BC CENTRE FOR EMPLOYMENT EXCELLENCE

# Collaborating to make it better: Lessons from Biz Hub

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# Executive Summary

Biz Hub was launched in February 2016 and was a three-year research and innovation project conducted by the BC Centre for Employment Excellence, a division of the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation. It was funded by the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction's Community and Employer Partnership Research and Innovation program. Biz Hub brought together employment service providers across British Columbia to address business process issues in small groups of practitioners or "sub-hubs," where they worked together to identify and develop strategies to improve specific processes.

The objectives of Biz Hub were to create and support a collaborative network of individuals from employment organizations to identify business processes that could be improved and to work with them to develop and implement these. A further objective was to increase awareness of approaches that organizations could use to bring about improvements in business processes. These approaches and tools included but were not limited to business process management (BPM), design thinking and behavioural insights (BI).

Biz Hub convened four sub-hubs over the course of the project. Each sub-hub involved six to eight practitioners in the employment services sector from across the province and addressed a specific business process over the course of six to nine months. The business processes addressed were: client engagement; staff engagement; staff capacity and employer engagement.

Within each sub-hub, BPM and BI approaches were used to help identify areas that could be improved with small, low cost changes to practice. Design thinking encouraged participants to consider potential innovations from both the client and organizational experience. This approach was refined as the Biz Hub project progressed, and consisted of four key steps:

1. Discovery — participant expertise, organizational data and knowledge of best practices were used to identify opportunities for service improvements;
2. Diagnose — BPM was used to identify service bottlenecks;
3. Design — participants collaboratively designed adaptations and innovations to remove bottlenecks; and
4. Delivery — service improvements were implemented and tested in organizations and information was shared with sub-hub participants and disseminated more widely through the main hub.

The response of organizations to the Biz Hub project and associated innovations was very positive. Organizations observed improvements in client and staff engagement and new resources were developed to support increasing staff capacity and employer engagement.

Most participants stated they would be willing to take part in future initiatives. Biz Hub would not have been possible without the commitment and support of senior staff within organizations.

Key lessons learned from Biz Hub included:

- It raised organizational and staff capacity to problem solve in a collaborative and systematic way with a user-centric approach.
- It encouraged organizations to view challenges and solutions collectively and holistically.
- It used organizational data to identify bottlenecks.
- It examined best practices, adapted these to develop practical low cost innovations that worked in each organizational context.
- Small changes can make a BIG difference!

# Introduction

## Overview

This report describes the design, development and implementation of Biz Hub. Biz Hub was a three-year research and innovation project conducted by the BC Centre for Employment Excellence (Centre), a division of the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC). It was funded by the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction's Community and Employer Partnership Research and Innovation program. Biz Hub brought together employment service centres across British Columbia (BC) to address business process issues in small groups of practitioners or "sub-hubs," where they worked together to identify and develop strategies to improve specific processes. The project team facilitated this process and used a combination of approaches including Business Process Management (BPM), Behavioural Insights (BI) and Design Thinking.

## Aims and objectives

The objectives of Biz Hub were twofold and are illustrated in Figure 1:

1. Create and support a collaborative network of individuals from participating organizations to address business process issues that affect organizations in the employment services sector and identify and implement changes for business process improvements. Biz Hub aimed to both generate evidence and make use of already collected data to support its activities.
2. Share knowledge about business process management and best practices from other organizations in the broader employment services sector. As the project developed, this aim expanded to include increasing awareness about behavioural insights and how this approach could be used to support small, low-cost improvements to service processes.

**Figure 1 Biz Hub objectives**


## Timeframe and report structure

Biz Hub began in February 1, 2016 and was completed by January 31, 2019. This report includes:

1. Background, model and approach
2. Sub-hub #1: client engagement
3. Sub-hub #2: staff engagement
4. Sub-hub #3: strengthening staff capacity
5. Sub-hub #4: employer engagement
6. Evaluation of Biz Hub
7. Summary and lessons learned.

# Biz Hub model and approach

## Background

Like many businesses, non-profit organizations are constantly looking for ways to provide high-quality services more efficiently. To improve efficiency, some organizations have turned to Business Process Management. BPM examines how organizations operate and includes areas such as business process redesign, organizational alignment, business strategy, and knowledge management; more importantly, it promotes organizational learning and capacity-building.

