The BC Centre for Employment Excellence is funded in whole or in part by the Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia.
MESSAGE FROM THE CENTRE’S MANAGING DIRECTOR

We are pleased to present the 2014–15 Annual Report for the BC Centre for Employment Excellence.

The BC Centre for Employment Excellence (the Centre/CfEE) is the first of its kind as a “what works” innovation hub for the employment services sector in Canada. It is unique in combining high-quality relevant evidence of what works with active engagement of practitioners, service providers and employers. We are delighted that the Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation recognizes the Centre’s contributions and has committed to supporting our work for another two years. The renewed funding allows the Centre to continue pursuing its mandate and further deliver on the important role it plays in gathering, translating, coordinating and disseminating a body of knowledge on which practitioners, employers and policymakers can draw to improve employment practices that inspire innovation.

The Centre has had another busy and successful year, owing to the generous support and encouragement from practitioners and the steady efforts and collaboration with our service, business and government partners. In this annual report, we have chosen to showcase the multiple research and innovation projects the Centre carried out with its partners over the last year. These projects vary in scope, research objectives, intended participants and methodologies, but combine overall to foster a sector-wide culture of innovation that encourages creativity and knowledge building.

We are thankful to our funder and project liaison for their ongoing support and collaboration over the past year. We are honoured to work alongside many dedicated, committed and passionate practitioners, service providers and employers; they inspire us as we work together to support innovation in the delivery of employment services across the province, with the common goal of helping British Columbians succeed in the labour market.

We are proud of our collective accomplishments and pleased to have the opportunity to report on these achievements for 2014–2015. Moving into our fourth year, the Centre looks forward to launching several exciting new initiatives — stay tuned for these announcements.

Susanna Gurr,
Managing Director,
BC Centre for Employment Excellence

MESSAGE FROM SRDC’S PRESIDENT AND CEO

The Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC) is pleased to support the BC Centre for Employment Excellence in its work and activities. With the very welcome ongoing funding from the Province of British Columbia, the Centre will build on the achievements it has made over the last three years. The Centre remains, as I am, committed to delivering relevant and exemplary products and services designed to enhance the impact of knowledge on practice in the employment services sector.

I am proud of the work accomplished by the dedicated team at the Centre and their many partners. The research and innovation projects that they implement support some of the province’s most vulnerable groups, and regard for the Centre continues to grow not only in BC, but other provinces as well. I am delighted to support the Centre’s growth as we find innovative solutions to address BC’s labour market priorities.

Jean-Pierre Voyer,
President and CEO,
Social Research and Demonstration Corporation
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The Training Group at Douglas College

The Centre is based in Vancouver and is a division of the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC), an established national non-profit, non-partisan, social policy research organization. For more information about SRDC, contact:

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ABOUT THE CENTRE

The BC Centre for Employment Excellence is an independent research and knowledge-sharing organization created to support the employment services sector and the employer community in BC with the best available evidence on issues related to employment and labour market programs and policies.1 The Centre is based in Vancouver and set up as a division of the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC), an established national non-profit, non-partisan, social policy research organization.

MISSION

The Centre aims to act as a coordination point for research on employment in British Columbia (BC). It connects its key stakeholders with the best and emerging information about employment and training programs, practices, resources and tools. The Centre offers a Web site, training, research studies and other opportunities to enhance the knowledge and capacity of service providers, practitioners and employers, with the aim of improving employment outcomes for all job seekers.

The Centre has a particular focus on job seekers who may require specialized services, such as people with disabilities, immigrants, Aboriginal people and youth.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND VALUES

The Centre is well-regarded for its ability to engage with key stakeholders and build collaborative and trusting partnerships. The key principles and values that guide the Centre’s work include:

- Ensuring relevant information is provided and presented in a useful and accessible manner;
- Delivering research and information that is independent and rigorous;
- Dealing with issues of significance to key stakeholders which address gaps in the existing knowledge base;
- Actively working in partnership with key stakeholders by fostering and building trust and collaboration to strengthen the Centre’s relevance and impact;
- Leveraging and building on existing resources to avoid duplicating available services and support; and
- Encouraging sharing and learning among its key stakeholders.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Research and Innovation lie at the core of the Centre’s activities. This was especially the case in 2014–15 as the Centre engaged in a total of six innovation projects with funding from the Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation’s Community and Employer Partnerships Research and Innovation Fund. The projects cover a broad range of areas in the employment services sector and involve partnerships with a variety of organizations. It is these collaborations that made their respective projects possible. Highlights from each of the projects are presented on the following pages.

