



Reflecting Our Communities

Building a Diverse BC Public Service

A Report on Our Inclusive Approach
to Hiring, Developing, Engaging and
Retaining Employees with Disabilities



Where ideas work

Introduction

Since 2006 and the establishment of the corporate human resource plan [Being the Best](#), the BC Public Service has become renowned as a leading employer. We have won Top Employer awards both for B.C. and for Canada, Greenest Employer awards, and Family Friendly Employer awards, among others. In support of maintaining our status as a leading employer, our leaders have created a 10-year vision for B.C. to become the most progressive province in Canada for people with disabilities – where disabilities are no longer a barrier to living full lives, contributing to communities, and where no British Columbian is ever told their goals and dreams aren't realistic because of their disability.

The BC Public Service will play a significant part in achieving this vision, which is closely related to the original strategy on diversity, [Reflecting Our Communities: Building a Diverse BC Public Service](#), launched in 2012. In response to the findings from this consultation, the Province has committed to “develop a disability strategy for the BC Public Service to enhance accessibility for hiring and advancement of persons with disabilities within the public service.”

“We are all within the spectrum of ability.”
— Robin Syme, CanAssist

There are three existing strategies in the BC Public Service that support our movement towards becoming a more inclusive employer:

1. **[Reflecting our Communities: Building a Diverse BC Public Service](#)**

The corporate diversity strategy for the BC Public Service was launched in 2012, with the overall goal of ensuring that all government policies and procedures reflect the diverse communities we serve.

2. **[Being the Best, the Corporate Human Resource Plan for the BC Public Service](#)**

[Being the Best](#) was first launched in 2006. The goal was not only to proactively address workforce needs, but also to become the best public service employer in Canada. The three key goals of [Being the Best](#) still endure:

- Building internal capacity
- Improving our competitiveness, and
- Managing for results

3. **[Accessibility 2024: Making B.C. the most progressive province in Canada for people with disabilities by 2024](#)**

This strategy was the result of a public white paper consultation. Based on input from citizens, government made a public commitment to improve in 12 areas to make B.C. the most progressive jurisdiction in Canada regarding disability and accessibility issues.

All three of these strategies intersect with the principle of inclusiveness. Within an environment of fiscal pressure and finite resources, accessing the hidden talent that lies within the labour pool comprised of those with disabilities provides a unique opportunity to tap into a largely undiscovered resource. These activities will be rooted in a mind-set of opportunity. Benefits will be realized by:

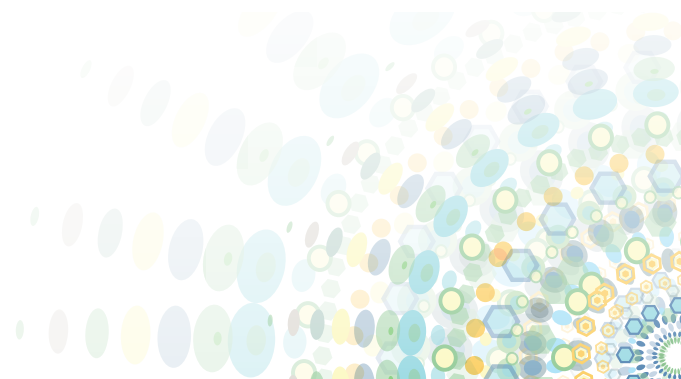
1. INDIVIDUALS who will have an opportunity to contribute their ideas and skills in a meaningful way as employees within the provincial public service
2. The BC PUBLIC SERVICE, which will benefit from a new pool of talent and resources
3. CITIZENS who will see themselves reflected in those serving them, and
4. By the LARGER COMMUNITY who will see tax dollars being redirected from monthly income assistance cheques and towards public service and program delivery.

“Each person is valued because of,
rather than inspite of their differences.”
— Reflecting Our Communities, 2012

Significant accomplishments have been achieved in the past; however, with this renewed focus the BC Public Service will seek to build upon this foundation by:

1. Enhancing accessibility for hiring and advancement of persons with disabilities within the public service, and
2. Engaging all employees, and normalizing the experience of people with disabilities excelling in the workplace.

The following focuses on things we are already doing within the BC Public Service to achieve these goals, as well as outlining the framework for action for moving forward in order to achieve the vital commitments outlined in [Accessibility 2024](#).