Over the past 20 years, many BPM efforts and initiatives have been developed by a range of organizations. Profit generation was the original driving force behind the business sector's development of BPM but more recently, business practices and aspects of organizational capacity have been identified as important in improving efficiency. These factors include service delivery, client experience and organizational ability to meet budget and contractual requirements — all of which are of concern to non-profit organizations.

To further examine the potential of BPM, the Centre conducted a literature review and a selected environmental scan. The review found evidence to suggest BPM could support improvements in operational efficiency and effectiveness, but there was a gap in the evidence regarding how BPM improvements impact client outcomes in the non-profit sector. The Centre concluded that supporting BPM in the non-profit sector was a promising idea, worth testing and scaling to determine "what works," but that it should be preceded by a comprehensive development phase that incorporated the knowledge and best practices from existing tools, resources and models/programs. This would allow the development of the most promising structure and adaptation for non-profit employment service agencies in BC.

To move ahead with the development phase, the Centre submitted the proposal *Strengthening Business to Achieve Higher Performance: Process Improvements at Non-profit Agencies with Employment Services for Specialized Populations* to the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction's Research and Innovation Fund. The Ministry funded the project, which was implemented during late 2014 and early 2015.

The aim of the *Strengthening Business to Achieve Higher Performance* project was to develop a prototype BPM model for non-profit organizations to support business process management. To develop the BPM model, the project team engaged leaders from non-profit organizations in a series of three focused, full-day workshops. The participating leaders and executives formed the BPM Working Group, which.identified, reviewed and analyzed four different BPM models:

- Community of practice;
- Resources and tools available online (open source);
- Individual management and/or group consultation — conducted by an external professional consultant; and
- Facilitated approach — conducted in a peer group.

The group evaluated the advantages, disadvantages and key success factors for each model. Community of practice[1] and facilitated approach emerged as the most appropriate models and the BPM Working Group proposed an original hybrid model of these two. The group then collectively designed this hybrid, which resulted in the Biz Hub model.

## Model design

Biz Hub's original and hybrid model was aimed at supporting business process improvements for organizations that delivered employment services to specialized populations in British Columbia with the goal of achieving better employment outcomes for clients, including both job seekers and employers.

Biz Hub was designed as a "hub-and-spoke" model (Figure 2).

### Figure 2 Biz Hub model


The main hub consisted of all participating organizations and its purpose was to gather and disseminate evidence related to what worked. Information sharing between the main and sub-hubs was a two-way process, ensuring that lessons were shared on an ongoing basis. Four hubs were convened and each focused on a specific "business process problem." The sub-hubs consisted of between six to eight staff from participating organizations who were willing to implement the BPM methodology. Each sub-hub was supported by the Biz Hub project team who provided technical and operational supports and tools, and external facilitators and/or subject matter experts who drew on their own expertise and knowledge of best practice related to each domain. The findings and lessons learned by the participating organizations were shared within the sub-hub and then with the main hub. Participants in the main hub played an important role in dissemination of lessons to other employment service organizations.

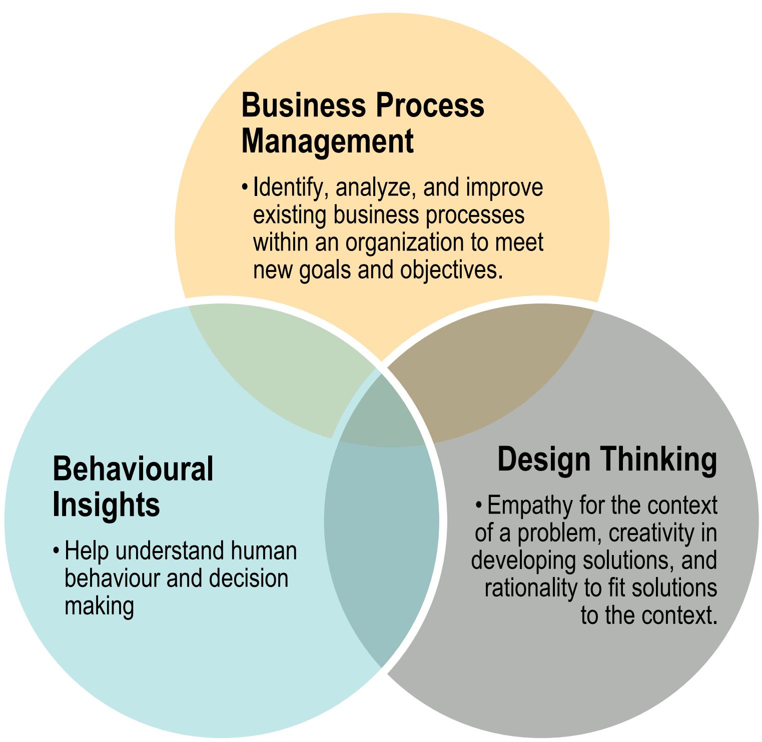
1 Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly. (Wenger, E. (2006). Communities of practice — a brief introduction. Retrieved from http://wenger-trayner.com/introduction-to-communities-of-practice/ on March 21, 2015.)

