

Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation

Employment Program of British Columbia (EPBC)

Program Evaluation Framework

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Introduction

On April 2, 2012, the Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation (SDSI) launched the Employment Program of British Columbia (EPBC). The purpose of the program is to support unemployed British Columbians in achieving sustainable employment as quickly as possible through an integrated system of employment services and supports. The integration of programming coordinates services, simplifies access, tailors to individual need, and ensures people receive needed services for which they are eligible.

The EPBC replaced ten legacy programs and services administered by the ministry, including programs funded under Part II of the *Employment Insurance Act* and employment programs targeted to Income Assistance clients.

This document outlines the approach that is being taken to formally evaluate the Employment Program of British Columbia. This Program Evaluation Framework will be supplemented by a second document (Program Evaluation Questions) which will provide further clarification and focus for the evaluation.

Purpose of the Evaluation

The purpose of this program evaluation is to conduct a high level assessment of how the EPBC is performing and to assist with future program development. It is the first formal evaluation of this program.

The evaluation will determine whether the program is meeting its intended principles, outcomes, and objectives, as outlined in the EPBC Request for Proposals (RFP). The evaluation will also answer specific questions, developed in consultation with stakeholders, to gain additional insights into: the success and impacts of the program; the design and delivery of the program; and the sustainability of the program. The evaluation is also expected to highlight any unintended consequences.

The results of this evaluation will play an integral role in the planning for the next stage of program design and procurement.

Background/Context

The EPBC integrates the services delivered under legacy programs into a single, comprehensive employment program. This includes employment services funded by the Province and Employment Benefits and Support Measures funded by the Government of Canada under Part II of *the Employment Insurance Act*.

EPBC services are available to all unemployed British Columbians seeking work, including Employment Insurance, Ministry income assistance and disability assistance clients. EPBC services include self-serve job search services, as well as client needs assessment, case management and other employment service options, for those needing more individualized services, to prepare for, find and maintain sustainable employment.

The Program is delivered by contractors and approved community based employment service providers through 85 WorkBC Employment Services Centres (ESC). The Ministry established 73 geographic catchment areas that span the province. The use of catchment areas ensures equitable access to the program, and allows program delivery to be tailored to the needs of the specific geographic region. One or more WorkBC Employment Services Centre(s) are located within each catchment area and serve the general public and program clients. To ensure accessibility to the Program, the contract holders may have also establish alternative service delivery channels, such as satellite offices, itinerant or outreach services, or remote access services to provide additional access for specialized populations.

For the purposes of the program, specialized populations are: people with a disability, immigrants, francophone persons, multi-barriered clients, survivors of violence and/or abuse, aboriginal people, rural and remote populations and youth.

Program Principles

The program was designed following these principles:

- **Client-Centred:** supports the client by providing services that are necessary and appropriate to support the client in improving employment readiness or attachment to the labour market as soon as possible;
- **Accessible:** equitable and inclusive access by residents throughout the province, with particular attention to Specialized Populations;
- **Results Focused:** enables the client to achieve program outcomes;
- **Accountable:** enables public accountability for all program spending;
- **Efficient:** provides the most valuable services for clients while spending limited program resources efficiently;
- **Fair and Transparent:** ensures payment that is fair and transparent to all clients, contractors, stakeholders, the Ministry and the public;
- **Consistent and Flexible:** is consistent across the province, yet provides the flexibility required to manage economic fluctuations, events, crises, or other factors that affect the lives of British Columbians; and,
- **Sustainable:** is financially sustainable for contractors and the province.

Program Outcomes and Objectives

The purpose of the program is to support clients in achieving and sustaining employment as quickly as possible. The program intends to achieve the following outcomes for individuals, employers and communities who access or benefit from program services.

Outcomes	Objectives
<p>#1 Clients become more independent, through achieving and maintaining sustainable labour market attachments, or community attachments where labour market attachment is not possible at the time.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clients become employed, with earnings that eliminate or reduce dependence on income supports • Clients who are not ready for employment, establish labour market or community attachment that promotes self-reliance and increased independence.
<p>#2 Clients receive services that are aligned with labour market needs and opportunities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program services received by clients contributed to their labour market or community attachment • Program services are aligned with labour market needs and opportunities
<p>#3 Labour market services available to clients are aligned with employers" and communities" needs and opportunities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities, employers and individuals can readily access services • Individuals at risk of losing their labour market attachment receive services at the earliest possible time • Employers utilize program services to help fill their labour market needs