Reflecting Our Communities: What We Are Currently Doing

As an organization, the BC Public Service is making a commitment to the key goals of enhancing accessibility and normalizing the employment experience for those with disabilities. Though the formal commitment may be new, diversity and accessibility are not new concepts for the organization. We have raised awareness of inclusiveness through diversity training for all employees, placing a diversity lens on recruitment and hiring, and by focusing on diversity in Public Service Week celebrations.

Integrating accessibility into everything we do as an employer begins with enhancing accessibility in the hiring and development processes. We are committed to ensuring that all employees can participate equally in creating the kind of organization where we all want to work.

INCLUSIVE HIRING PRACTICES

The BC Public Service is committed to removing barriers that restrict or inhibit the employment of groups identified under the Human Rights Code. This commitment includes assistance so applicants with disabilities can fairly compete for positions in our organization.

There are more than 200 occupations in the BC Public Service, each with unique requirements. Due to the variety of requirements, reasonable efforts to include applicants with disabilities in the screening and interview process must be considered on an opportunity-by-opportunity basis.

Some examples of assistance during the recruitment process include:

- Alternate formats for written materials
- Physical adjustments (chairs, workstations, keyboards, etc.)
- Technical aids/assistive devices

WEBSITE ACCESSIBILITY

Inclusiveness is driving the improvements to the BC Public Service website, MyHR. In alignment with the Government of B.C. Internet Standards and the BC Public Service Agency's Self-Service Roadmap, the BC Public Service Agency has established accessibility as a key priority in the development and maintenance of the MyHR website and related digital tools and technology. The MyHR website, which includes our job opportunities site, adheres to the Government of B.C. internet standards. These standards are informed by the Web Accessibility Initiative of the World Wide Web Consortium.

ACCESSIBLE WORKPLACES

Through barrier-free buildings, we have committed to removing physical barriers to accessibility, and 81 per cent of our 558 owned and leased offices, courthouses and health units are already barrier free. Except where heritage constraints apply, 100 per cent of our owned and leased customer service buildings will be fully accessible by 2020.

Shared Services BC has implemented a “Barrier Free Policy” to provide barrier-free design in newly constructed buildings and major alterations of existing owned buildings. The construction of new buildings and major alterations are regulated under the British Columbia Building Code. The Code includes requirements for the design, construction and alteration of buildings to make them accessible to persons with disabilities, including persons with mobility challenges.

WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY

Supports and resources available through Workplace Health and Safety connect employees, including employees with permanent disabilities, to a wide range of prevention oriented health resources including occupational health assessment services for employees who are at work, but struggling with health conditions. Corporate services focus on early triage to identify appropriate clinical, workplace or other supports. For complex cases, managers and employees are supported with a multidisciplinary team of workplace health professions to provide rehabilitation support and to build safe, timely and sustainable return to work plans.

Early return to modified work leads to better long term health outcomes for employees, including employees with permanent disabilities. The focus of our model is on an employee’s abilities for work by better understanding their limitations. This creates opportunities for the modification of work duties to support employees who require rehabilitation from illness or injury, management of chronic disease, or who have permanent disabilities.

- **Occupational Health and Rehabilitation:** Return to work and occupational health services to assist employees and managers manage illnesses at work or facilitate return to work following employee illness or injury.
- **Health Promotion and Planning:** Planning and delivery of corporate wide health promotion campaigns and programs designed to increase health awareness and literacy and prevent illness.
- **Occupational Safety:** Specialist advice and services to ministry managers to ensure a safe working environment that meets or exceeds WorkSafe BC occupational safety requirements.
- **Managing Employee Health Issues at Work:** Occupational health specialists work with employees who have health issues that impact their job performance, as well as their managers, in order to determine options and accommodations that will assist the employee to do their job.
- **Short-term Counselling:** This program focuses on a range of resources including prevention-focused work/life management services.
- **My Good Health:** A confidential online health management system that can help employees and their dependent family members understand where they are succeeding, as well as make informed decisions to positively impact their health now and in the future.



EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS

- Diversity is incorporated into our employee audience in images (regions, ages, genders, ethnicities, occupations, ministries).
- Inclusive language is used in all forms of corporate communications (all regions, genders, non-denominational).

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND COACHING

The MyPerformance approach to performance management focuses on the conversation and relationship between supervisor and employee, often using a coaching approach, to support engagement and higher performance. The focus on building trust in the relationship and encouraging conversation through a coaching approach can provide the necessary supports to assist with accessibility and inclusion at all levels.

Performance coaching services are available to any member of the BC Public Service. Supervisors who take a coaching approach can help all staff set clear, relevant, meaningful goals appropriate to their role and development needs. This also allows for the unique differences of individual staff members to be considered in encouraging people to work from their strengths rather than their limitations.