The core of the Biz Hub model and approach was collaboration. Participants within the sub-hubs worked together to share their experiences and insights and then collaboratively problem-solve the issue. This approach was possible because of the following underlying values and principles adopted by Biz Hub:

- use of evidence to improve business processes;
- client focus;
- recognition that people are the organization's most important resource;
- willingness to openly share and exchange best practices, challenges and opportunities;
- honouring of organizational diversity; and
- a commitment to learning by doing.

Initially, the target group for Biz Hub was strictly non-profit organizations in BC; however, during recruitment for the first sub-hub, several for-profit organizations in the employment services sector expressed their interest in participating in the project. Given the overlapping mandates and shared expertise of both types of organizations, participation was extended to for-profit organizations providing employment services to specialized populations.

**Figure 3 Biz Hub approaches**

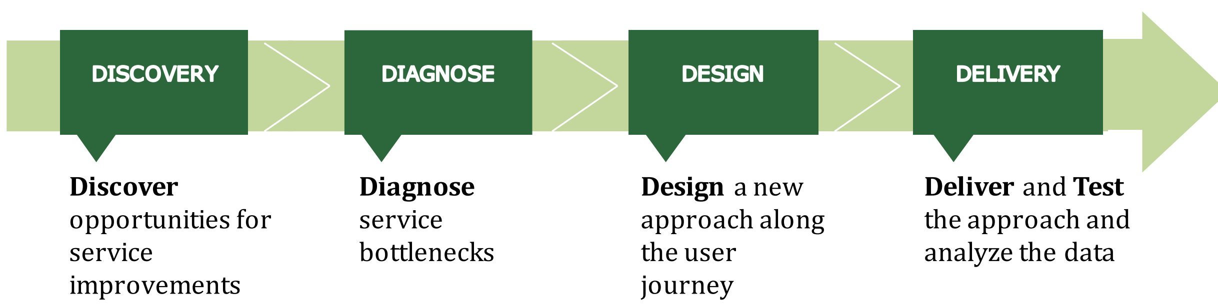


# Key approaches used in Biz Hub

Biz Hub used three approaches to help organizations achieve improvements in organizational efficiencies by introducing small, low-cost innovations. These approaches are outlined in Figure 3: BPM was used to explore what was happening, BI helped identify why certain behaviours and decisions occurred and how to change them, and Design Thinking helped to ensure that participants considered potential solutions with a creative and empathetic lens that included the client and organizational experiences. Within each sub-hub, BPM and BI approaches were used to help identify areas that could be improved by making small, low-cost changes to practice. Design thinking encouraged participants to consider potential innovations from both the client and organizational experience. As the project progressed, this approach evolved into a process that consisted of four key steps (see Figure 4):

1. Discovery — used participant expertise, organizational data and knowledge of best practices to identify opportunities for service improvements.
2. Diagnose — service bottlenecks were identified by mapping out the business processes and examining them from both an organizational and client perspective.
3. Design — participants collaboratively designed adaptations and/or innovations to remove bottlenecks. BI strategies were used to make small, low-cost changes to processes.
4. Delivery — service improvements were tested in organizations and information was shared with sub-hub participants and with the main hub.

