

CANADA – BRITISH COLUMBIA

Labour Market Agreement for Persons with Disabilities Evaluation of Employment Services

FINAL REPORT — MARCH 31, 2018



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Overview

The Province of British Columbia is pleased to present the Evaluation of Employment Services Final Report for the Canada-British Columbia Labour Market Agreement for Persons with Disabilities (LMAPD).

The LMAPD is a cost-sharing agreement between the Governments of Canada and British Columbia. It outlines investments and programs in B.C. to support persons with disabilities take part in the labour market.

As part of the agreement, the province evaluated the support and services provided through the Employment Program of British Columbia (EPBC) and Community Living British Columbia (CLBC). This report contains the results of this year's evaluation.

Employment Program of British Columbia (EPBC):

EPBC offers employment services, supports, skill training and work experience to British Columbians seeking employment. This includes specialized services for persons with disabilities to help them:

- ▶ take part in their communities
- ▶ pursue employment goals
- ▶ increase self-reliance
- ▶ build skills and experience
- ▶ secure employment

Community Living British Columbia (CLBC):

The CLBC's goal is to help working-aged adults who face significant daily challenges, secure employment. Clients eligible for services include:

- ▶ adults with developmental disabilities
- ▶ adults with a significant limitation in adaptive functioning and a diagnosis of either fetal alcohol spectrum disorder or autism spectrum disorder.

Evaluation of the Employment Program of BC: Key Findings for Persons with Disabilities

Background

Ference & Company, an external evaluation and research firm, released an evaluation report of the overall Employment Program of BC for the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction (the Ministry) in March 2016. Key findings relating to programs and services for persons with disabilities are summarized below.

EPBC is managed by the Ministry's Employment and Labour Market Services Division. The main objective of EPBC is to help B.C. residents achieve long-term employment.

Methodology

The evaluation included:

- ▶ survey of 5,145 EPBC clients
- ▶ interviews and surveys of 263 key informants including:
 - ▶ 22 Ministry representatives
 - ▶ 38 EPBC contractors and service providers
 - ▶ 92 Employment Service Centre case managers and staff
 - ▶ 40 sub-contractors
 - ▶ 31 employers and employer associations
 - ▶ six other provincial and federal government representatives
 - ▶ 29 other stakeholders
 - ▶ five selected experts

- ▶ document review
- ▶ literature review and review of program administrative data
- ▶ nine case studies
- ▶ eight focus groups (one of the eight focus groups discussed access to services for persons with disabilities, and the quality of those services).

Program Relevance

Based on Ference and Company's literature review, EPBC aligns with provincial and federal government priorities. These priorities include:

- ▶ reducing barriers and securing employment for all
- ▶ ensuring access to education and skills training
- ▶ supporting a diverse and strong economy.

Program Impacts

On average, persons with disabilities clients rated the usefulness of the EPBC services they received as 3.8/5. This matches the average rating across all clients.

EPBC clients were also asked how likely it is that they would have obtained their current employment, self-employment, or volunteer position without EPBC. The answer format was based on a scale between 0% (not at all likely) to 100% (very likely). On average, clients thought the likelihood of getting their current employment without the help of EPBC was 68%. Persons with disabilities rated the likelihood at 65%.



3.8/5

Average rating
of usefulness
of services

Program Design and Delivery

Most clients surveyed (84%) were satisfied or very satisfied with the location and accessibility of the EPBC services.

They felt the offices are a welcoming environment with useful resources, equipment and staff that help them find employment. Average ratings were consistent across regions and different client groups, including persons with disabilities.

EPBC Centres developed outreach and engagement activities to increase awareness of EPBC services among target groups. Activities included:

- ▶ a community event to raise awareness about employing persons with disabilities
- ▶ working with CLBC to deliver training to youth with disabilities

According to the evaluation, the services appear to align with client needs for different client groups. Most respondents agreed (66% either strongly or somewhat agreed) that there is access to specialized expertise and services when needed. The two examples below highlight some of the expertise and services provided to persons with disabilities:

▶ **Employing specialized case managers to work with persons with disabilities**

- ▶ One EPBC Centre contracted out services for persons with disabilities. Since then, the Centre has hired experienced case managers and brought the services in house. Customized employment services are still referred to a sub-contractor. Another EPBC Centre has a dedicated case manager for persons with disabilities.