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1 In this report, the term “labour market” does not include collecting data to produce labour market information and analysis and forecasting future job needs. The Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training is responsible for the province’s labour market information and analysis. The Centre will draw heavily on the information, resources and tools produced by this ministry and others and connect the employment services sector and the employer community with the available labour market information. As well, the Centre will work to determine how labour market information can be used to assist individuals in their employment goals.
**PROJECT**

**BC PARTNERS IN WORKFORCE INNOVATION PILOT PROJECT**

**PARTNERS**
- Employment Action Committee (members are: Community Living BC, Open Door Group, Neil Squire Society, Burnaby Association for Community Inclusion (representing the BC Employment Network), Flaherty and Associates and MacLeod Silver HR Business Partners)
- Employer/Industry partners

**GOAL**
This three-year collaborative and innovative initiative is designed to meet the dual objectives of supporting the workforce needs of BC businesses and improving employment outcomes for people with disabilities.

**DESCRIPTION**
This pilot project will apply a business “demand-based” approach using a recruitment model to work directly with BC employers in specific industry sectors with high employment demand to match them with candidates who have the qualifications, skill set, career interests and capabilities to meet the job requirements. The recruitment activities will be performed by a Recruitment Specialist, who will work on behalf of employers to interface with partnering employment agencies to recruit suitable candidates. The Specialist will monitor each employment relationship to ensure that it is successful for all parties, interfacing between the employer, employee and agency to determine if any further supports are required.

As a pilot, this project is designed to provide important insights into establishing innovative partnerships between employers and disability serving agencies to facilitate the employment of people with disabilities in BC.

**METHODOLOGY**
This project will use a Developmental Evaluation approach to evaluate the role of a Recruitment Specialist in facilitating employers’ hiring of people with disabilities.

**DURATION**
March 2015 to March 2018

**WEBSITE**
www.bcpartnerswin.org
PROJECT
MAKING CHANGE — INTEGRATING MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING WITHIN EMPLOYMENT SERVICES FOR BC EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME ASSISTANCE RECIPIENTS

PARTNERS
• Back in Motion (Avia Employment Services)
• Empowering Change Inc.

GOAL
This pilot tests the feasibility of using a Motivational Interviewing (MI) model in WorkBC Employment Service Centres to determine if it can help clients on Income Assistance (IA) improve their access to the labour market, sustain employment and reduce IA recidivism.

DESCRIPTION
This project involves piloting MI as an approach to case management with the aim of improving outcomes for employment-obligated IA clients referred to WorkBC Employment Service Centres. MI is an intervention to overcoming ambivalence that keeps many people from making desired changes in their lives. The aim of this project is to test an intervention that goes beyond the delivery of services to focus on the prerequisites for career decision-making and the issues individuals experience that prevent them from securing and maintaining employment, such as low self-esteem, cultural differences, poverty, discrimination, self-efficacy and personal motivation.

In July 2014, the Centre hosted a webinar on a BC-based study that built on an earlier successful trial of MI.

METHODOLOGY
The project includes a rigorous evaluation of the proposed intervention, randomizing both participants/job seekers and case managers to the treatment, so that clear lessons for policy and practice can be learned and disseminated.

DURATION
April 2015 to March 2017
PROJECT
MENTORING PARTNERSHIPS FOR BC CAREER DEVELOPMENT PRACTITIONERS

PARTNERS
• BC Career Development Association (BCCDA)
• SkillPlan

GOAL
This pilot project examines the role that a structured mentorship program can play in supporting Career Development Practitioners (CDPs) in BC.

DESCRIPTION
CDPs have the opportunity to form mentoring partnerships around specific topic areas where they are looking for — or offering — support and guidance. This could include serving clients with particular needs and barriers, pursuing skills upgrading or other professional development opportunities, or training in the latest software or information and communications technologies. Participants are provided with orientation and training on effective mentoring skills and strategies based on SkillPlan’s established mentorship framework. They are also given the opportunity to fill the role of mentors or mentees on topics of their choosing.

More information for CDPs about the mentorship program is available on BCCDA’s website, www.bccda.org.

METHODOLOGY
A random assignment design is being used to determine the effectiveness of the Mentoring Partnerships Pilot in supporting the professional development needs of CDPs as well as its role in equipping practitioners to provide services and supports to BC job seekers. In addition, case studies will be conducted to learn about the impact of the pilot for WorkBC Employment Service Centres.