“Being disabled means having to be thoughtful about what we do. We need to be flexible and innovative about how we do it, ready to persevere and be creative when we meet unforeseen barriers or issues that don’t exist for other people. These are valuable attributes in any workplace, so I never find it surprising when I hear how successful other persons with disabilities have been in their jobs.”

— BC Public Service employee

Reflecting Our Communities: Commitments to 2024

As an organization, we are growing in the right direction. Our approach going forward intends to build on the goals articulated in, and the strong foundation of stability established in [Accessibility 2024](#), [Being the Best](#), our corporate human resource plan and [Reflecting Our Communities](#), our corporate diversity strategy. We must strive to apply a lens of inclusiveness to everything we do as an employer: attracting, hiring, developing, engaging and retaining employees.

Bigger than diversity or accessibility, inclusion acknowledges that all employees are within the “spectrum of ability” and normalizes the experience of people with disabilities, visible or invisible, enabling them to excel in the workplace. There are a number of things we can do to support the goal of inclusion.

HIRING OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Work-Able: Graduate Internship Program: One of the themes that arose in the public white paper consultation process was the need for work experience programs for recent post-secondary graduates with disabilities:

- Development of an internship program providing work experience for recent post-secondary graduates, in partnership with CanAssist, the Ministry of Advanced Education, and the Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation; targeting specific post-secondary programs aligned with identified workforce needs. Driven by workforce

needs such as policy, IT/IS and project/program management and aligning with relevant post-secondary programs would provide work experience for students with disabilities while attracting an untapped market for hard-to-fill vacancies across the public service.

Hiring Services: In order to support inclusiveness of programs and services throughout the hiring process, there are a number of key activities which will be undertaken:

- Accessibility audit of the application process, including the recruitment system used to post vacancies and accept applications. The purpose of this audit will be to identify ways to improve the accessibility and usability of the process through the lens of disability awareness.
- Integration of inclusivity language in job postings where applicable.
- Online tools and supports for hiring managers and applicants, supervisors and employees.
- Promote the BC Public Service brand so that persons with disabilities recognize the BC Public Service as an attractive, engaging and accessible employer.
- Materials on MyHR as education for hiring managers to consider persons with disabilities.



ADVANCEMENT OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Learning and Development: Integrating the lens of inclusiveness into the learning and development programs for existing employees sends a powerful message about its priority to the organization. Below are a number of key ways we will do this:

- Development of new learning resources/materials (power points, facilitator guides, participant manuals, handouts etc.) with consideration of the use of blended learning formats which support diverse learning needs.
- Ensuring that all narrated learning resources have a script that is available to those with hearing or visual disabilities.
- Ensuring that all training rooms used by the Learning Centre are accessible.
- Partnering with ministries to provide certified Sign Language Interpreters where required for instructor led course delivery.
- Annual review and updates to existing learning resources to ensure content reflects a diversity of learning styles.
- Updating course evaluation criteria to better reflect the diversity of the public service.

- Updating web resources using visual images/language to better reflect the diversity of our workforce and increase accessibility.
- Integration of the message and importance of inclusiveness principles into Welcome to the Public Service, the Oath and Orientation program for all new BC Public Service employees.
- Integration of the message and importance of inclusiveness principles into the curriculum of the Supervisory Development Certificate Program.

Executive Development: In order to be inclusive as an organization, our senior leaders must model this behaviour on a daily basis. The following actions will equip our executives and strategic leaders with the information and resources necessary to do so:

- The executive recruitment website and external advertising will be updated to support formats for adaptable technologies used by persons with disabilities, according to best practices in the field, to ensure that executive recruitment information is accessible to potential employees with disabilities.
- Education and training opportunities will be provided for executives and strategic leaders on understanding how having a disability may affect the person and the workplace, and how supervisors can be proactive in supporting all employees' career advancement.

Workplace Health and Safety: In order to support employee health and safety, a number of actions will be undertaken:

- Enhance forms so they can be accessed in various ways to accommodate limitations that persons with disabilities may have.
- Develop training materials for managers and supervisors in developing safe and healthy work places, ensuring that employee with permanent disabilities and their unique needs is a focus of the training.
- Include questions in a health and wellness survey that help to identify the workplace experience and culture associated with supporting people with permanent disabilities.

