2022 WORK ENVIRONMENT SURVEY DRIVER GUIDE

Connecting the Drivers of Employee Engagement

BRITISH COLUMBIA
BC Public Service

Where ideas work

The 2022 Work Environment Survey (WES) and report have been commissioned by the BC Public Service Agency on behalf of the BC Public Service.

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Introduction

The BC Public Service has been committed to understanding and improving employee engagement for more than fifteen years through the BC Public Service Work Environment Survey (WES) program. A key element of the WES program is the Employee Engagement Model, which was developed by BC Stats using a statistical technique called structural equation modelling (SEM). In the model, specific workplace functions and management practices, called Engagement drivers, impact employee engagement. Each driver contains a set of survey topics that measure particular aspects of the employee experience. The model is graphically represented as a house, which serves as a visual metaphor that simplifies and illustrates the relationships of drivers within and between the different parts of the model. Spotlighting each driver's unique role in the model can facilitate the interpretation of the WES results and their relevance to the workplace.

ENGAGEMENT

BC Public Service Commitment

ENGAGEMENT CHARACTERISTICS

Job Satisfaction

Organization Satisfaction

WORKPLACE FUNCTIONS ARE THE BUILDING BLOCKS

Empowerment	Stress & Workload	Job Suitability
Vision, Mission & Goals	Teamwork	Tools & Workspace
Recognition	Professional Development	
Pay & Benefits	Staffing Practices	Respectful Environment

MANAGEMENT IS THE FOUNDATION

Executive-Level Management

Supervisory-Level Management

The Employee Engagement Model contains 13 drivers which make up the foundation and building block layers of the "House" diagram.

Beginning on the next page, each driver within the engagement model is presented, beginning with the two management drivers that make up the foundation of the model. This is followed by the building block drivers comprised of various workplace functions and aspects of the work environment.

The pattern of connections between the thirteen "House" drivers noted in this report and the engagement characteristics in the "Roof" (i.e., BC Public Service Commitment, Job Satisfaction and Organization Satisfaction), shape the overall structure of the Employee Engagement model. The order in which the drivers are presented in this report is based on the relationships among the building block drivers. For example, Staffing Practices, Respectful Environment and Professional Development lie near the base of the building blocks in the House diagram, because they collectively impact all of the drivers above them.

Subsequent sections in this guide are devoted to defining each "House" driver by listing the survey topics that represent them, and noting statistically significant connections (either incoming or outgoing) to other drivers and the engagement characteristics. Comments from WES 2022 are included to round out the interpretation of each driver with employees' relevant experiences.[1] The strength of the connections between drivers are categorized into three groups and represented by arrows of differing colours, illustrated in the legend below:

Strength of Connection

⟶	Very Strong
⟶	Strong
⟶	Moderate
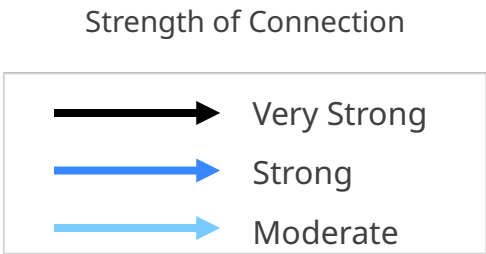
Together, these sources of information about each driver (i.e., definitions, employee comments and incoming/outgoing connections) serve to deepen the understanding on how to use the Employee Engagement Model as a diagnostic tool, namely by putting into context employees' perceived experiences on a variety of core workplace functions and management practices that impact employee engagement. This information should be used to guide and focus conversations on ways to continuously improve employee engagement, and support any work-related efforts or initiatives to this effect.

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[1] The comments are drawn from responses by those who indicated they had seen improvements in the workplace since the last WES survey and were asked to describe them.

Executive-Level Management

The Executive-Level Management driver represents employees' collective beliefs about their senior leadership team, including their Deputy Minister, Assistant Deputy Ministers, Executive Directors and other members of the Executive Committee. This driver defines the three executive actions that matter most to Engagement: communicating decisions in a timely manner, following through on commitments, and providing clear direction for the future.

"Executive communication has improved, including a more approachable and genuine Executive. It's clear that there's a consistent and genuine desire to engage our whole team in continuous improvement..."

"There is a stronger cohesion at the Executive level; more communication to all staff and a greater willingness to hear from people in the organization (at all levels). Overall, this Executive cares a lot about the work that the organization does, and it is reflected in the way they govern..."

Executive-Level Management is the only driver in the model with no incoming relationships from other drivers, but it connects to Supervisory-Level Management and all workplace functions except Teamwork. This driver also directly impacts Organization Satisfaction, one of the characteristics of Engagement.

The connection to Vision, Mission & Goals is the most robust in the model, emphasizing the critical role that executives have in setting and communicating the direction for the organization. The connections with Staffing Practices, Pay & Benefits, Tools & Workspace and Professional Development highlight executives' responsibility to ensure consistency and fairness across the organization.

> **Executive-Level Management has a direct impact on Organization Satisfaction, and on every "House" driver except Teamwork.**

Incoming and Outgoing Connections of **Executive-Level Management**
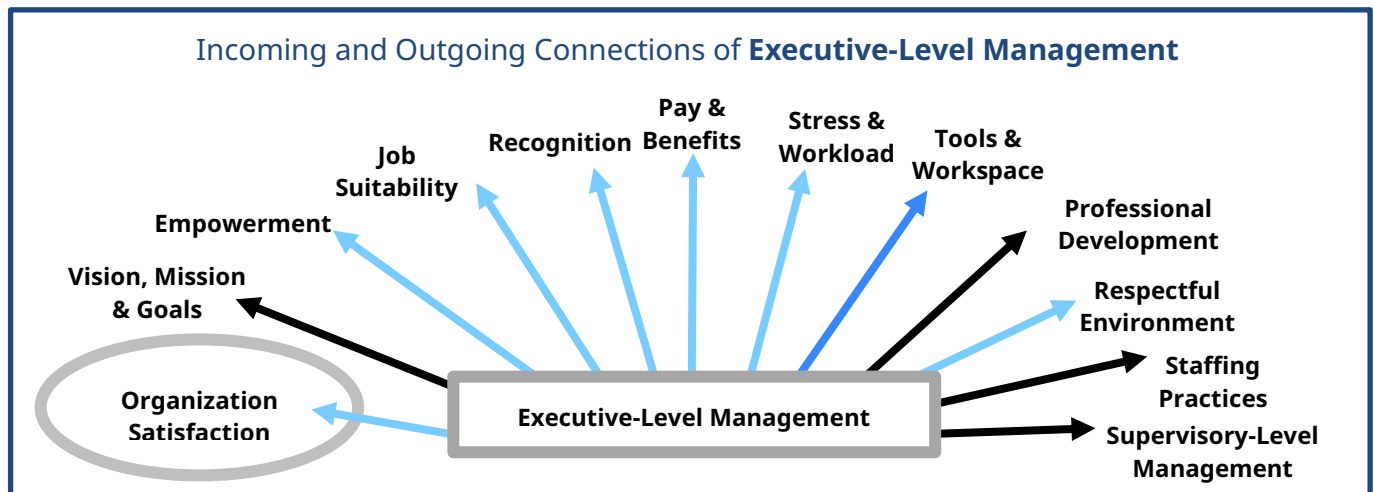
Supervisory-Level Management

Supervisory-Level Management enhances Engagement when employees believe that the person they report to leads with an understanding of others' perspectives, consults them on decisions that affect their work, provides clear expectations regarding their work, as well as when employees feel they are able to have a conversation with the person they report to when they need their perspective or advice.