▶ **Flying-in specialized service providers into rural communities to provide specialized services.**

- ▶ One EPBC Centre sub-contracts a vocational specialist. The specialist works with case management staff to monitor and give recommendations for PWD clients. Once a month the centre brings the specialist in to deliver customized employment services.

Several stakeholders perceive gaps exist in services for specialized populations with higher needs, including persons with disabilities. Gaps identified include:

- ▶ Sub-contractors serving specialized populations noted challenges delivering the services under the EPBC financial (fee structure) model. One sub-contractor noted that it is difficult to generate enough fees to pay for the services. Some reasons may include:
 - ▶ the costs and activities are not sufficiently covered
 - ▶ variable service delivery costs
 - ▶ back-end billing for some services can take several months to process
- ▶ Some stakeholders mentioned that EPBC does not offer sufficient job coaching and ongoing support to help placements for persons with disabilities clients to be successful.
- ▶ Some reported that EPBC could better serve persons with disabilities by ensuring front-line workers have the training and experience needed to work with this population. Suggestions included:
 - ▶ offering more life skills training programs
 - ▶ better coordination with other services and supports such as affordable housing
 - ▶ more personalized or one-on-one services

TECHNOLOGY@WORK PROGRAM

The Technology@Work Program was launched in May 2015 in support of a commitment from Accessibility 2024 to invest \$3 million in annual funding for assistive technologies. The purpose of the program is to support employment for people with disabilities who require assistive technology.

Technology@Work is part of the Employment Program of BC and is intended to compliment disability employment services available through EPBC. It will streamline access to assistive technology for clients that are working, volunteering or those that have imminent work (starting within the next 3 months).

Technology@Work has received positive feedback from its clients and the community. This program is:

- ▶ Providing technology solutions to individuals with disabilities to be successful at work or in volunteering
- ▶ Promoting workplace accessibility, including educating employers
- ▶ Gaining a reputation as the 'go-to' for disability navigation supports.

Efficiency and Economy

Expenditures per client vary significantly by client type. Higher expenditures tend to be associated with higher barriered clients who require more frequent and longer-term support. Between April 2012 to September 2015, the average cost across all client types was \$1,901 per client. For persons with disabilities clients, the average was \$2,429 per client.

On average, key informants said that EPBC uses its financial resources well. Key informants identified these positive factors:

- ▶ The financial resources are well-spent in some areas and there are strong measures in place to ensure the funding is spent efficiently.

- ▶ The services are managed by fewer contractors under the one-stop-shop model and the EPBC model combines multiple programs.
- ▶ There are ongoing efforts to find out from service providers the key efficiency challenges and to address them.
- ▶ A higher proportion of funding is spent on clients and services than infrastructure.
- ▶ There is increased access to financial supports for clients, such as money for interview clothes and other job-start supports.

Several challenges with EPBC's financial model identified by key informants include:

- ▶ Linking service delivery to financial compensation has led to some misrepresentations with how clients are treated and services are delivered.
- ▶ Several contractors stated that they had to hire new staff to address the additional administrative requirements under EPBC. They also shared that the focus of the program is more on data collection, meeting targets, and financial management. This comes at the expense of time which could be dedicated to building relationships with clients and partners.
- ▶ Some key informants find both the financial model and policy challenging to manage EPBC funding. They noted the challenges come from multiple billing points, types of services, client groups and complex eligibility rules.

Evaluation of the Community Living British Columbia Employment Services

Introduction

An increasing number of people with developmental disabilities want to work, earn their own wages, feel valued as employees and receive the associated benefits of employment. Community Living BC's (CLBC) vision for employment is "that every individual with a disability, who wants a job, is employed". Recognizing the benefits that employment brings to the lives of people, CLBC developed strategic objectives to drive their work on employment forward.

CLBC-funded employment services provide a full range of services including customized employment, supported employment and self-employment. Summer 2016 research indicated that most job seekers secure a job within 15 months of accessing service.

Strategic Action

CLBC's Community Action Employment Plan (the Plan) was launched in March 2013 as part of CLBC's commitment to work with government and community partners to support more individuals with disabilities in realizing their employment goals. The Plan outlined activities for collaboration with government, sector partners, individuals, families, community organizations and employers. These activities will help more CLBC clients gain employment. It also promotes an "employment first" culture in the work of CLBC and its contracted service providers, helping individuals find employment and increase the number of employers who are hiring inclusively.