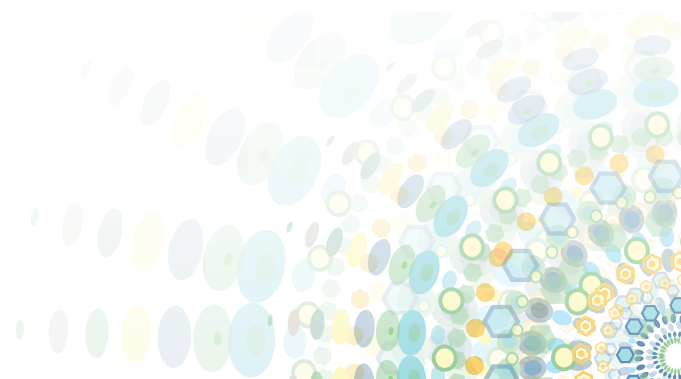
Website Improvements: In alignment with the Government of B.C. Internet Standards and the Agency's Self-Service Approach, the following actions will be taken:

- Monitor and continuously improve the MyHR website as well as any emerging digital tools and technologies.
- Ensure that the Agency's web presence continues to meet the Government of B.C. Internet Standards and the World Wide Web Consortium standards for web accessibility.
- Work across lines of business to develop and publish new content that supports the improved attraction, retention and advancement of people with diverse abilities.

Employee Engagement and Corporate Communications: Being mindful of the importance of inclusiveness to the engagement and retention of existing employees, the following practices will be adopted:

- Creation of a corporate Employee Advisory Council comprising a cross-section of disabled employees in order to provide an internal perspective on what is going well, and what can be improved in moving us forward as an organization.
- Public service employees with disabilities at all levels will be highlighted in corporate communications such as @Work.

“We want to be useful members of the work team.
Overcoming our limitations is just the start – we want
to grow in the job, improve our productivity or the
quality of our work. Just like anyone else.”
— BC Public Service employee



Reflecting Our Communities: Performance Measures

Inclusiveness is the overall goal; with this in mind it is important to have some specific performance measures in place to ensure we continue to move in the right direction over the coming years. The following are some of the ways we will measure our success:

QUANTITATIVE MEASURES

- Percentage of employees who self-identify as having a disability: annual measure, goal to increase to seven per cent by 2024.
- Work Environment Survey (WES) scores for employees who self-identify as having a disability.
- Number of participants taking part in the Work-able: Graduate Internship Program.
- Retention rates of employees with disabilities.
- Extent to which employees with disabilities feel their needs are accommodated.

QUALITATIVE MEASURES

- Intern experience: Feedback from Work-Able: Graduate Internship Program participants, supervisors and partnering organizations .
- Feedback from Accessibility Employee Advisory Council, employees, hiring managers, supervisors and executive across the public service.
- WES feedback from employees who self-identify as having a disability.

“The BC Public Service should lead by example.”

“The BC Public Service should identify a target of inclusion for persons with disabilities that reflects the national population of persons with disabilities: a minimum of 15 per cent.”

“The BC Public Service is an excellent starting point.”

— Feedback provided by citizens during the Accessibility 2024 white paper consultation process

Conclusion

The province of British Columbia already has a solid foundation in place upon which to make the program and policy decisions necessary to meet the assurances of [Accessibility 2024](#) and the ongoing commitments in [Reflecting Our Communities: Building a Diverse BC Public Service](#). The BC Public Service will play a critical role in achieving the goal of becoming the most progressive province in Canada for people with disabilities.

Adopting a more inclusive approach by providing equitable employment opportunities for persons with disabilities has province-wide impacts. Not only does employment provide a much needed sense of stability, contribution and self-reliance to individuals; it also redirects tax dollars from those who must otherwise rely on financial assistance and towards government programs and services. These are individuals who, through gainful employment, are able to contribute to their homes, families and communities while reflecting the diversity of British Columbia's population.

As the largest employer in B.C., the public service will send a powerful message by leading the way. The proposed strategic direction is based on best practices in the field of disability employment, specifically the concept of creating a 'disability confident' organization, as well as leading practices at the provincial, national and international level.

Responsibility for this inclusive approach remains throughout the employment life cycle. It is incumbent upon us as an organization to have the right information and programs in place to hire the right people, as well as to engage and retain them. Doing so will generate considerable benefits for the individual, the BC Public Service and the province as a whole.

“...the societies that succeed will be the ones that are most inclusive because they draw on the benefits of a wealth of different perspectives to drive innovation and advancement.”
— Reflecting Our Communities, 2012