"...My direct supervisor understands me and accepts me, knows me very well and wants me to work to my strengths, believes in me... and has supported me in my decisions... Being appreciated by, and respected by, my supervisor makes my work that much better..."

"I have a very engaged manager who is available for questions and discussions. She is willing to bring concerns forward to higher levels and values our input..."

Supervisors exist up and down the workplace hierarchy. This means that unlike the Executive-Level-Management driver, this driver does not relate to a specific group of people. Consequently, the driver is focused on people management skills required at all levels. There are many ways for supervisors to consult with their staff, including team meetings, email, informal discussions, 1-on-1s, etc. The key to improving this driver is to ask employees what kinds of supports they want from a supervisor; how, when and where they wish to be consulted; and to ensure that expectations are communicated in a clear and coherent way.

> **Supervisory-Level Management focuses on people management skills for all supervisors in the workplace.**

This driver affects eight workplace functions. However, the strongest connections are to Staffing Practices and Respectful Environment. This driver is influenced only by Executive-Level Management. A supervisor's ability to support their staff and share information depends on how well their executives communicate decisions and future direction downwards.

Incoming and Outgoing Connections of **Supervisory-Level Management**
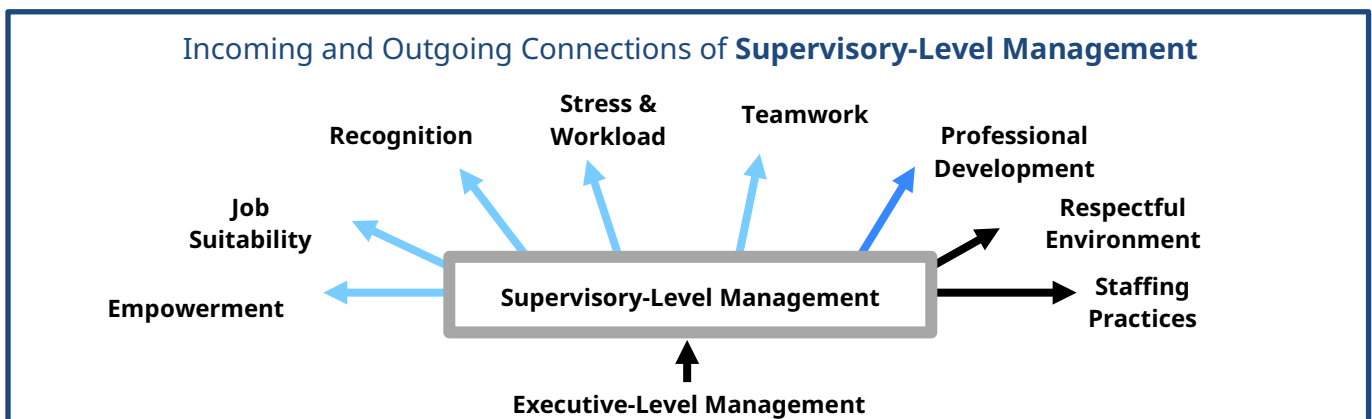
Staffing Practices

Staffing Practices heighten Engagement when employees believe that the hiring processes are fair, that the best person with the right skills is hired, and that critical knowledge is retained when employees leave their work unit.

"My workplace has made improvements in...streamlining and clarifying hiring processes to support internal succession and create a fair and transparent process..."
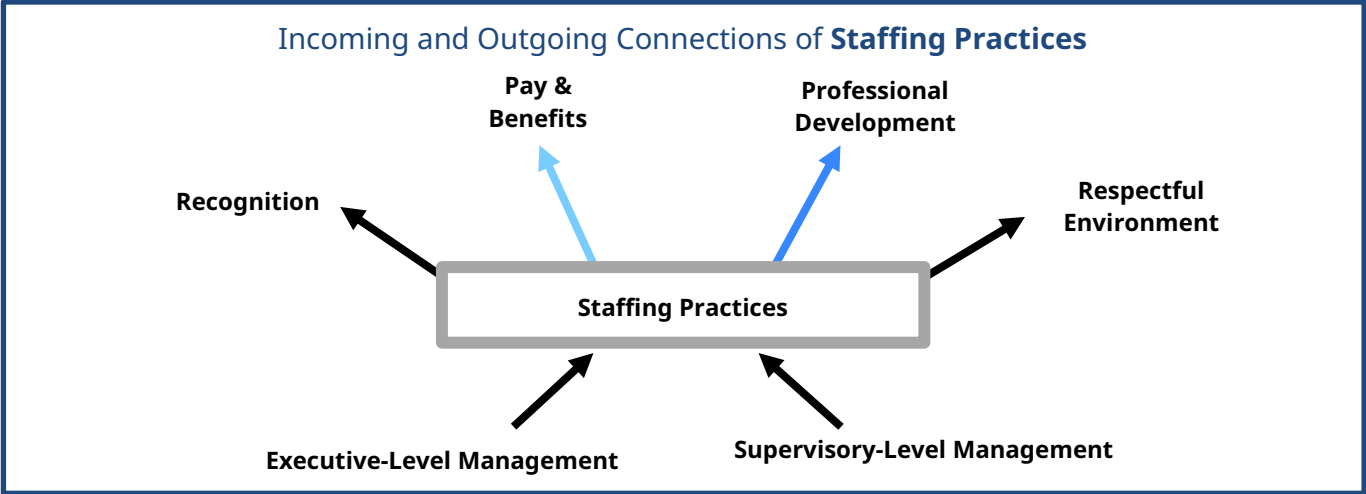
"The hiring practices in our branch are amazing... We have hired fantastic people that have the knowledge and experience to contribute fully to the team. We are all high performers and it feels great."

The Staffing Practices driver holds a unique position in the model, as it is the only building block not affected by any other building blocks. Executive and Supervisory-Level Management are tied to the process and outcomes of staffing practices from different perspectives. For example, supervisors have control and responsibility over the staffing process in their work unit and whether it is perceived as fair by their employees, that the best person with the right skills is hired in their work unit, and that knowledge sharing happens within the team. However, people often look beyond their work unit to evaluate staffing practices. Therefore, executives are responsible for ensuring that fair staffing practices are consistently applied across their organization, and appropriate workforce retention plans are in place.

The Staffing Practices driver acts as a cornerstone since it is impacted only by the foundation drivers.

The Staffing Practices driver directly impacts Respectful Environment, Professional Development, Pay & Benefits and Recognition. These connections highlight the fact that some staffing actions such as promotions and special assignments are often viewed as a tangible form of recognition, which also link to compensation. Similarly, employees' perceptions of fair staffing practices link to their perceptions of a respectful environment and access to career growth opportunities.