Governance Structure

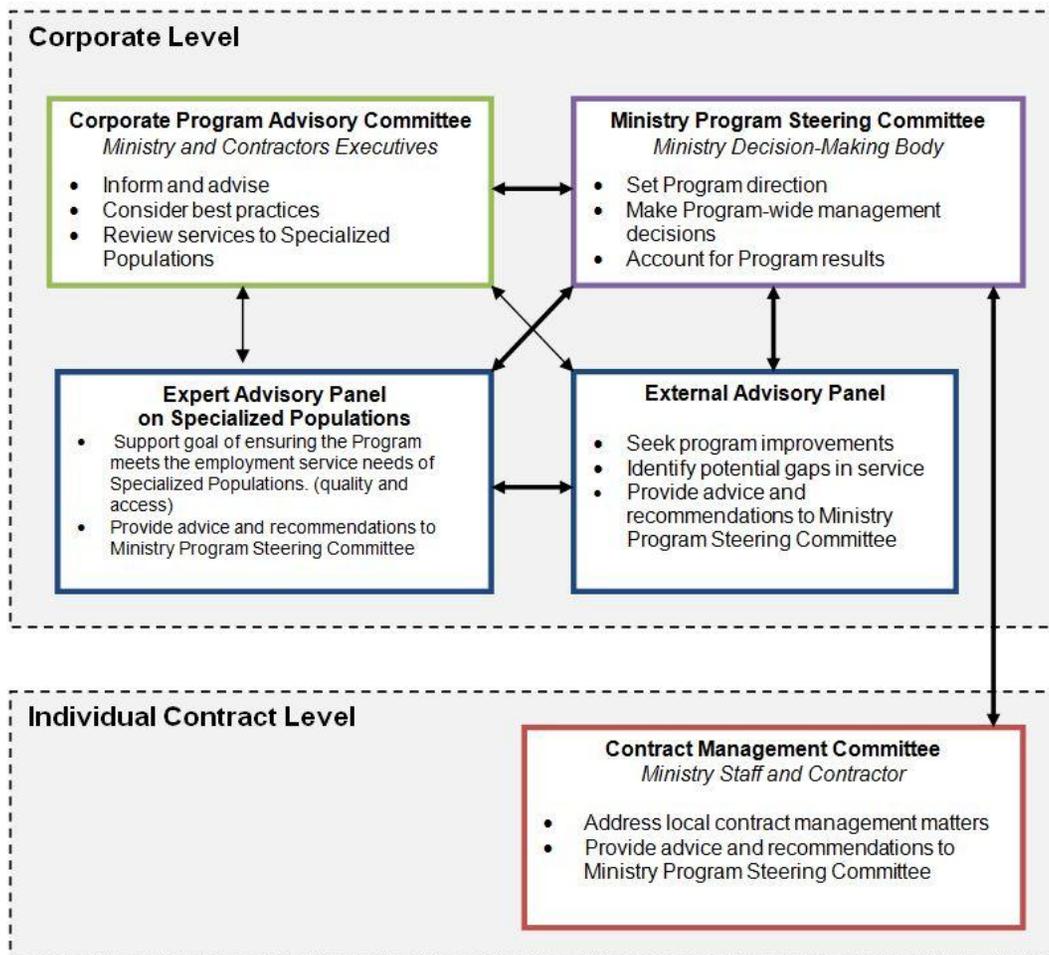
Program Governance

The Ministry Program Steering Committee (PSC) is the primary governing body for the program, and is responsible for the strategic direction and management of the EPBC.

In making program decisions, the PSC is guided by advice and recommendations from other corporate governance bodies, the members of which represent the interests of the program’s key participants – the Ministry, its contractors and the program’s clients. The following three bodies have an advisory role in the corporate governance process:

- External Advisory Panel
- Expert Advisory Panel on Specialized Populations
- Corporate Program Advisory Committee (CPAC)

At the individual contract level, governance activities are focused on providing oversight of the program in each of the 73 individual catchment areas. The oversight function in each local area is provided by a Contract Management Committee.



Governance for the Evaluation

The primary responsibility for the development and implementation of the Program Evaluation Framework resides with the Program Management Branch within the Employment and Labour Market Services Division. This group will procure and support the external evaluator and will carry out consultation, as needed, with Ministry staff and the corporate advisory governance bodies.

The program evaluation work is being managed as a project. The Program Management Branch is accountable to the Ministry Program Steering Committee for the successful completion of this project, through the ELMSD Project Board.



Key Stakeholders

The following groups are expected to have an interest in the approach as well as the results of the evaluation.

EPBC Clients

Clients are the focus of the program. There are approximately 82,000 individuals across British Columbia who access some level of service in a year. To gain insight into client perspectives, consultation will take place with the two advisory panels and client surveys will also be used, where appropriate, to gain input directly from clients.

Ministry Program Steering Committee

The Ministry Program Steering Committee (also referred to as the EPBC Steering Committee) is a decision making body that sets strategic direction for the program. This includes the Employment and Labour Market Services Division (ELMSD) Assistant Deputy Minister, Executive Directors, Directors and a representative of the Research, Innovation and Policy Division (RSD) within SDSI. This committee will make any final decisions required to manage the evaluation.

