000s of British Columbians accessing WorkBC Services”. The other included a simple checklist, introducing the letter with “You’re one step away from valuable job resources.” We asked two questions. First, which email works the best—checklist or social norms? Second, is email an effective way to support job seekers?

The Design and Results

We found the checklist email performed the best. Compared to the social norms email, people who received the checklist email were more likely to open it (34% vs. 30%), click the link (8% vs. 6%), and submit an online expression of interest (5% vs. 3%). Among this “checklist” group, the conversion rate—the number of people who submitted the form after clicking the link—was high, at 64%. The checklist email also reduced the delay in online form submissions by 1.5 days.

We also found strong evidence that email is an effective way to support job seekers. People who received an email in the first 30 days were three times more likely to enroll in WorkBC than those who received an email afterwards. However, we found no significant difference between checklist and social norm conditions—suggesting proactive communication is even more impactful than changes in content.



*p < 0.05

People who received the checklist and social norms email were more likely to enrol in the program than those who were sent an email after 30 days.

Expanding Farming Opportunities in B.C.

Using behaviourally informed postcards to encourage farmland owners to participate in a land-matching program.

We designed a new postcard about the program, and tailored versions of it to three different regions.



We found...

12 people inquired about the program during the study

All of those who inquired had received a behaviourally informed postcard

The Challenge

Only 5% of British Columbia is farmable, and a strong local food supply relies on using farmable land. B.C. also has some of the most expensive farmland in Canada, making it hard for new farmers to afford to get started. The B.C. Land Matching Program (BCLMP) aims to address this by matching landowners with land seekers. BC BIG partnered with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries to explore how to improve participation in this program by landowners with available farmland.

Making the most of usable farmland will help strengthen B.C.'s local food supply.

Behavioural insights

► Social Norms

We highlighted that “hundreds of landowners” had already participated and added regional social norms.

► Messenger Effect

We included messages from a fellow landowner and regional land matcher, and highlighted the Ministry of Agriculture’s involvement.

► Loss Aversion

We fostered stewardship/identity and harnessed loss aversion framing by emphasizing the value of using land rather than having it sit fallow.

► Step-by-step process

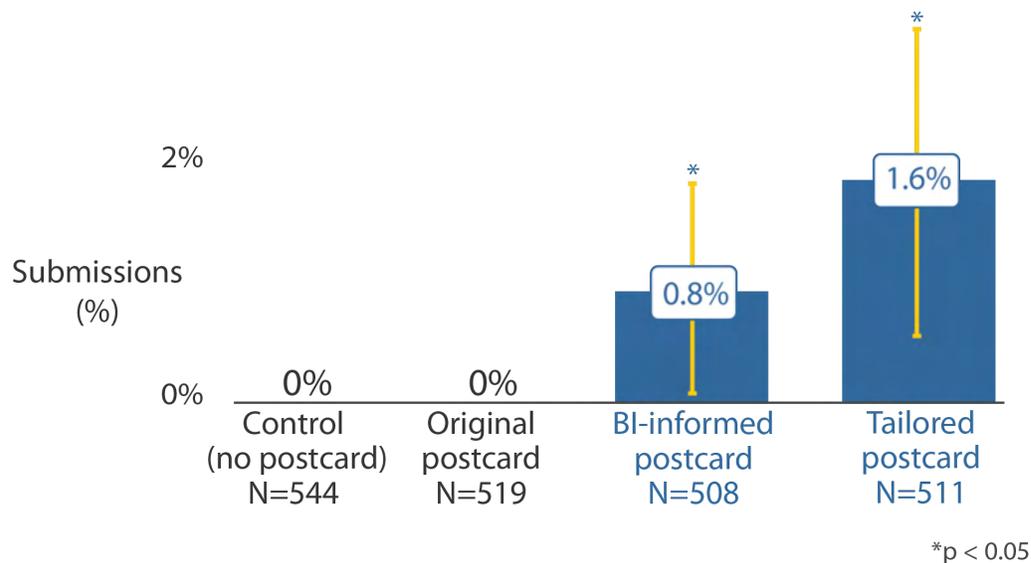
We included a step-by-step flow chart of how the process works.

The Approach

The project evaluated a behaviourally informed approach to increase landowner participation in the BCLMP in Metro Vancouver, the Capital Regional District, and the Central Okanagan. BC BIG conducted qualitative research to explore landowner views, experiences, values, and motivations about land leasing and the BCLMP. We used a randomized controlled trial to look for differences in the number of inquiries.