Incoming and Outgoing Connections of **Staffing Practices**

Pay &
Benefits

Professional
Development

Recognition

Respectful
Environment

Staffing Practices

Executive-Level Management

Supervisory-Level Management

Respectful Environment

The Respectful Environment driver measures whether a healthy atmosphere exists in the workplace – one where trust and mutual respect are evident, where a diversity in ideas, people and backgrounds is valued, and which is free from discrimination, bullying, and harassment.

"Everyone is working towards a harmonious, respectful workplace with openness and professionalism, as championed by management."

"Ongoing commitment to supporting and developing people, and to ensuring an inclusive, diverse, and culturally safe work place."

The Respectful Environment driver rests near the model's foundation because it impacts several elements of the work environment, including Teamwork, Empowerment, Recognition, Professional Development, and Stress & Workload. For example, empowerment and teamwork will flourish in an environment where diversity is acknowledged and embraced, and is free from discrimination, bullying and harassment. Similarly, the give-and-take of meaningful and performance-based recognition may hinge on having mutual trust and respect between employee and manager. Finally, a respectful work environment can help ensure that professional development opportunities and employee workloads are distributed fairly throughout a work unit.

The Respectful Environment driver impacts five building blocks. Its impact on Teamwork is the second strongest link in the model.

This driver is influenced by Supervisory-Level Management and Staffing Practices, as these drivers help set the tone for the work environment in terms of respectful and diverse culture-building. Executive-Level Management also has a direct impact on Respectful Environment.

Incoming and Outgoing Connections of **Respectful Environment**
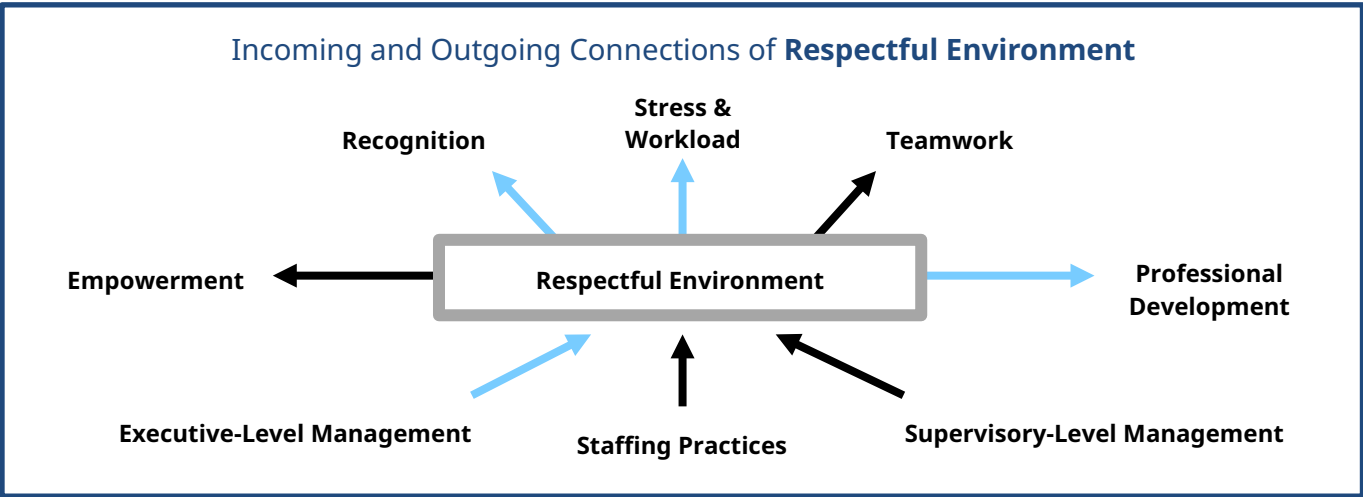
Professional Development

Professional Development enhances Engagement when employees believe that their organization supports their learning and development, provides good quality training, offers adequate opportunities for skill building, and makes opportunities for career growth available.

"Our workplace has a wonderful focus on supporting and developing people. Professional development opportunities continue to be offered..."
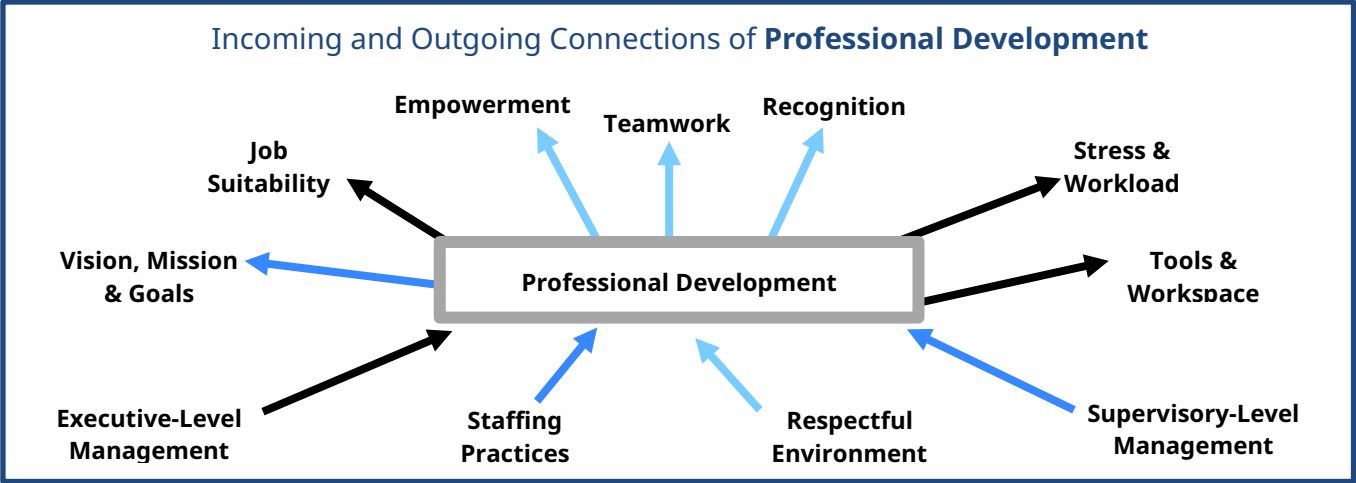
"I have seen more focus on...learning and development. There have been more opportunities for growth. I have attended more learning and development events/courses and I have been greatly encouraged by my direct supervisor and executives."

"...I have been given lots of opportunities to grow my career and have felt far more empowered and appreciated. I have been connected to more people in my organization who have shown me lots of support and encouraged me to develop a new set of skills."

Professional Development is an integral driver, with 11 connections to and from other drivers. There is a very strong incoming connection from Executive-Level Management, which highlights the critical role that senior leadership has in supporting the long-term career growth and development opportunities for their employees.

The Professional Development driver is the busiest building block, with 11 incoming and outgoing connections.

This driver has outgoing connections to seven drivers: Tools & Workspace, Stress & Workload, Job Suitability, Vision, Mission & Goals, Recognition, Teamwork, and Empowerment. Professional development that supports a career and learning path within an organization may contribute to an employee's sense of connection to the organization's vision, mission and goals, as well as better aligning their skills and abilities with the requirements of the job. Training and development opportunities will also set employees up for success with a better understanding of the available tools and equipment in the workspace, and it can improve workflows and reduce stress. Further, the new ideas and valuable knowledge received through learning and growth opportunities may lead to more responsibility and empowerment for employees. Lastly, the driver can influence team cohesion through shared learning and setting common learning goals.