DURATION
December 2014 to November 2016

WEBSITE
www.bccda.org
PROJECT

SHARING POSITIVE EXPERIENCES OF INCLUSIVE EMPLOYMENT

PARTNERS
• UBC Centre for Inclusion and Citizenship
• SpICE (Spatial Information for Community Engagement) Lab, UBC Okanagan
• Community Living BC

GOAL
This pilot project evaluates the use and impact of an online mapping tool that allows individuals with disabilities, their families, employers and service providers to share and learn about the positive, inclusive employment experiences for individuals with developmental disabilities in BC.

DESCRIPTION
In December 2013, the Centre launched a project to develop an online database of best practices concerning the employment of people with developmental disabilities. The Mapping Tool is designed as a resource for individuals with developmental disabilities, their families, service providers, employers, and policy-makers. It aims to increase understanding of how best to support people with developmental disabilities in preparing for and maintaining employment.

By allowing users to upload text or media files that relate their experiences with employment and disability support services, the tool will facilitate the sharing of first-hand knowledge of best practices to other stakeholders.

A key aspect will be the identification of innovative approaches for helping people with developmental disabilities to overcome barriers to finding or keeping a job. The tool’s map-based interface will allow users to search for information specific to their own regions.

While the broader developmental disability community will be encouraged to use the map to share positive experiences of inclusive employment, the research component of the pilot will involve the collection of stories from 30 to 35 self-advocates, employers, support workers, and family members from across BC.

Results and activities from this initiative were shared in a webinar hosted by the Centre.

DURATION
December 2013 to September 2015

WEBSITE
www.mappinginclusiveemployment.ca
PROJECT
STRENGTHENING BUSINESS TO ACHIEVE HIGHER PERFORMANCE:
PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS AT NONPROFIT AGENCIES DELIVERING EMPLOYMENT SERVICES FOR SPECIALIZED POPULATIONS

PARTNERS
• Leaders at 10 non-profit employment services organizations in BC

GOAL
This pilot project developed a prototype model to support business process management (BPM) at non-profit organizations in the employment services sector.

DESCRIPTION
This was an initiative designed to strengthen business processes in BC’s non-profit employment services sector.

Like many businesses, non-profit organizations are always looking for ways to provide high-quality services more efficiently. One approach that addresses this challenge is BPM, a client-centered approach that promotes organizational learning and capacity-building. Although originally developed and used in the for-profit sector, BPM is just starting to be applied in the non-profit sector.

The Centre convened a group of leaders of community organizations from several regions in BC to develop an approach for addressing business process challenges. Over a series of three workshops, the group contributed their insights and inputs which, in addition to background materials gathered along the way, shaped the resulting model. The proposed model that emerged is an original, collaborative design.

Results and activities from this initiative were shared in a webinar hosted by the Centre.

DURATION
October 2014 to June 2015
PROJECT
UNDERSTANDING CURRENT EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMMING AND SERVICES FOR BC YOUTH

PARTNERS
• Tom Zizys
• YMCA of Greater Vancouver
• MOSAIC
• Community Social Planning Council
• McCreary Centre Society

GOAL
This pilot project engaged community organizations and researchers to explore labour market issues for BC youth from a variety of perspectives and to identify innovative approaches that can be developed for further evaluation.

DESCRIPTION
The project involved a call for papers, inviting researchers from across the province to submit proposals. In all, the Centre received 28 applications and funded five studies for the project. The research papers and proponents are:

1. Study of Demand-led Labour Market Strategies to Improve Employment Outcomes for British Columbia Youth (Tom Zizys)
2. Understanding Current Employment Programming and Services for Lower Mainland Youth Living with Mental Illness (YMCA of Greater Vancouver)
3. The Value of Paid or Unpaid Short-term Work Placements for Refugee and Immigrant Youth (MOSAIC)
4. Pathways to Success for Youth in BC’s Capital Region: The Power and Potential of Social Enterprise in High Demand Sectors (Community Social Planning Council)
5. Negotiating the Barriers to Employment: Vulnerable BC Youth’s Experiences and Recommendations (McCreary Centre Society)

DURATION
November 2013 to September 2014
KNOWLEDGE AND CAPACITY-BUILDING

In addition to Research and Innovation projects, the Centre was successful in a number of other capacities in 2014–15:

• **The continuation of a popular webinar series.**
  The Centre built on the success of a monthly webinar series first launched in 2013 by continuing to offer new and engaging learning opportunities on topics of interest to practitioners. Subject areas that addressed specialized populations attracted the most participants, underscored by a March 2015 two-hour mini-symposium on Disability-related Employment Needs Assessments, which drew 173 live participants.

