MESSAGE FROM THE CENTRE’S MANAGING DIRECTOR

We are pleased to present the 2015–16 Annual Report for the BC Centre for Employment Excellence.

The BC Centre for Employment Excellence (the Centre/CfEE) is a pioneer in creating a “what works” centre for the employment services sector in Canada. We are proud of the solid foundation we, together with our partners, have built in just a few short years to put evidence at the heart of practice.

This past year has proven to be yet another busy and successful one with plenty of innovative thinking and sharing of best practices. On the research and innovation front, we are carrying out an increasing number of projects. We launched four new multi-year research and innovation projects, which are showcased in this report along with ongoing projects. These projects vary in scope, research objectives, intended participants and methodologies, but combine to foster a sector-wide culture of innovation that encourages creativity and knowledge building.

We recognized right from the start that our effectiveness relies on the strength of our relationships with community agencies, employers and others. Working with key partners, the Centre has made notable progress in the last four years. We are deeply grateful for the trust our partners and funder have placed in us. It inspires us. It keeps us energized to do the work we do. We look forward to collaborating with the remarkable people and organizations who are dedicated, committed and passionate practitioners, service providers and employers. We will continue to find new ways to increase the impact of our work by co-creating and collaborating with key partners and through engagement and knowledge sharing with stakeholders in the employment services community.

Looking ahead, we remain inspired by the same mission that has animated the Centre since its founding.

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. The Centre, and I, remain committed to delivering relevant and exemplary products and services designed to produce evidence to support decision-making for practice and policy in the employment services sector.

I am proud of the work accomplished in the past year by the dedicated team at the Centre and their many partners. The research and innovation projects that they implemented 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 continued success as we find innovative solutions to address BC’s labour market priorities.

Jean-Pierre Voyer
President and CEO
Social Research and Demonstration Corporation
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:

Jean-Pierre Voyer  
President and CEO, SRDC  
613-237-3169  
jpvoyer@srdc.org
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:

- Actively working in partnership with key stakeholders by fostering and building trust and collaboration to strengthen the Centre’s relevance and impact;
- Co-creating and collaborating on new approaches in the spirit of continuous learning and improvement;
- Leveraging and building on existing resources to avoid duplicating available services and support;
- Encouraging sharing and learning among its key stakeholders; and
- Celebrating innovations of other stakeholders in the sector.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
In its fourth year, the Centre continued to expand its Research and Innovation (R&I) program. Projects cover three broad areas: programs to assist persons with disabilities, programs leading to more effective transitions to work for unemployed people and programs to build capacity amongst employment service providers and practitioners. The projects vary in scope, research objectives, target populations, collaborations and methodologies, but together they combine to foster a culture of innovation that encourages creativity and knowledge building in the employment services sector. In addition to completing and continuing several projects in 2015–16, the Centre launched four new R&I projects in key policy areas. These projects are funded from the Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation’s Community and Employer Partnerships R&I Program.

¹ In this report, the term “labour market” does not include the collection of data to produce labour market information or analysis and forecast of 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.
EMPLOYMENT NAVIGATOR PILOT (ENP) PROJECT

PARTNERS
The Centre is managing and evaluating the project with its partners Lookout Emergency Aid Society and Open Door Group (ODG) — a cross-sector partnership between housing, employment and research.

GOAL
The Employment Navigator Project incorporates best practice and aims to bring together Housing First and customized employment approaches to deliver employment supports to tenants in supportive housing. The main aim of the Employment Navigators is to encourage individuals to consider the possibility of employment and to help them connect with the existing services and the supports needed to make employment a reality.

DESCRIPTION
The ENP model is client-centred with Employment Navigators located in supportive housing providing one-to-one support to clients. The intention is that the Employment Navigators work closely with tenants to identify and access supports to move them along their path to employment using implicit career search techniques and customized employment. The Employment Navigators work with individuals to identify employment goals and to improve employment readiness by accessing a range of existing community supports. When appropriate, the Navigators refer participants to the ODG where they become ODG clients and are able to access the range of supports and services through the Employment Program of BC. The Employment Navigators will continue to provide support to help participants sustain employment and to continue progress towards their goals.