Incoming and Outgoing Connections of **Professional Development**

Teamwork

Teamwork boosts Engagement when employees experience positive working relationships, receive help when needed to get the job done, and feel that their team communicates effectively.

"…Considerable improvements have been made to how we communicate with one another and across teams; opportunities to collaborate across teams and virtual team building activities."

"I really am enjoying being on this team. My team has a very strong work morale despite the daily challenges we face…"
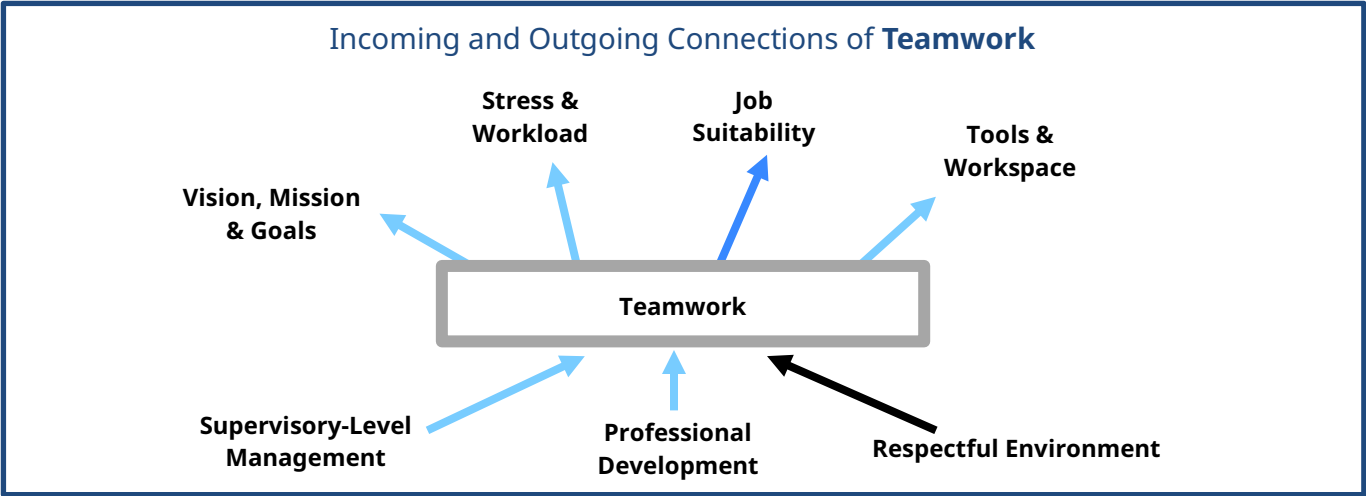
"The greatest improvement in my workplace is that any worker, whether or not on my team, including anyone that I do not know personally, is very helpful, friendly, polite, and ready to help when needed."

Teamwork is affected by three key drivers: Supervisory-Level Management, Professional Development, and, very strongly, Respectful Environment. These incoming drivers set the tone for the local work environment and influence the degree of teamwork and reliance on each other in the work unit.

Teamwork consistently tends to be one of the highest scoring drivers, even in work units with low Engagement scores.

The Teamwork driver impacts four drivers, with a stronger connection to Job Suitability. Other outgoing connections include Vision, Mission & Goals, Tools & Workspace, and Stress & Workload. A high functioning team can help employees feel a sense of accomplishment with their work, feel like they can reach out for help with tools, equipment, or workload, and have a better appreciation of the organization's vision, mission, and goals.

When the patterns of work unit results are analyzed, we find that Teamwork may act as the glue that holds work units together, particularly for work units with low engagement. In work units with very low scores, Teamwork often shows up as one of the only high scoring drivers. The importance of Teamwork in a work unit – where employees help each other and communicate effectively – cannot be overstated.

Incoming and Outgoing Connections of **Teamwork**

Stress &
Workload

Job
Suitability

Tools &
Workspace

Vision, Mission
& Goals

Teamwork

Supervisory-Level
Management

Professional
Development

Respectful Environment

Tools & Workspace

The Tools & Workspace driver measures whether employees believe that their physical environment enables them to work well, and that their computer and non-computer based tools are helping them excel in their jobs.

"Since the last survey, I have seen an increase in the IT tools that we need to do our jobs. New computers, faster networks, VPN access, ability to work from anywhere, new phone systems, and access to software... It has really helped us."

"The improvements have come through a move to a new LWS. This space has more light, better office furniture (fully adjustable chair and sit-stand desk), better access to flexible meeting spaces, better access to quiet workspaces, and is more inviting."

Employees' perceptions of the tools they use to perform their job impact Stress & Workload, Pay & Benefits, Vision, Mission & Goals, and BC Public Service Commitment. When an employee feels that they work in an enabling physical environment with access to relevant computer and non-computer based tools, they are more likely to feel supported in efficiently accomplishing their work. Also, if employees feel that they struggle daily with their workplace tools and environment in order to complete their work, they are more likely to feel under-compensated for that work. Further, employees are more likely to feel committed to organizational goals and the BC Public Service when they feel adequate investments are being made on workplace tools and the environment.

The Tools & Workspace driver directly influences Engagement with its connection to BC Public Service Commitment.

Professional Development plays the strongest role in employee perceptions on the driver, as training helps people feel comfortable with the hardware, software and equipment they utilize.

Incoming and Outgoing Connections of **Tools & Workspace**
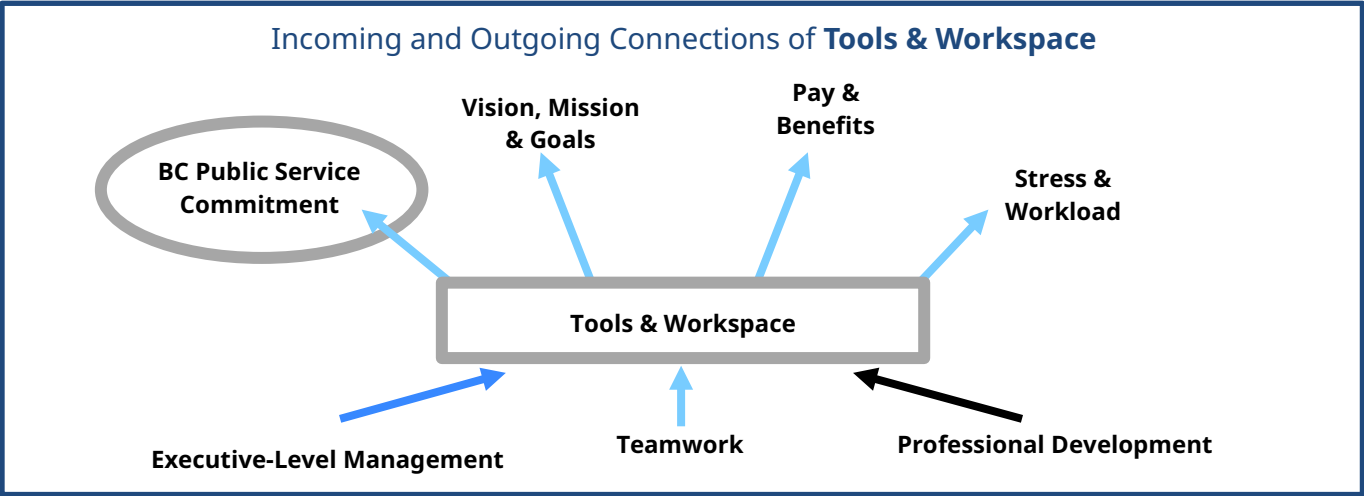
Stress & Workload

The Stress & Workload driver represents employees' perceptions that their workloads are manageable and distributed fairly, that they are supported during times of change, and that they have support to provide high levels of service while balancing their work and personal lives.