Ministry Staff

Ministry staff includes staff in the Employment and Labour Market Services Division as well as the Research, Innovation and Policy Division. Where possible existing committees will be engaged as needed - this will include the ELMSD Meeting of Directors (MOD) and Program Risk Management Committee (PRM). Ministry staff will help develop the evaluation questions and will help support evaluation activities.

External Advisory Panel

This is an advisory committee that provides advice and recommendations to the operation and enhancement of EPBC. There are up to 12 members appointed by the Minister from a slate of proposed by the government's Board Resourcing and Development Office (BRDO). This panel will be engaged to provide input on the evaluation questions to consider; review the draft Program Evaluation Framework; review the preliminary evaluation findings as well as the final report and make recommendations to the Ministry; and be consulted, as needed, throughout the evaluation.

Expert Advisory Panel on Specialized Populations

This is an advisory committee that provides advice and recommendations to ensure that the EPBC meets the employment service needs of specialized populations. There are up to 12 members appointed by the Minister from a slate of proposed by the government's BRDO. This panel will be engaged as they relate to specialized populations to provide input on the evaluation questions to consider; provide advice on the design and content of surveys developed for specialized populations; and review the preliminary evaluation findings.

Corporate Program Advisory Committee (CPAC)

This committee is a forum for executives representing the EPBC contractors and ELMSD management to meet and exchange information about the program, its operating environment, and the working relationship. CPAC working groups will be consulted, as needed, to support implementation of the Program Evaluation Framework. Focus groups may also be used to gain insight into contractor and approved service provider perspectives, as a component of the evaluation.

Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC)

ESDC is a federal government department that provides federal funding to the program through the Labour Market Development Agreement. ESDC will be kept informed on the progress of the evaluation and is a source of data to support the evaluation.

Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training

The Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training is responsible for oversight and management of the Canada/British Columbia Labour Market Agreement (LMA). The Forecasting and Analysis Division can provide advice on evaluation techniques and assist with access to data and information on labour market trends.

Ministry of Advanced Education

The Ministry of Advanced Education has an inter-ministry agreement with SDSI to assist with the delivery of skills training in the province. The ministry is also a source of data related to post-secondary education, which may be used in this evaluation.

Other stakeholders and partners may include BC Stats, Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, and Government Communications and Public Engagement. (Additional stakeholders may be identified as the evaluation is implemented).

General Approach and Considerations

The general approach for this program evaluation is to be comprehensive, collaborative and practical in considering what, who, when, and how to evaluate.

The evaluation process is designed to take place in four major steps, described later in the document. The first step is to establish the evaluation questions. Once the evaluation questions are established, an external evaluator will be brought in - through a standard government procurement process - to ensure the robustness and independence of the evaluation. The evaluator will conduct the evaluation. The final step will be for Ministry staff to disseminate the evaluation results.

The Program Management Branch will provide overall project oversight to implement this Program Evaluation Framework, support the evaluator and liaise between the evaluator and stakeholders, as necessary.

It is planned to have the evaluation complete and findings disseminated by the end of fiscal year 2015/16.

The following are additional considerations in developing the Program Evaluation Framework:

- The evaluation results will develop practical insight for program decision makers in the next stage of program development
- The evaluation questions must align with the stated purpose of the evaluation
- The evaluation questions must be ones that can be answered in the evaluation timeframe (from a data collection perspective as well as a resource utilization perspective)
- Creation of data may be considered where needed (data is not limited to existing data sources)
- The program evaluation will not include any reviews of individual contractor performance
- The program evaluation will not replace existing operational program monitoring, such as quality assurance initiatives, performance measurement, external audits, LMDA evaluations, existing financial and system controls, contract management activities

Evaluation Process

The evaluation process will take place in four major steps.

Step 1 – Establish Evaluation Questions. A clear list of priority evaluation questions will be developed in consultation with stakeholders.

Step 2 – Select External Evaluator. A standard government competitive process will be run to select an external evaluator.

Step 3 – Conduct Evaluation. The evaluator will confirm a data collection plan, gather data, conduct analysis and document the findings. As necessary, this work will be supported by Ministry staff.

Step 4 – Disseminate Findings. The evaluator will disseminate the results.

Step 1 - Establish Evaluation Questions

Central to the evaluation are the evaluation questions - it is very important to get these questions right. These questions need to be the ones that, when answered, will provide decision-makers with solid and practical information upon which to base future decisions about the program.

A number of inputs will be used to create the list of potential questions for evaluation. This will include the program principles, objectives and outcomes; a review of evaluations conducted by other jurisdictions; and the results of planned consultations with stakeholder groups. This will be followed by an assessment of the potential questions to determine which ones will be put forward to be answered in the evaluation.