*Julya says
"employment
has given me the
confidence to do
things I wouldn't do
before I had a job."*

In June 2016, the 2016-2019 Plan priorities were released to further guide the work for the following three years. The priorities help CLBC and the community meet a new three-year goal of approximately 5,000 CLBC eligible individuals (approximately 25%) to report employment earnings. The priorities in this document were identified through reflection on the lessons learned, the initial work of the Plan and contributions from a provincial engagement meeting. This meeting (held in June 2015) included over 100 self-advocates, service providers, employers, government representatives and CLBC staff in Victoria

SUPPORT FOR EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AND CLBC STAFF

In August 2016, CLBC hired two special project analysts to support CLBC staff and employment service providers to advance employment objectives and improve data collection. This resulted in improved service monitoring which has led to quality improvements to CLBC funded employment services. The special project analysts also supported skills development training for CLBC liaison analysts in order to meet the Best Practices for Supported Employment as outlined by the Canadian Association for Supported Employment.

BUILDING COMPETENCY

Since 2013, CLBC has invested in building the competency of service providers to make services more targeted and effective. Topics have included Supported Employment Marketing, Customized Employment Strategy, Marketing, Job Coaching, Positive Behaviour Supports, Rural Job Development, and Support Strategies for Job Seekers with Complex Needs.

In 2016, CLBC added an “IMPACT” framework to ensure all competency CLBC training events were strategic and achieved the intended results. The framework measures training in the following areas:

- ▶ impact
- ▶ mastery focused
- ▶ practice oriented
- ▶ appropriately directed
- ▶ tangible results

Each year, CLBC evaluates the reported impact that training has had so that training strategies and topics can be refined.

TRAINING FOR CLBC STAFF

In December 2017, CLBC launched an Employment Foundations course for all staff to support their knowledge about CLBC’s role in employment. It focused on how regional staff can help support the path to employment and work with the overall goal of improving employment outcomes for individuals. The course allows staff to strengthen their approach to employment services as both a provider and role model of employment service delivery.

EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT AND RECOGNITION

A key piece of work in the movement to inclusive employment is shifting the public’s understanding of how people with diverse abilities can contribute to businesses’ bottom line. CLBC employment service providers engage employers to create customized employment opportunities. A key strategy in this work has been employer recognition events. Many of these events occur in the fall and are linked to

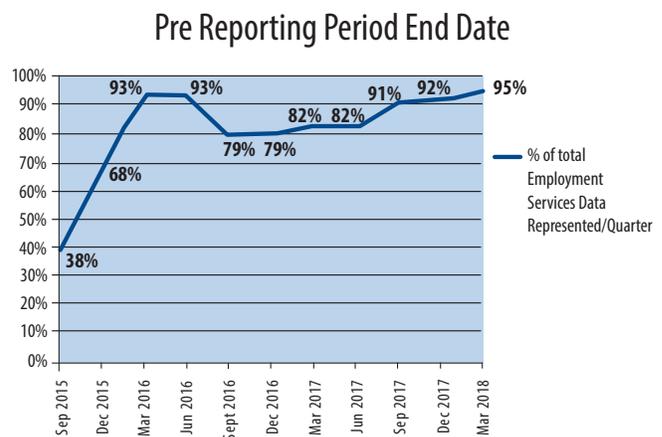
BC’s Disability Employment Month (Sept), Canada’s Disability Employment Month (Oct) or Community Living Month (Oct).

CLBC’s WOW awards started in 2008 and recognize efforts to build inclusion, create employment opportunities and increase community connections for people with disabilities. Communities across the province host awards and recognition events to celebrate the diverse contributions and partnerships of employer champions. Rotary@Work and MentorAbility are initiatives that support employers to be successful when employing people with disabilities.

Measuring Progress

REPORT DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

In fiscal 2014/2015, CLBC developed a Periodic Report for Employment (PRE) for service providers to report on their service delivery. The refreshed reporting requirements of the LMAPD, along with measures identified through the Community Action Employment Plan, formed the foundation for the report. Report function and content was tested with a group of service providers. The first round of data collected from service providers occurred following September 30, 2015 and covered the period January 1, 2015 to September 30, 2015. Since that time, service providers have been reporting progress on a quarterly basis. Revisions have been made to the report to improve data integrity and reach a 95% compliance rate for report submission.