"Better awareness and acknowledgement of stress and workload as an overarching problem on our team and in our business. Management team is doing better at prioritizing our teams' work, spreading workload out across the team, communicating, and supporting staff in stress management."

"Focus on stress and workload. Most of the time, whenever I needed, my supervisor supported me in prioritizing things on my plate..."

The Stress & Workload driver connects directly to two engagement characteristics: Organization Satisfaction and Job Satisfaction. An employee's perceptions about balanced workloads and support during times of change impacts their job and organization satisfaction. This driver also affects Recognition and Pay & Benefits. High performing workplaces with well distributed workloads lead to more opportunities for meaningful recognition, and compensation is often perceived to be related to workload.

The Stress & Workload driver directly impacts the two satisfaction-related Engagement characteristics.

Six incoming connections have an influence on the Stress & Workload driver: Supervisory-Level Management, Executive-Level Management, Respectful Environment, Teamwork, Tools & Workspace, and most strongly, Professional Development. Lack of sufficient training and development opportunities can have an impact on stress levels and manageable workloads.

Incoming and Outgoing Connections of **Stress & Workload**
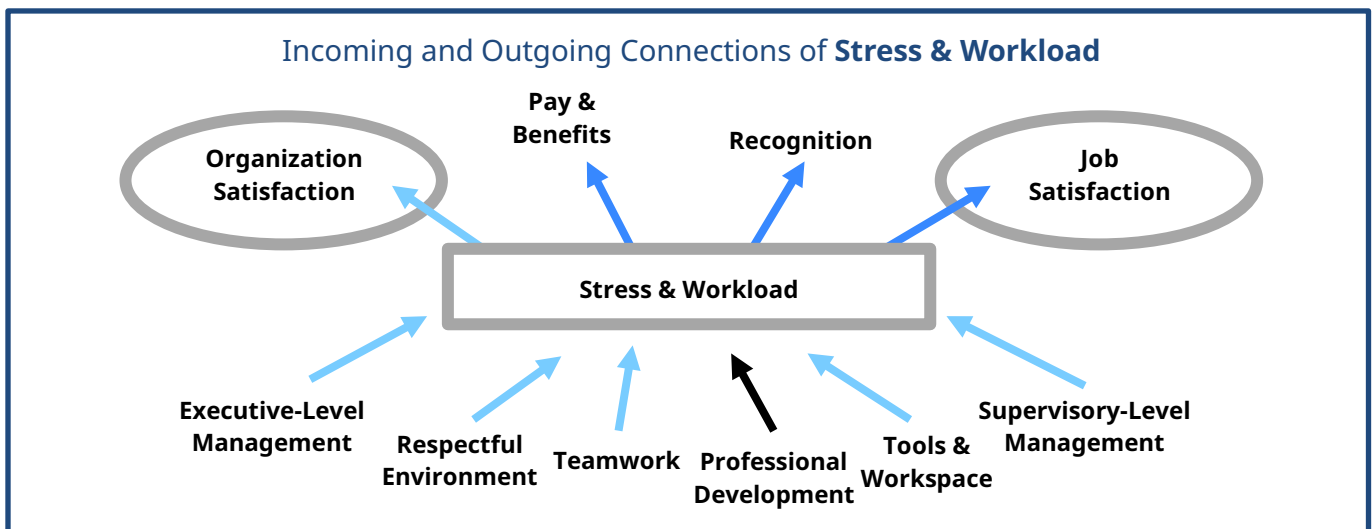
Pay & Benefits

Pay & Benefits improves Engagement when employees believe that they are paid fairly and at a competitive rate for their work, and that their benefits package meets their needs.

"There is a greater emphasis on...fair pay for employees. It feels like the organization is not always trying to pay employees the least amount possible."

"Better benefits and parental leave policies that are more commensurate with the federal public service and other public sector agreements."

Pay & Benefits is a dynamic driver. Perceptions of Pay & Benefits impact Engagement directly because of its connections to both BC Public Service Commitment and Organization Satisfaction. This means employees' satisfaction and preference to stay with the BC Public Service, even if offered a job elsewhere, can depend on how they regard their compensation.

The strongest outgoing connection from Pay & Benefits is to BC Public Service Commitment.

Stress & Workload has the strongest incoming relationship with Pay & Benefits. That is, if workloads are not manageable, or they don't have support to provide a high level of service, then a person may feel insufficiently compensated in order to successfully do their job. Pay & Benefits is also affected by Executive-Level Management, Staffing Practices, and Tools & Workspace.

Incoming and Outgoing Connections of **Pay & Benefits**

Organization Satisfaction

BC Public Service Commitment

Pay & Benefits

Executive-Level Management

Staffing Practices

Tools & Workspace

Stress & Workload
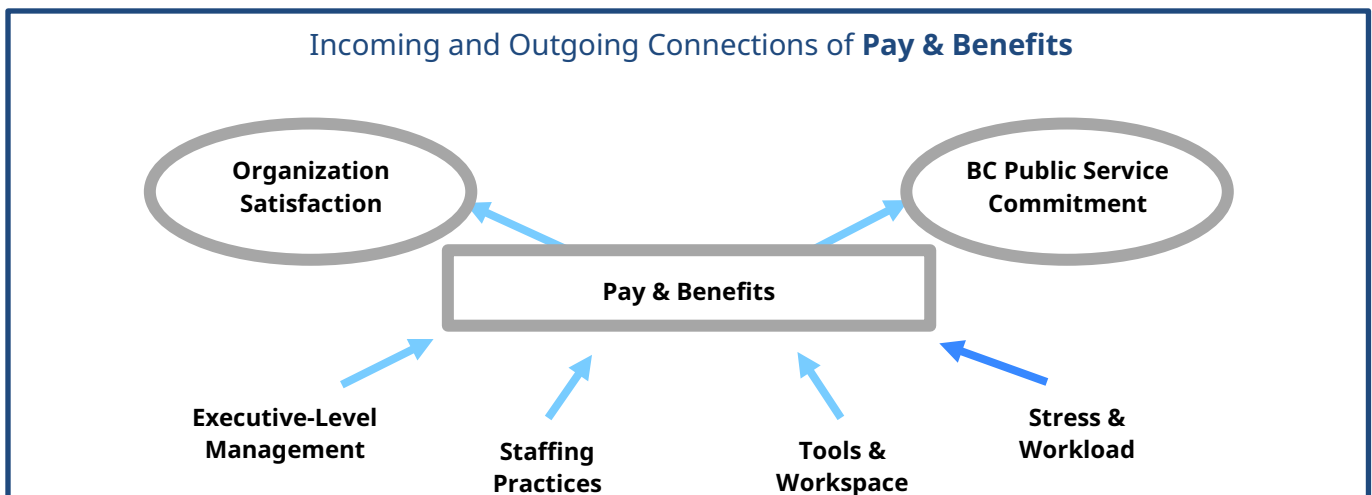
Recognition

Recognition raises Engagement when employees experience meaningful and performance-based recognition, and when employees are held accountable for work performance and actions.