DURATION
October 26, 2015 to October 25, 2018

KEY COMPONENTS
The figure shows the components of the ENP model. It highlights the fact that client progress is not linear as well as the need for ongoing review of processes and the supports provided.

METHODOLOGY
To ensure the evaluation captures the processes generated by the project, CfEE has adopted a comprehensive approach that is grounded in developmental evaluation. This approach is participatory and will provide a format for key partners to be actively engaged with all aspects of the evaluation. The evaluation design consists of three main components — implementation research, case studies and comparison site — and each component will use a range of qualitative and quantitative methods.
PROJECT

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT SOCIAL ENTERPRISES PILOT PROJECT

PARTNERS
Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria

GOAL
This pilot project is examining the effectiveness of Employment Social Enterprise (ESE) paid placement opportunities in providing valuable employment experience as well as on-the-job hard and soft skill training to increase the employability and potential long-term employment outcomes of youth participants.

DURATION
February 1, 2016 to January 31, 2019

DESCRIPTION
ESEs have the potential to offer disadvantaged job seekers the opportunity to jumpstart their careers by establishing meaningful contact with a workplace and employer in a relatively safe environment, resilient to setbacks they may encounter en route to success. This project aims to provide a rigorous assessment of the effectiveness of this approach within an employment service delivery context.

The project team will engage WorkBC Centres, employers and social entrepreneurs on Vancouver Island and in the Lower Mainland to generate temporary paid work placements in ESEs for youth facing barriers to employment. WorkBC Centres are involved in recruiting youth clients to participate in the study, referring them to the ESE placements and providing supports to clients before, during and after placement. The project’s ESE partners will provide participants with at minimum six-month placements in a range of sectors and occupations.

METHODOLOGY
The project utilizes a random assignment design where a minimum of 75 youth in the study group are offered placements compared to a similar number of youth (or more) that are not offered an ESE placement but continue to receive WorkBC programs and services for which they are eligible. Youth participants are also being invited to engage in participatory research activities during the course of the project to provide deeper insights into their circumstances and motivations as well as input into how the approach can be improved to address their needs more effectively.
# PROJECT CALCULATOR BC

## PARTNERS
SRDC is leading the project and partnering with Disability Alliance of BC, Turn2Us and Back in Motion/Avia Employment Services.

## GOAL
This project aims to develop a state-of-the-art income calculator Web site to provide information on a wide range of different income sources, estimate eligibility and allow participants to explore likely changes in income following transitions into and out of employment. The project evaluation seeks to better understand the information needs of people with disabilities and those who advise them, as well as assess the impacts of improved access to information.

## DURATION
February 1, 2016 to January 31, 2019

## DESCRIPTION
For people with disabilities and their families, a contributing factor to low rates of employment is the fear of losing benefits. A comprehensive income calculator site and application will provide better information to WorkBC case managers, people with disabilities and their families. The tool is being designed to provide options to make “better off in work” total income estimates for specific job opportunities and a personal account function to help clients tally their earnings exemption totals.

## METHODOLOGY
The research design involves evaluating the impacts of Calculator BC by comparing a program group cluster of offices receiving access to the full tool and training and the control group cluster of offices participating in data collection only.
PROJECT
BIZ HUB

PARTNERS
BC-based community organizations that deliver employment programs and services to job seekers from specialized populations.

GOAL
This project aims to improve operational efficiency in organizational processes with the long-term objective of improving services and achieving better employment outcomes for job seekers.

DURATION
February 1, 2016 to January 31, 2019

DESCRIPTION
For-profit and non-profit organizations alike are always looking to provide high-quality client services more efficiently. Over the years, various methodologies have emerged to support these efforts. But even when armed with new strategies and tools, making changes to complex day-to-day operations and processes is never easy.

Biz Hub supports business process improvements in the employment services sector with the ultimate aim of achieving improved outcomes for job seekers. It is an industry-developed and supported peer-to-peer model that was created by non-profit sector leaders from across BC.