SHARING LEARNINGS

In January 2017 (covering the period April 1, 2016 – June 30, 2016), CLBC publicly released their first annual Learning Report to share key provincial data gathered through the PRE. CLBC also established five semi-annual Regional Continuous Quality Improvement Reports (CQI) for CLBC staff and service providers containing region-specific data to refine employment services and move closer to intended results. CLBC also established a semi-annual provincial Employment Supplement Report (the Supplement) for managers. The Supplement provides CLBC managers with internal data that adds to the Regional CQI Report. It strengthens monitoring of employment contracts, enhances collaboration and provides data for service delivery decision-making.

PEER TO PEER SURVEYING

CLBC initiated “peer to peer” surveys in fiscal 2016/17. Under this initiative, CLBC employs individuals with developmental disabilities to interview people accessing employment services to measure improved employability. Experience has shown that peer to peer surveying garners better data as those being surveyed are more comfortable and minimizes the perceived power dynamic. Survey questions were in plain language to make them easier to understand for those being surveyed. Selected survey results are included in the text box below.

Meeting Objectives

Increasing the employment of working-aged persons with disabilities that are CLBC eligible advances strategic objectives of CLBC and the provincial government.

Fiscal 2017–18 Peer to Peer Survey Results

- ▶ **86.7%** indicated that their employment supports helped them learn new skills.
- ▶ **76.5%** indicated that their employment supports helped them get their first job.
- ▶ **83.6%** indicated that their job helped them to live more independently.
- ▶ When asked who helps them when they need help, 56.1% indicated that co-workers helped and 30.2% indicated Employment Support Workers helped.
- ▶ **82.2%** indicated that they feel they are making a difference in their workplace.
- ▶ **46.3%** indicated they would like to work more. (55% are working up to 10 hours/week).

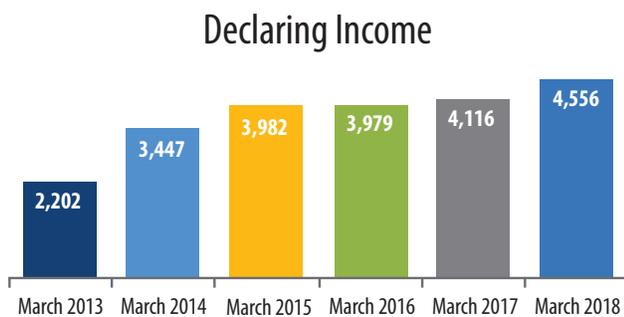
As of April 2015, over 1,400 people served by CLBC reported employment income throughout B.C. By March 2016, an additional 1,800 clients (21%) reported income. By March 2018, this number grew to 4,556. Although these results are encouraging, it represents only a rate of 23% employed. This data is derived from a data match with the BC Government Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction where CLBC eligible individuals report employment earnings.

QUALITY OF LIFE

CLBC's "include Me!" project began in 2012-13. It invites individuals from across the province to participate in a survey that measures their quality of life, including the impact of employment. Employment is positively correlated with social inclusion, human rights, self-determination and personal development. Across all surveys, respondents' scores varied depending on the type of residential or community inclusion service they received: respondents receiving shared living or supported living services are more likely to be employed. Individuals receiving employment services are more likely to be employed, have support to find a job and get around their community easily, compared to those individuals receiving other community inclusion services.

SUSTAINABILITY

In March 2016, 1,880 job seekers were working with a CLBC service provider. 1,222 (65%) were employed and 997 were still employed after one year. Comparatively, in March 2018, 2,202 job seekers were working with a CLBC service provider, 1,524 (69%) were employed and 1,417 were still employed after one year.



Increasing Employment Service Capacity and Options

CLBC currently has two major employment projects in development:

- ▶ Offering Employment Services to All:
 - ▶ This project builds capacity in CLBC employment services so that anyone interested in employment has timely access to service.
- ▶ Advancing New Service Options:
 - ▶ This is a new service option that has support for employment at the core, but also includes community inclusion, skill development and informal supports. This service will benefit people who need a broad-based service to reach their employment goals.

Summary

CLBC-eligible individuals remain interested in employment. Presently, demand is higher than available services. Those who have secured employment experience a wide range of benefits and are sustaining their jobs. Service providers benefit from competency training, effectively engage with employers and support an attitude shift that values the contributions of people with disabilities. Strong progress has been seen since 2013 with significant increases to employment. CLBC is increasing service capacity to meet demand.

Conclusion

The evaluation report for EPBC and CLBC present multiple lines of evidence of program performance, including program participant feedback. Opportunities for future improvement were identified; however, both programs are achieving positive outcomes for persons with disabilities.