"Reviewing and supporting recognition within the organization has been a focus and continues to be on the radar so that staff are recognized for going above and beyond…"
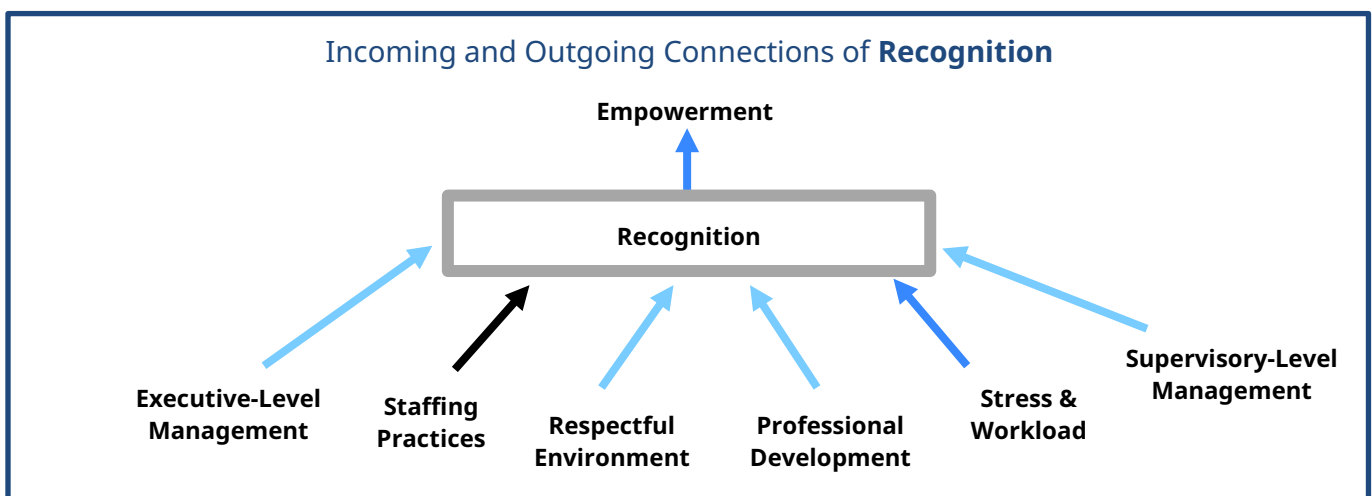
"I think workers who have not pulled their weight…are being held more accountable which is comforting as a team member. I have always carried my weight and then some, it is comforting to know that leadership is no longer accommodating poor behaviours and outcomes of individual workers…"

"More frequent division meetings to acknowledge the good work done throughout the division and recognize exceptional accomplishments, teams, or individuals…"

Recognition is a precursor to only one other driver: Empowerment. When employees receive meaningful feedback on their performance (including constructive feedback) and are recognized for quality work, they are more likely to feel empowered in their position.

Recognition is a unique driver in that it has only a single outgoing connection (with Empowerment).

Fair staffing practices contribute very strongly to employees' perceptions of this driver when they believe that hard work and demonstration of their skills are recognized by opportunities for promotion. Stress & Workload also plays a role in employees' perceptions of this driver, because balanced workloads provide space for employees to perform at higher levels, which creates opportunities for meaningful and performance-based recognition.

Incoming and Outgoing Connections of **Recognition**

Empowerment

Recognition

Executive-Level Management · Staffing Practices · Respectful Environment · Professional Development · Stress & Workload · Supervisory-Level Management

Job Suitability

Job Suitability elevates Engagement when employees find their work to be meaningful, a good fit with their skills and interests and gives them a sense of accomplishment.

"There has been a strong focus on...working to ensure job suitability and to provide alternative job opportunities for staff to learn and grow, and to explore new roles."

"I am proud of the workplace. There is a sense of unity, professionalism, safety, laughter, and a sense of doing great work that is meaningful. I now have a supportive and guiding supervisor so that I can be my best self. This work is hard, and I find it meaningful. I feel valued, and I believe I am making a difference..."

"...There seems to be more effort to get to know 'the person' and their abilities and interests."

The Job Suitability driver influences Empowerment and two of the engagement characteristics: BC Public Service Commitment and, most strongly, Job Satisfaction. Employees who have jobs that provide a sense of accomplishment and align with their interests and abilities tend to be more satisfied with their job, and more committed to the Public Service. Additionally, employees who feel their job is meaningful and a good fit are more likely to develop a sense of empowerment and autonomy in their work.

> **The Job Suitability driver is the strongest influencer on Job Satisfaction.**

Four drivers impact the Job Suitability driver, with Professional Development having the strongest influence. The incoming connections illustrate that a supportive work environment in which employees work effectively together, development opportunities exist for skill-building, and good management practices ensure employees are optimally utilized, can all combine to align the work an employee does with their unique interests, skills, and values.

Incoming and Outgoing Connections of **Job Suitability**
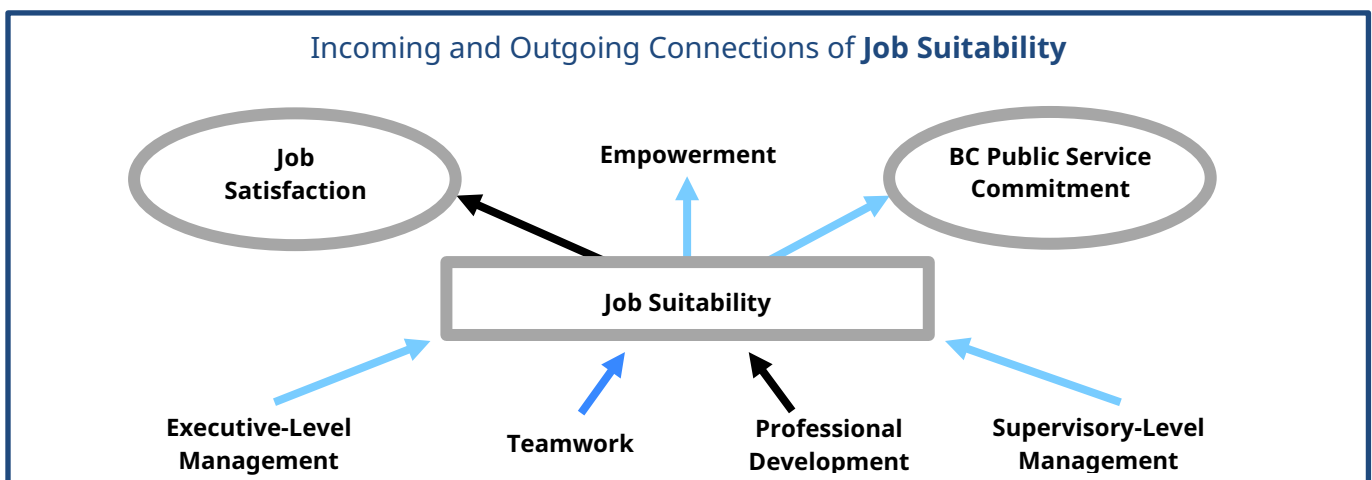
Empowerment

Empowerment promotes Engagement when employees believe that they have the opportunities and freedom to provide input, make the necessary decisions to do their jobs well, and implement new ideas.