**Figure 4 Biz Hub four-step process**




# Overview of the Biz Hub approaches

## Business process management

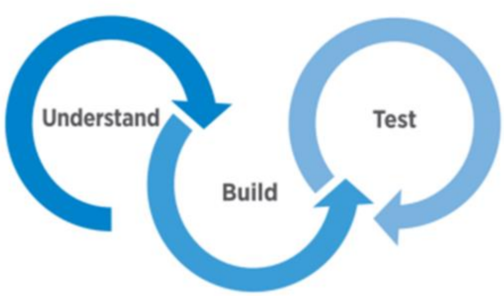
Business process management is a discipline that considers business processes to be a strategic organizational asset that must be understood, managed, and improved to deliver value-added products and services to clients, users and stakeholders. This is true for all organizations, including non-profits. BPM aims to improve efficiency in the delivery of services or products to clients or customers by examining and then controlling organizational processes. It is a methodology that improves processes to ensure they are efficient and effective and result in a better and more efficient organization. To achieve these improvements, a variety of different tools and frameworks have been developed within business process management. Common features require organizations to objectively view their operating procedures and assess why things happen as they do and to consider if and how they could be improved.

Within Biz Hub, business process management was used to identify areas for improvement which were then mapped to highlight what was happening alongside what was intended to happen and to identify the factors which contributed to the processes. This mapping activity was facilitated by a member of the Biz Hub project team and when bottlenecks had been identified, participants were encouraged to discuss these with their organizations and to explore them using their own organizational data. This process helped to ensure organizational buy-in.

## Behavioural Insights

The use of Behavioural Insights (see Figure 5) is increasing in policy and practice arenas and there are a number of BI units throughout the world including in Canada and in British Columbia.[2] BI is essentially the use of a behavioural science approach to understand how individuals behave in a given situation. BI accepts that individuals are not always rational beings who make rational decisions; rather their actions are affected by a myriad of factors. BI seeks to understand these factors within the context of the action.

**Figure 5 Behavioural Insights**




The question at the centre of this approach is: what is the policy or intervention trying to achieve? To answer this, BI uses a collaborative approach to understand the context and issues from both the users and the providers. When this information has been collected and aligned with the overall policy goals and business process, the next step is to test, learn and adapt innovations or nudges to improve efficiency. Nudges have been described as using the things we know about people's behaviour to encourage them to make better decisions. To count as a nudge, Thaler and Sunstein[3]

2 Behaviour Insights Group, Policy, Innovation and Engagement with the BC Public Service Agency.

3 Thaler, R.H. and Sunstein, C.R., 2008, Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth, and Happiness (p. 6).

state, “the intervention must be easy and cheap… Nudges are not mandates. Putting fruit at eye level counts as a nudge. Banning junk food does not.”

In Biz Hub, the use of BI was to encourage sub-hub participants to think of small changes that could be made (nudges) to the business process to improve it. Once the type of nudge was agreed upon, the project team worked with participants to identify how best to implement and evaluate the changes within each organization.

### Design thinking

Incorporating design thinking[4] into Biz Hub helped participants think outside the box and to help them find creative solutions to problems. Design thinking is generally described as an analytic and creative process that engages a person in opportunities to experiment, create and prototype changes, gather feedback, and redesign.

## Biz Hub in action

### Sub-hub recruitment and selection

For each sub-hub, participants were recruited through the Centre’s communications channels which included its newsletter, website, social media and word of mouth. Potential participants completed an application which was reviewed by a member of the project team and an external consultant with knowledge of Biz Hub. The application form included questions about the applicant’s organization, reasons and goals for participating, and the value to their organization which was sponsoring their involvement. Participants were selected to ensure a diverse range of experiences, expertise and geography were included within each sub-hub. As part of the recruitment process, individuals were expected to obtain the support of their organization’s senior or executive staff to demonstrate the organization’s commitment to change management.

### Sub-hubs

Each sub-hub was led by a facilitator(s) and/or subject matter expert who were leaders and/or practitioners in the sector. An important goal of Biz Hub was to raise the capacity of staff within organizations and across the sector. To achieve this, participants in each sub-hub were provided with training and support around the approaches being used as well as the issues addressed so they could return to their organizations and continue using the Biz Hub approaches. The experience gained would contribute to continuous improvement processes within their organizations.