• **Outreach and engagement activities with career practitioners.**
  Through the Web site, BC Employment Program Hub, Knowledge Clearinghouse and in-person and online meetings, the Centre connected practitioners serving BC’s job seekers with information, research, resources and tools to support and enhance their work. The Centre’s Web site alone saw over 16,000 unique visitors over the last year.

• **The Face-to-Face Project — Connecting Youth with Disabilities with Employers.**
  With funding from the Vancouver Foundation, the Centre piloted an innovative approach which connected 14 youth with disabilities with 19 employers to practice networking and mock interview scenarios. The Centre hosted a forum at the 2015 UnTapped Conference that featured a video story launch and interviews with an employer and youth.

THE YEAR AHEAD

Moving into its fourth year of operations, the Centre will continue to build upon its strong relationships with employment services agencies, community organizations and employers. 2015–16 will include an expanded focus on the employer community, highlighted by the Centre’s partnership with Open Door Group in the 2016 UnTapped Workplace Inclusion Conference.

Over the course of the next year, the Centre and its partners will collaborate on current and upcoming research and innovation projects to deliver evidence on what works in the employment sector. New products and services will also be developed, including the BC Professional Development and Training Hub for Career Development Practitioners and a regular podcast series that will feature interviews with leaders of innovative labour market approaches in British Columbia and other jurisdictions.

The team at the Centre looks forward to continuing its work with stakeholders to build capacity in the sector!
MANAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE

Governance

The Centre was created as a division of the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation. Established in 1991, SRDC is a national non-profit social policy research organization dedicated to determining what works in social and economic policies and programs, to the highest standards of evidence. While the Centre operates quite independently, it relies on the governance structure already in place at SRDC; SRDC’s President and Board of Directors provide general oversight to ensure that the Centre is meeting its mandate and to monitor its financial viability.

Organizational Structure

Core Team

The Centre has a core team of committed and engaged individuals. Susanna Gurr, the Centre’s Managing Director, provides overall management of its strategic vision and day-to-day operations. Shawn de Raaf, the Centre’s Research Coordinator, oversees its research program. Finally, Greg Lockwood, the Centre’s Stakeholder Coordinator, spearheads its stakeholder engagement activities.

Affiliated Researchers

Similar to other knowledge-based organizations, the Centre relies on the skills and expertise of an extended team of researchers in addition to its core staff. The Centre has access to a multidisciplinary pool of experienced and established SRDC researchers who have knowledge and expertise in a variety of areas related to employment and labour market programs. These areas of expertise include income security programs, literacy and essential skills, career development and employment supports. Moreover, the multiple research and innovation projects that are being conducted at SRDC contribute to the Centre’s research and development program.

Where and when appropriate, the Centre also partners with external academic and community researchers who are well-positioned to support relevant projects and/or contribute their research for dissemination through the Centre.

Partners

The Training Group at Douglas College is the Centre’s training partner. Where appropriate, the Training Group supports the development and delivery of training and technical assistance services, identified through input from the employment services sector and employer community. These services are provided on a cost-recovery basis.
Steering Committee

A Steering Committee representing the Centre’s key stakeholders meets twice annually to offer advice on the Centre’s research content and services. This Steering Committee is made up of experts with extensive knowledge of BC’s labour market and institutions, representing many different areas, including the employment services sector, employer community, government and special populations. The current members of the Steering Committee are:

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<tr>
<th>Member</th>
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<tr>
<td>John Atherton</td>
<td>Department of Employment and Social Development</td>
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<td>Krista Bax</td>
<td>Asia Pacific Gateway Skills Table</td>
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<td>Gary Birch</td>
<td>Neil Squire Society</td>
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<td>Rob Bruce</td>
<td>Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation</td>
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<td>Tannis Goddard</td>
<td>Training Innovations</td>
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<td>Val Lockyer</td>
<td>The Training Group at Douglas College</td>
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<td>Fiona MacPhail</td>
<td>University of Northern British Columbia</td>
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<td>Sharon Manson Singer</td>
<td>Director on SRDC Board</td>
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<td>Jean-Pierre Voyer</td>
<td>President and CEO at SRDC</td>
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<td>Jeremy Higgs</td>
<td>Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training</td>
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<td>William Borgen</td>
<td>Faculty of Education, UBC</td>
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Go to www.cfeebc.org to learn more. Connect with the Centre via Twitter @CfEEBC, our mailing list and RSS Feeds.