"Our new Executive Director is moving our team in the right direction and respects and values the members of our team. I feel seen and heard and like my input is welcomed and appreciated."
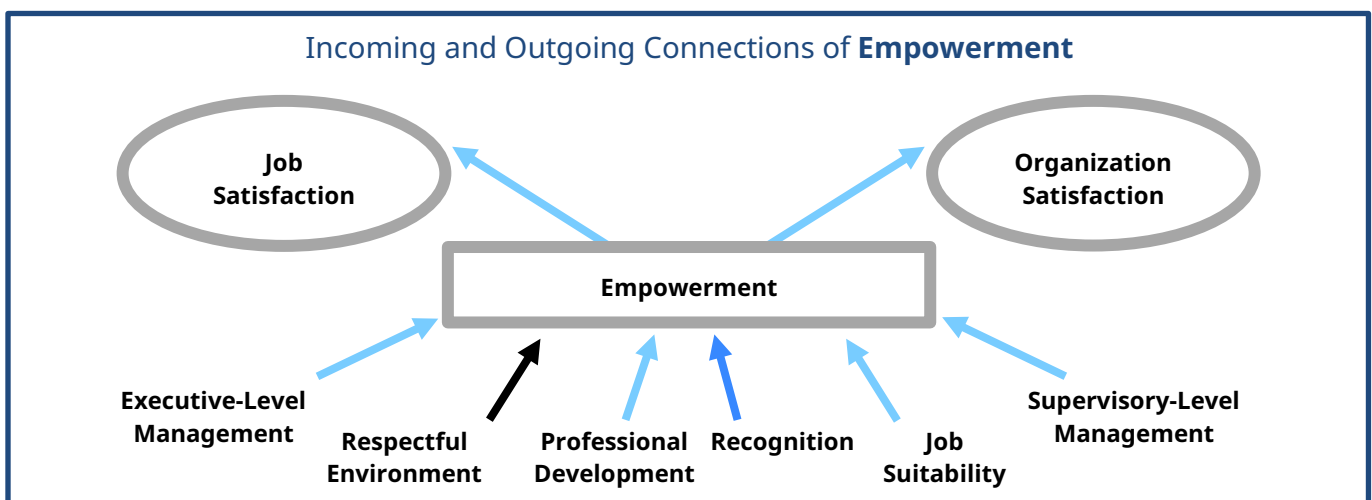
"...I feel way more empowered to do a god job and am trusted to make decisions when needed..."

"Management has made great efforts to make the team feel supported and empowered in our work, and actively involves the team in decision-making..."

The Empowerment driver has a direct impact on Engagement by way of its connections to two of the characteristics of engagement: Organization Satisfaction and Job Satisfaction. When employees feel empowered to implement new ideas and provide input into decisions, they are more satisfied with their organization and job.

Empowerment takes the cumulative effect of six building blocks to directly influence Engagement.

As Empowerment is influenced by six separate drivers, it is possible to develop an employee's sense of empowerment through a wide variety of strategies. Some of the more effective approaches include the development of a respectful work environment where diversity in ideas is encouraged, where supervisors provide honest and meaningful recognition, and where employees feel that the leadership of their organization sets direction that emphasizes their development and growth.

Incoming and Outgoing Connections of **Empowerment**

Vision, Mission & Goals

The Vision, Mission & Goals driver denotes employees' beliefs of whether their organization's vision, mission and goals are well communicated and whether their organization is taking steps to ensure its long-term success.

"Improvements have been made, specifically, the organization has identified where they want to go and the vision, mandate, and strategic plan to get there, which is a huge step in the right direction…"

"Decisions are communicated timely; directions such as vision, mission, and goals are shared and clearly laid out… "

"My Executive are communicating more – the vision, mission, and goals have been more clearly spelled out… Employees were actually asked to share their opinions and thoughts… I appreciated that…"

The Vision, Mission & Goals driver has a direct influence on Engagement due to the strength of its relationship with Organization Satisfaction, as well as its connection to BC Public Service Commitment. When employees understand the direction and priorities conveyed by leadership and believe their actions will contribute to the achievement of the vision, they feel more satisfied with their workplace and want to stay with the BC Public Service.

The strongest connection in the WES 2022 model is the influence of Executive-Level Management on Vision, Mission & Goals, which in turn has a very strong connection to Engagement through Organization Satisfaction.

While Executive leadership naturally has the strongest influence on employees' perceptions of this driver, there are also significant influences from Professional Development, Tools & Workspace and Teamwork.

Incoming and Outgoing Connections of **Vision, Mission & Goals**

BC Public Service Commitment

Organization Satisfaction

Vision, Mission & Goals

Executive-Level Management

Teamwork

Professional Development

Tools & Workspace
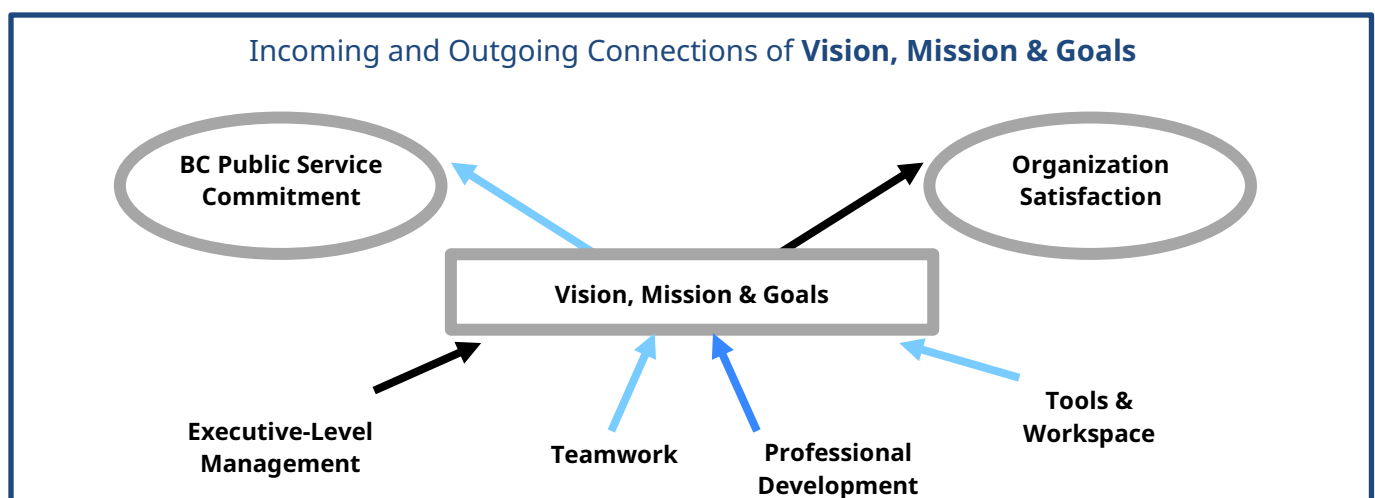
The Engagement Characteristics

The three engagement characteristics – Organization Satisfaction, BC Public Service Commitment, and Job Satisfaction – are outcome measures of Engagement.