Within Biz Hub, four sub-hubs were recruited on a rolling basis and each sub-hub met over a period of between six and nine months depending on the business processes being addressed. At the start of the project, an Advisory Committee consisting of leaders in the sector was established to provide

[4] BBVA Innovation Center, http://www.centrodeinnovacionbbva.com/en/news/creativity-and-empathy-keys-applying-design-thinking-methodology

advice on the business processes that would be the most relevant for the sector. The Committee suggested topics for each sub-hub and after discussion agreed on the following:

- Client engagement;
- Staff engagement;
- Staff capacity; and
- Employer engagement.

The number of organizations participating in each sub-hub was limited to between six and eight.

## Meetings

For each sub-hub, the first meeting was an in-person all-day meeting in Vancouver, with subsequent meetings being held online. Across all four sub-hubs, attendance at in-person and online meetings was very high. In-person meetings required all participants to attend, and that goal was achieved. Online meetings were attended by over 90 per cent of participants. Online meetings were recorded to allow any participants unable to attend to listen to the recordings at their convenience. Online meetings were approximately 1.5 hours in length and agendas were sent to participants in advance.

The purpose of each sub-hub's first meeting was to:

- enable participants to get to know each other;
- provide an overview of the Biz Hub and the approaches that could be used;
- describe the evaluation approach; and
- explore the business issue, map the key business processes and reflect on potential challenges, and set the context for developing nudges.

At the end of the first meeting, participants returned to their organizations to report back and obtain feedback from their colleagues.

The meetings were designed to be collaborative, with participants sharing information about progress, what worked well, and areas that needed further improvement. The project team worked with participants to develop and adapt interventions appropriate to the organizational context to achieve business goals. The Biz Hub team led and facilitated the data gathering, analysis and improvement activities in the sub-hub.

## Evaluation of Biz Hub

A developmental evaluation approach (see Figure 6) was used to evaluate the Biz Hub project. Each sub-hub was evaluated separately with the learnings from one hub being used to improve subsequent hubs. Previous experience evaluating complex and innovative initiatives highlighted the need for a flexible but rigorous approach. As Biz Hub was highly innovative, which meant that the program content and delivery mechanisms could change, the evaluation approach was designed to reflect this.

**Figure 6 Developmental evaluation**


*"Developmental evaluation is intended to support the process of innovation within an organization and in its activities. Initiatives that are innovative are often in a state of continuous development and adaptation, and they frequently unfold in a changing and unpredictable environment. This intentional effort to innovate is a kind of organizational exploration. The destination is often a notion rather than a crisp image, and the path forward may be unclear. Much is in flux: the framing of the issue can change, how the problem is conceptualized evolves and various approaches are likely to be tested. Adaptations are largely driven by new learning and by changes in participants, partners and context."*[5]

Within this evaluation, developmental evaluation allowed for innovations and adaptation in Biz Hub to be captured. The evaluators and the program team worked closely together to ensure information about change was collected systematically and informed the decision-making process regarding further innovations and improvements. A mix of quantitative and qualitative research methods were used to evaluate Biz Hub.

The developmental approach enabled the project team to work closely with sub-hub participants so that the data gathered identified ways in which the initiative could be refined and improved. Participants in each sub-hub also completed a questionnaire at the end of the sub-hub to evaluate their involvement and satisfaction. Further details about the evaluation of each sub-hub is presented in the relevant section.

5 Gamble, J., 2008, The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation (p. 13).

# Sub-hub 1: Client engagement

The Advisory Committee identified client engagement as the focus for the first sub-hub. In selecting this issue, the committee recognized the importance of client engagement across the employment services sector and the challenges organizations experience in delivering services and supports to vulnerable populations. The challenge for organizations, confirmed by an initial survey completed by all sub-hub 1 participants, was that disengaged clients are less likely to attend appointments and to complete programs, thereby reducing the likelihood of obtaining employment and incurring financial repercussions for organizations as well. Therefore, developing strategies to improve client engagement was of genuine interest to organizations.