Cross-Jurisdiction Review

There will be a review of the evaluation questions undertaken in other jurisdictions in the same field. This includes studies from other leading Canadian and international jurisdictions, as well as studies from reputable organizations such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Planned Consultations

The plan is to work with the different stakeholder groups early on to gather ideas on potential questions and to understand the value and priority in answering the different questions. These stakeholders will include EPBC Advisory Panels (namely the External Advisory Panel and Expert Advisory Panel on Specialized Populations) and Ministry staff (namely the MOD and PRM committees).

Each group will be asked to identify, from their viewpoint, the most important questions to evaluate that would help decision-makers and other stakeholders understand how the EPBC is performing against stated program principles, outcomes, and objectives.

The consultations are expected to be conducted between December 2013 and February 2014.

Assessing the Questions

To help narrow down the list of potential questions to a manageable list, each question will be assessed in terms of the following criteria:

- aligns with the stated purpose of the evaluation
- level of urgency/priority
- data is (or can be) available to answer the question in the evaluation timeframe
- estimated resource utilization to answer (i.e. effort and cost to collect and analyze data)

Where possible, assessment will be part of the conversation with each stakeholder group (particularly noting the perspective on the level of urgency/priority). In order to assess whether data is (or can be) available to answer the question in the evaluation timeframe and to estimate resource utilization there will need to be some initial thinking and high-level mapping of each question to a possible data source/data collection mechanisms (such as databases, focus groups or surveys).

At the end of this first step, there will be a recommended list of priority evaluation questions that will be submitted to the Ministry Program Steering Committee for final decision. There will also be a preliminary mapping of questions to data sources/data collection methods. The final data collection plan will be made in consultation with the evaluator.

Step 2 - Select External Evaluator

An external evaluator will be selected through a standard government procurement process (such as a Request For Proposals) to ensure the evaluation is robust, meaningful and easy to understand. An essential role of the evaluator is to ensure statistical validity in the data collection plan and analysis techniques, and objectivity of findings.

At the end of this second step, an external evaluator will be selected.

Step 3 - Conduct Evaluation

The formal evaluation will be managed by the external evaluator and supported by Ministry staff, primarily the Program Management Branch. The external evaluator will be responsible for confirming the data collection plan, gathering the data, performing the analysis and documenting the findings. Stakeholders will be engaged as needed to support data collection and analysis.

Confirm Data Collection Plan

In Step 1, the Program Management Branch will have generated a preliminary document that maps the evaluation questions to a possible data source/data collection method. The evaluator will build upon this work and confirm a Data Collection Plan that ensures statistically valid data collection methodologies are used to support the planned analysis. Different data sources/data collection methodologies may include obtaining data from existing sources (e.g. SDSI reports and databases such as the Corporate Data Warehouse) or generating new information from client surveys and/or focus groups. However, given the timelines for this

evaluation, it is not expected that any changes will be made to the Integrated Case Management system to support this evaluation.

The data collection approach will be question-specific and will be based on what data/information is readily available and the best way to get the most accurate answer. There may be multiple approaches for one question.

Gather Data, Perform Analysis and Document Findings

The evaluator will be expected to oversee the gathering of data. This includes confirming client survey content and managing the results, as well as running any focus groups and managing the content that is created from them.

Analysis will be conducted by the independent evaluator using techniques that will ensure sufficient rigour to give the answers credibility and ease of answering. The analysis will be documented in a final report to be completed prior to the end of fiscal 2015/2016. In addition to the final report, there will be a preliminary report to provide some early analysis and insights on the highest priority questions using the data that is available at that time. The preliminary report is expected to be completed by the end of 2014/15. The questions to be covered in this preliminary report will be determined once the evaluation questions are defined and the data collection plan is completed.

At the end of this third step, all analysis will be complete and documented in a final report.

Step 4 - Disseminate Findings

Upon receipt of the final report (and where suitable interim reports), Ministry staff will disseminate the findings to all stakeholders, including the public.

At the end of this fourth step, the evaluation is complete.

After the Final Report

Once the final report has been disseminated, stakeholders will have an opportunity to review the findings, provide comment and make recommendations to the Ministry.

The Ministry will review the evaluation findings along with stakeholder feedback and key implementation factors (such as system restrictions, contractual obligations, timing or resources), before determining what changes should be implemented to continue to improve the Employment Program of British Columbia.

Estimated Timelines

Implementation of the Program Evaluation Framework is scheduled to begin in late 2013 and be complete by the end of fiscal 2015/2016. Timelines will be confirmed with the external evaluator, once selected.

Major Milestones

February 28, 2014:	Evaluation Questions Finalized
May 31, 2014:	External Evaluator Selected
July 1, 2013 - February 28, 2016:	Evaluation Underway
March 31, 2015:	Preliminary Report
March 31, 2016:	Final Report / Evaluation Findings Disseminated