The Design and Results

Updated postcards promoting the program harnessed several behavioural insights. A second version of the postcard was also created to evaluate the additional impact of tailoring the message to different regions. We ran a randomized controlled trial to test the effectiveness of the postcards and measured two key outcomes: 1) call/email inquiries to the BCLMP and 2) web traffic to the BCLMP site. Only 12 postcard recipients followed up about the program via phone call or email. However, all responses were from those who had received one of the two behaviourally informed postcards, for a significant difference between treatment postcards and control. There was, however, no statistical difference between the two types of behaviourally informed postcards.



All inquiries were from landowners who received one of the behaviourally informed postcards.

[▶ Learn more about the BCLMP](#)

Seven Lessons Learned

In our first four years, we learned a lot about how to apply behavioural science in government. Here are some of the BIG lessons we learned.

1

Science is Hard

We have aimed for the highest standards of scientific inquiry in our projects. But in government it is sometimes hard to pull together all the pieces we need to design a full, rigorous experiment.

2

Mix Your Methods

In a field where quantitative methods rule, it is easy to overlook the value of qualitative data. In our unit, we have adopted a mixed methods approach. Our work is stronger for it.

3

Embrace Failure

Not everything works the first time... or the second. We are learning to embrace apparent failures as learning opportunities.

4

Grow Your Talent

We have seen the value of investing in people within BC BIG and across the public service to build knowledge and expertise.

5

Find a Partner

We know we are better together, and we value the partnerships and networks that have been foundational to the growth and maturity of our BI unit.

6

Pay it Forward

Our successes have come from the work of others before us, and the advice, knowledge, and expertise they share. We are committed to sharing our experiences with others and supporting those who are new to the field.

7

Share Your Story

In science, it is important to publish results. But we see value in sharing the whole story – not just the results. We celebrate the journey, the lessons learned, and the paths that didn't go where we expected.

Want to Read More?

Check out our [2019 blog post](#) on these lessons learned. And while you are there, explore some of our other posts!

Looking to the Future

BC BIG grew quickly, becoming the mature organization it is in just four years. In our fifth year, we have our footing and are finding new and exciting ways to expand on our work. We will continue to support client ministries in designing and delivering programs and services that meet the changing social, economic, and environmental needs of our province. The team will also continue to support the training needs of public servants and contribute to the growing BI community in British Columbia and across Canada.

Some of the initiatives under development include:

- Facilitating the co-creation of **BI Principles** with other practitioners across Canada in an effort to articulate what it means to be a great BI practitioner in our country.
- Co-hosting the **BIG Difference BC 2021 conference** to provide the opportunity to learn, share, and network with the BI community in B.C. and beyond.
- Co-chairing the **BIG Difference Advisory Board** to advise on the community and capacity-building activities at BC BIG and UBC-DIBS, and to ensure these activities reflect the diverse needs and interests of the growing BI community in B.C.
- Launching the **BIG training strategy**. As part of this, we will further develop training offered by BC BIG and map out the continuum of BI learning options (from novice to expert), delivered through BC BIG, UBC-DIBS, and other providers.

And many more exciting projects, that we are not ready to share quite yet! Be sure to stay in touch to learn about these next steps—email BIG@gov.bc.ca to be added to the BIG Difference BC mail list.

As we look toward the future, BC BIG is well-positioned to build on our early foundations. The next few years will see the team tackle projects with greater complexity, collaborate with new partners, and apply BI further upstream in the policymaking process.

There's no doubt BC BIG will continue serving the public good with the same curiosity, collaborative spirit, and drive for excellence that's been central to our success so far.

The BC BIG Team

This document represents the work of everyone who has been a part of the BC BIG family since its inception, and the contributions of all of our clients, partners, supporters, and collaborators.

We are grateful to everyone who has supported us and grown with us.

BC BIG began with **Rueben Bronee**'s vision to bring in BC BIG's founder, **Heather Devine**. Heather's passion, vision and drive brought BC BIG to life over its first four years and her leadership shaped it into the mature organization it is today.

Over the years, the BC BIG team grew and benefitted greatly from the contributions of...

Isabelle Andresen
Kirstin Appelt*
Michael Buttazzoni
Ken Craig
Jamieson Dunlop
Mikayla Ford*
Caitlin Forsey

Maria Giammarco
Susana Guardado
Kathryn Henderson
Vince Hopkins
Takuro Ishikawa*
Carl Jensen*
Christine Kormos*
Anna McClean

Lindsay Miles-Pickup*
Traviss Ram
Sarah Smythe
Sasha Tregebov
Sharilynn Wardrop*
Ashley Whillans
Stephanie Wilkie*

**current team members in 2021*

Learn more by visiting the [BC BIG website](#)
or email us at BIG@gov.bc.ca