Biz Hub is a pilot project that tests a new idea for learning and capacity-building, but it is also a vehicle to put innovative ideas into concrete action. Implementation and testing of Biz Hub will create and support a collaborative network of individuals keen to learn and implement business process management and identify and make changes that will improve operational efficiency in the employment services sector.

KEY COMPONENTS
Biz Hub is a hub-and-spoke model with two key components — a main hub and sub-hubs. The main hub serves as the “place” to engage, share and exchange information on important and relevant business processes. The sub-hubs are where the action happens: six to eight practitioners, led by a facilitator and subject matter expert, work together to solve a specific business process problem facing their organizations.
PROJECT
BC PARTNERS IN WORKFORCE INNOVATION PILOT PROJECT (BC WIN)

PARTNERS
• Employment Action Committee (members include Community Living BC, Open Door Group, Neil Squire Society, Burnaby Association for Community Inclusion, Flaherty and Associates and MacLeod Silver HR Business Partners)
• Employer/industry partners in the Lower Mainland of BC
• Approximately 25 service partners in the region that support a wide range of client groups

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.

DURATION
March 2015 to March 2018

METHODOLOGY
This project is utilizing a Developmental Evaluation approach to examine how the establishment of the Recruitment Specialist role can enable more effective partnerships with employers who are committed to meeting their hiring needs by recruiting from a talent pool of employment-ready candidates with diverse abilities.

DESCRIPTION
This pilot project applies 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 are performed by a Recruitment Specialist, who works on behalf of the project’s employer partners to interface with partnering employment agencies to recruit suitable candidates. The Specialist monitors 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 employment serving agencies to facilitate the employment of people with disabilities in BC.

UPDATE
The First Year in Review presents the project’s background, design and early findings from its first year of operations. The report highlights how BC WiN partners are contributing to a collective impact approach that is working towards being more responsive to employers’ needs while contributing to system-wide changes in attitudes, beliefs and practices regarding inclusive employment. To date, BC WiN’s Recruitment Specialist team has recommended over 80 candidates for employment, and of these, over 25 candidates have secured employment through the initiative.

A video that summarizes the project and features employers and candidates can be viewed on the CfEE YouTube page.

WEBSITE
www.bcpartnerswin.org
PROJECT
MAKINGCHANGE — 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 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. MI helps clients to overcome the ambivalence that may be keeping them from making desired changes in their lives.

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.

UPDATE
Seven WorkBC offices and over 150 employment-obligated IA clients have participated in the project to date. Although it is too early to calculate impact estimates, there have been reports of clients taking increased ownership and moving forward more quickly to follow employment plans.
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.

DURATION
December 2014 to May 2017

DESCRIPTION
Through the pilot project, 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, skills upgrading or other professional development opportunities, or training in the latest software or information and communications technologies. Participating CDPs are offered 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 the BCCDA mentorship platform, www.bccdamentorship.ca.

METHODOLOGY
A random assignment design is being used to determine the effectiveness of the mentorship model 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 are being conducted with four WorkBC Employment Service Centres to learn about the impact of the pilot within their organizations.

UPDATE
To date, over 200 practitioners across BC have enrolled in the practitioner study in addition to the nearly 50 practitioners that have participated in the four WorkBC case study sites.
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 evaluated 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 was 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 is facilitating the sharing of first-hand knowledge of best practices to other stakeholders. A key aspect is 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 allows users to search for information specific to their own regions.

While the broader developmental disability community has been encouraged to use the map to share positive experiences of inclusive employment, the research component of the pilot has involved the collection of stories from approximately 30 self-advocates from across BC, as well as their employers, support workers, and family members.

WEB SITE
www.mappinginclusiveemployment.ca

DURATION
December 2013 to September 2015

UPDATE
The project concluded in September 2015 with the project findings published in a final report on the Centre’s website. The Home Society now supports the Employment Mapping Tool on an ongoing basis.