## Business process management

As part of the business process management approach, during the first sub-hub meeting participants mapped out the client movement through the employment services. Participants shared what was working well in their organizations and identified aspects of the client engagement process that could be improved. Throughout the client engagement process, attrition was highlighted as a major challenge. Organizational data and participants experience suggested:

- Clients failed to attend subsequent appointments despite reminders;
- Some clients were seen as noncompliant in that they did not provide the information required or did not follow through on what they were asked to do; and
- The client handoff process was a further attrition point as the transfer of client and client information was not always complete.

These challenges and potential interventions were discussed within the sub-hub meetings. Participants sought input from their organizations and agreed on three potential interventions/nudges.

## Identifying potential nudges

Participants identified three potential nudges to improve client engagement. Due to time constraints, only the first two nudges were addressed within the client engagement sub-hub. The process of identifying the nudges was based on evidence of best practices and the expertise and insights of the participants. The design process was iterative and the nudges identified were:

1. Appointment reminders provided to clients

   The issue to be addressed was the fact that clients attended their first appointment but attendance at subsequent appointments declined despite reminders being sent via the clients' preferred communication channel. The implications of non-attendance were the lack of client movement towards employment and staff downtime as many clients did not call to reschedule appointments.

2. Clients with literacy challenges

   The issue to be addressed was the fact that some clients experienced difficulty in understanding information and materials provided by the employment centre and as a result, failed to comply with action plans. The clients that experienced the greatest difficulties were immigrants and those with low levels of literacy. Within the employment centres, awareness of and supports for literacy challenges were inconsistent.

3. Streamlining client handoff to other colleagues

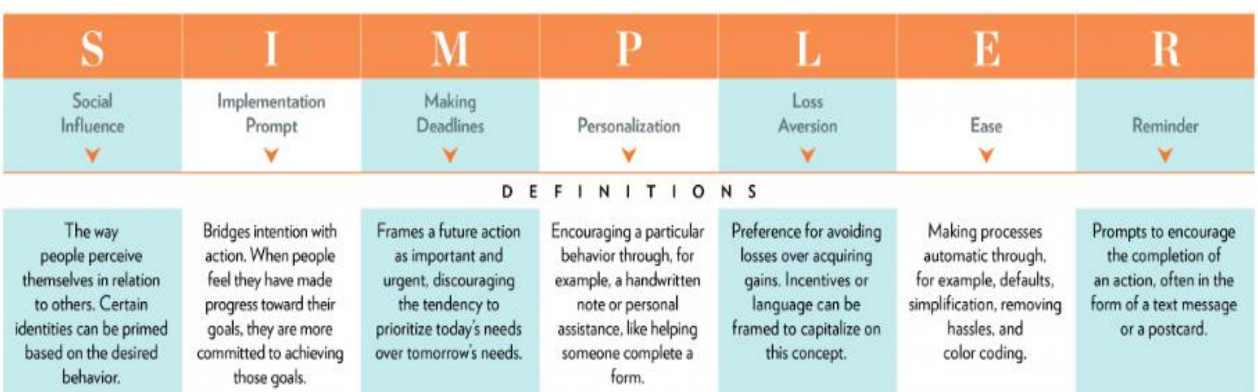
   The issue to be addressed was the streamlining of the hand-off process so that clients did not have to repeat the same information to staff and ensuring clients were aware of the reasons why they were being referred to another member of staff.

Discussions between participants and the project team suggested that improving client attendance at subsequent appointments — that is, reducing no-shows — was the issue that should be addressed first by the sub-hub. The second business process tackled was related to client literacy. These two initiatives and their results are reported below.

## Nudge 1: Appointment reminders provided to clients

The Biz Hub project team explored other initiatives which had attempted to improve attendance at appointments or programs. One initiative, the Behavioural Interventions to Advance Self-Sufficiency (BIAS), had worked with human service agencies that served low-income and vulnerable populations in the United States.[6] This initiative completed 15 randomized control trials and resulted in the development of the SIMPLER framework (see Figure 7),[7] which identified strategies that successfully nudged individuals' behaviour in a positive way.