These characteristics of engagement also influence each other as if they were drivers. For example, there is a relationship between Job Satisfaction and Organization Satisfaction. The more satisfied you are with your job, the more likely you are to be satisfied with your organization. Job Satisfaction and Organization Satisfaction both influence Commitment. In fact, Organization Satisfaction is the strongest direct relationship to Commitment in the model. There is also a two-way relationship between Job Satisfaction and Commitment.

> **The three outcome measures of Engagement influence each other as if they were drivers.**

These mutually reinforcing relationships between the engagement characteristics create dynamic forces in the roof of the model and help us better understand the diverse and complex nature of employee engagement.

Connections within the **Engagement Characteristics**

BC Public Service Commitment

Job Satisfaction

Organization Satisfaction
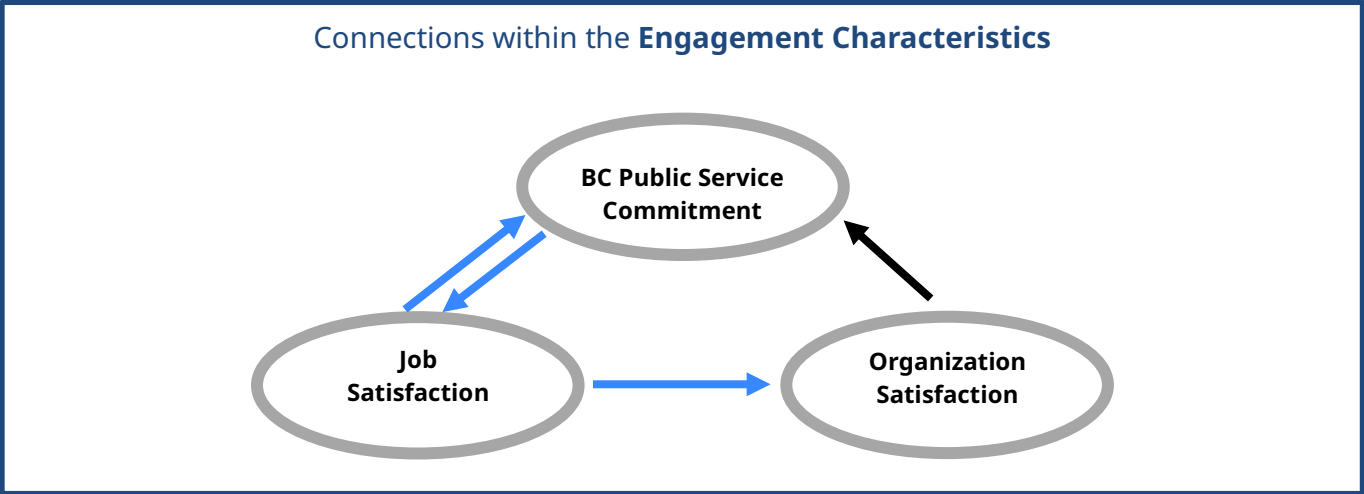
Interpreting the Drivers

While the definitions of each driver in the Employee Engagement Model are specific, everybody has different interpretations of the words in the survey question topics. Sometimes the differences are minor, but other times they can be significant, which can lead to misunderstandings between people, and between intention and action. The key to making concrete improvements in your work unit is to uncover or unpack these differences in perceptions and understand what they mean in your day-to-day work environment.

For more information on how the driver connections form pathways in the model, please see the Pathway Guide (BC Stats).

Appendix A: Background

High Level

Study   2022 Work Environment Survey (WES)
Project Sponsor   BC Public Service Agency

Operations

Data Collection Method   Online survey
Fielding Window / Dates   January 27 - February 18, 2022
Project History   Annual survey 2006-2011,
                                        Biennial survey 2013, 2015, 2018, 2020, 2022

Population / Sample

Scope   Individuals who were deemed as active BC Public Service
                                        employees in the Corporate Human Resource Information
                                        and Payroll System (CHIPS) as of January 11, 2022 (and
                                        remained active through to survey launch date of January
                                        27, 2022) and had valid contact information.
Sampling Strategy   Census

Key Measure(s)

Key Measure   Engagement score: 67 points (out of 100)
Type of Measure   Five-point frequency scale
Methods of Analysis   Descriptive statistics and structural equation modeling

Confidentiality

During survey administration, employees received personalized invitations and reminders. All survey responses were encrypted during submission and stored on a secure server accessed only by select employees at BC Stats. BC Stats employees are sworn under the *Statistics Act*, and all information collected in the survey is protected by the *Statistics Act*. Only aggregate results are provided in the reports. Individual responses or information that could identify an individual cannot be disclosed.
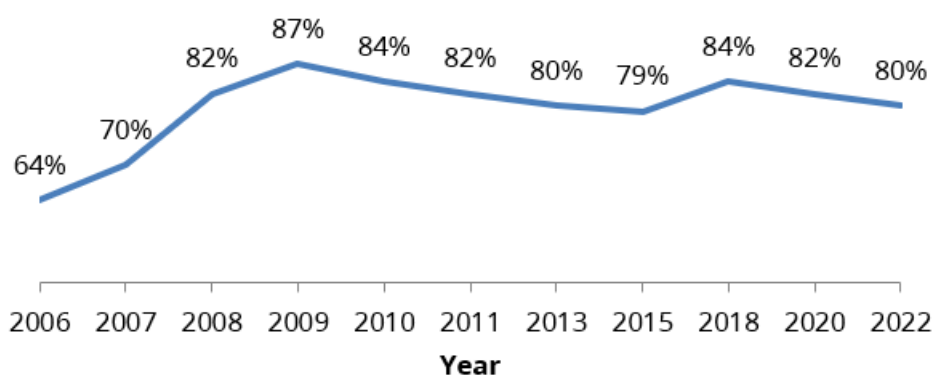
Response Rates

In the BC Public Service this cycle, 80% of employees completed the survey, a change of -2 percentage points since last cycle (see Table 1). Figure 1 shows the response rates since the inception of the WES program.

TABLE 1: RESPONSE RATE

	COMPLETED SURVEYS	TOTAL EMPLOYEES	RESPONSE RATE	DIFFERENCE (PPT)
2022	**24,485**	**30,696**	**80%**	
2020	24,675	29,931	82%	-2

FIGURE 1: RESPONSE RATES OVER TIME

BC Stats wishes to thank all employees who participated and contributed to achieving such a high response rate. High survey response rates ensure high quality, reliable data.

BC Stats is the provincial government's leader in statistical and economic research, information and analysis essential for evidence-based decision-making. BC Stats, the central statistics agency of government, is excited to be taking a lead role in the strategic understanding of data sources and analysis across government. The goal is to increase overall business intelligence—information decision makers can use. For more information, please contact Kathleen Assaf.

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