L to R: Chris Boehm and Kevin Speijer of Burger 55 in Penticton, BC
The YWCA Metro Vancouver has commissioned the Centre to carry out an evaluation of NextStep, a multidimensional mentoring intervention designed to help recently educated, unemployed individuals to better integrate into BC’s labour market.

The evaluation determines NextStep’s impacts on self-esteem, confidence, motivation, industry networks and labour market attachment using a random assignment design, with half of eligible individuals receiving group and peer mentorship and the other half receiving group, peer and one-to-one mentorship.

The Industry Training Authority commissioned the Centre to evaluate the front end-loaded delivery pilot offered at Thompson Rivers University School of Trades and Technology. The front end-loaded truck and transport mechanic training pathway was designed as an alternative to the traditional block-release model for apprentices and employers.

The Centre was contracted by Restaurants Canada to develop and prepare a Diversity Toolkit designed specifically for restaurants and foodservice businesses that intend to hire and maintain a diverse workforce. The Centre partnered with MacLeod Silver HR Business Partners to develop the Toolkit and present it to Restaurants Canada members across the country through a series of webinars.
KNOWLEDGE AND CAPACITY-BUILDING

In 2015–16, the Centre continued the important work of enhancing knowledge in the sector by building an evidence base for the provision of employment programs and services. Highlights from the last year in this area include:

• **The UnTapped Series.**
  The Centre partnered with Open Door Group for UnTapped 2016, which was repackaged into a four-event series for its fourth edition. The series brought together over 400 employers for topical discussions of common recruitment challenges and tested solutions to create more inclusive workplaces. From the opening business lunch featuring former VP of Walgreens Randy Lewis to the spring awards gala, the series successfully raised awareness of strategies implemented by successful companies to engage non-traditional talent pools and what can be learned from their experiences.

• **The continuation of a popular webinar series.**
  The Centre’s webinar series was introduced in 2013 and continues to be a key vehicle for engaging and supporting practitioners, averaging over 100 participants in the live sessions alone. The webinars from 2015–16 covered a broad range of topics, highlighted by an online mini-symposium in January, *Translating Aboriginal Traditions to Employment*. Complete recordings for each webinar, now displayed with closed captioning, are archived on the CfEE Website.

• **A new podcast series.**
  Introduced in early 2016, the *CfEE Podcast Series Innovate, Implement, Inspire* explores unique approaches to the labour market in British Columbia. Featuring interviews with practitioners and directors from a wide range of organizations and initiatives, the series launched with a three-part series on partnerships, which can be downloaded or streamed from the Centre’s website or iTunes.

• **Gearing Up For Jobs.**
  In March 2016, the Centre participated in three of a series of four two-day workshops hosted by The New Relationship Trust. The events brought together over 190 front-line First Nations employment coordinators, alongside First Nations, provincial and federal government representatives, industry, unions and not-for-profit service providers. At the Fort St. John, Prince Rupert and Vancouver events, the Centre highlighted ways in which its research and resources can support communities.

THE YEAR AHEAD

Since launching in 2012, the Centre’s effectiveness has been strengthened by its close relationships with community agencies, employers and key partners. As it enters its fifth year of operations, the Centre will continue to build on these partnerships, as well as find new ways to increase the impact of its work.

The year 2016–17 will see further progress in each of the Centre’s research and innovation projects and core activities, with a focus on delivering evidence on what works in the employment sector. Results and lessons learned from its portfolio of research and innovation projects will be shared in a symposium hosted by the Centre and scheduled for the spring of 2017.

The team at the Centre remains committed to producing relevant and helpful information for its stakeholders and looks forward to another exciting year ahead!
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.

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>Employment and Social Development Canada</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>Naomi Pope</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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The Centre’s team (from left to right): Shawn de Raaf, Research Coordinator; Susanna Gurr, Managing Director; and Greg Lockwood, Stakeholder Coordinator.
WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!
Go to www.cfeeac.org to learn more. Connect with the Centre via Twitter @CfEEBC, our mailing list and RSS Feeds.