**Figure 7 SIMPLER framework**




6 https://www.behavioraleconomics.com/developing-simpler-solutions/

7 https://www.mdrc.org/publication/developing-simpler-solutions

Within the scope of the client engagement sub-hub, it was not possible to address all aspects of the SIMPLER framework. The project team presented the findings of the BIAS project to participants and they agreed to focus on the personalization of reminders sent to clients as this was found to directly improve attendance rates.[8] The BIAS evaluation showed that by adding the recipient and sender names and adding in an element of reciprocity, attendance rates increased.

As a first step, participants provided the project team with examples of their existing reminder scripts or templates. When necessary, the project team provided support to help with the personalization of the text. The participants obtained approval from their organizations to trial the new reminder script and text.

The project team designed an evaluation framework for this initiative, which consisted of a natural experiment. This involved a "before and after" approach with the "before" data acting as the control group and the "after" as the intervention group. The data collection window was one month. The evaluation determined the impact by measuring the difference in the attendance of the "before" group and the attendance for the "after" group. The design is outlined below.

1. Standard or existing reminders were used for week 1 and attendance at subsequent appointments was tracked during week 2.
2. During week 3, the personalized reminders were used for one week and attendance at subsequent appointments were tracked during week 4.
3. A mix of communication channels were used to contact clients including phone, text, email and letters/cards.

Of the eight centres in sub-hub 1, five participated in the initiative at the time. Reasons for not participating included moving offices and other business demands. However, all participants were supportive of the personalization nudge, and some opted to conduct a trial later.

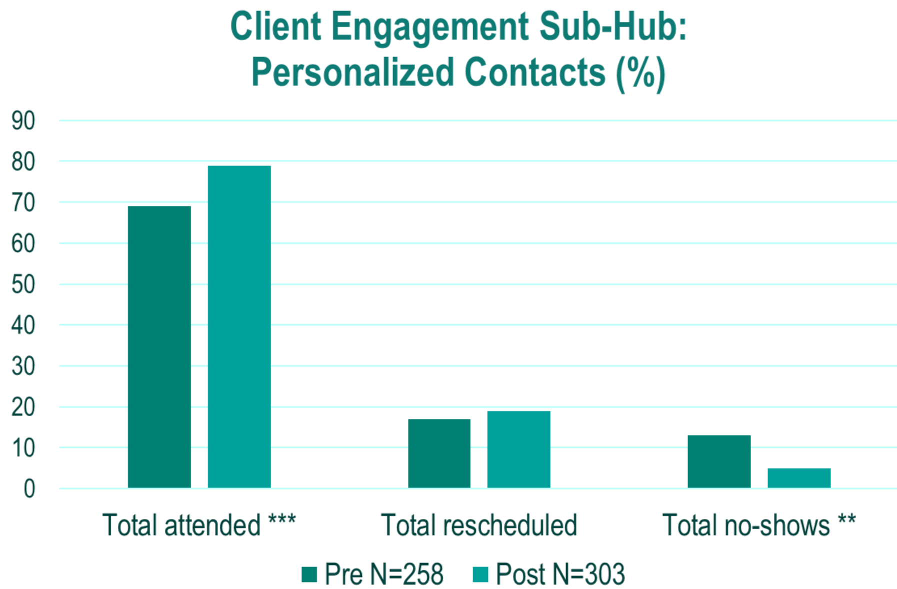
The project team developed a tracking tool using Excel to allow each organization to track the number of reminders sent, the communication channel used and attendance. A sample size of 561 was achieved (258 in the comparison group and 303 in the intervention group).

Data was received from three centres. Figure 8 shows:

- The use of the personalized reminder resulted in an increase in attendance at appointments of 10 percentage points. This result was statistically significant;
- There was an increase of two percentage points in those who contacted the centres to reschedule appointments; and
- There was an eight percent point decrease in appointment no-shows. This result was also statistically significant.

8 http://www.horizons.gc.ca/eng/content/behavioural-insight-brief-overview-behavioural-insights

**Figure 8 Results from personalizing reminders**




**Note**: Statistically significant differences are indicated by asterisks: * P < 0.10, ** P < 0.05, *** P < 0.01

The sub-hub participants were pleased and surprised by these results as changes to the reminders were relatively small and straightforward to implement. The decline in no-shows was of particular interest as no-shows equate to downtime for staff. Reducing this downtime meant staff could arrange other appointments and be engaged in billable activities.

In addition to the improvement in attendance and the decrease in no shows, sub-hub participants reported other benefits:

- Increased communication with clients, with more dialogue regarding appointment dates and times.
- Front desk staff preferred the new scripts.
- Previous reminders contained less information. The personalized reminders included an option to advise the centre of any changes and reminded the client of what would be discussed at the meeting.
- An increase in attendance at workshops was attributed to personalized contact.
- Clients commented on the difference, describing the reminder as a "friendly invitation."

## Nudge 2: Clients with literacy challenges

The second aspect addressed in the client engagement sub-hub was related to literacy challenges and barriers experienced by some clients. Organizational data demonstrated the range of clients served included immigrants, people with disabilities and vulnerable populations. Practitioners in the client engagement sub-hub reported that some clients attending their centres experienced barriers to accessing services because of low literacy levels and that this made it difficult for them to participate in programming. To address these literacy barriers the client engagement sub-hub worked collaboratively with the project team and Decoda Literacy Solutions to adapt a literacy review. The literacy review was designed to identify the key barriers encountered by clients. As part of the literacy review, Decoda worked with the participating organizations to develop strategies to address these barriers by making relatively small changes to office environments, service delivery practices and by providing training and resources to help front line staff recognize if clients have low literacy issues.

The literacy review developed by the project team and Decoda was innovative and provided organizations with an opportunity to improve client engagement by identifying and addressing barriers created by low literacy levels. The aim of the literacy review was to help clients obtain a better understanding of what they are being asked to do in the hope they would be more likely to comply, participate in and complete programming. The literacy review was designed to:

1. Support staff in better serving clients;
2. Improve the client experience; and
3. Improve the information exchange between clients and WorkBC centre staff, thereby improving the client engagement process.

## Defining and understanding literacy

Research shows an overwhelming consensus that literacy is about more than just reading, writing and numeracy skills. Literacy is about giving, getting and understanding information across all aspects of our lives. It includes the skills we use in our everyday and working lives that help us to make sense of the world around us. Literacy has been defined as: "acquiring, creating, connecting and communicating meaning in a wide variety of contexts."[9]

Literacy skills are important because they enable individuals to make effective decisions and to problem solve issues. Low literacy skills often result in individuals struggling to understand and process information and these challenges can negatively affect an individual's social and economic well-being. Low literacy skills are a problem across Canada. To function well in Canadian society, an individual needs a literacy level of 3.[10] In this study, adults who attained levels 4 or 5 were seen to have high literacy levels. Figure 9 shows literacy proficiency in BC.

[9] Alberta Education, 2010, Literacy First: A Plan for Action (p. 3).

[10] Employment and Social Development Canada, Learning—Adult Literacy.

**Figure 9 Literacy proficiency of BC population aged 16 to 65 years**


In BC, literacy skills amongst adults suggest that many individuals of working age are experiencing challenges when they try to read or understand information. Figure 9 shows that 45 per cent of the adult population in BC has literacy levels of 1 or 2. This same study found that 52 per cent of adults in BC had numeracy skills of levels 1 or 2.

- **Literacy level 1**: Individuals can identify basic words and numbers and can do basic decoding. Reading requires considerable effort and comprehension suffers as a result.
- **Literacy level 2**: Adults with level 2 literacy skills can identify words and numbers in context and are able to respond with simple information and complete a straightforward form. However, reading for these individuals requires significant concentration.

Understanding that clients might be experiencing challenges with literacy was important because reading is often a skill that is taken for granted by many in society, including professionals delivering a range of services and supports such as employment services. In accessing or using services, clients are asked to read letters, emails, information leaflets, complete forms and follow written instructions as part of standard practice. As 45 per cent of adults in BC have literacy levels of 1 or 2, it is very likely that professionals, especially front-line staff in employment centres, will work with clients who have difficulties with literacy.

## The literacy review in participating organizations

The literacy review conducted in the participating organizations was designed to raise awareness of the difficulties some clients with low literacy levels may experience when they try to use services. The fundamental question at the heart of the literacy review process was: what would a client with a literacy level of 1 or 2 — that is, someone who has difficulties reading and writing — experience when using your services?

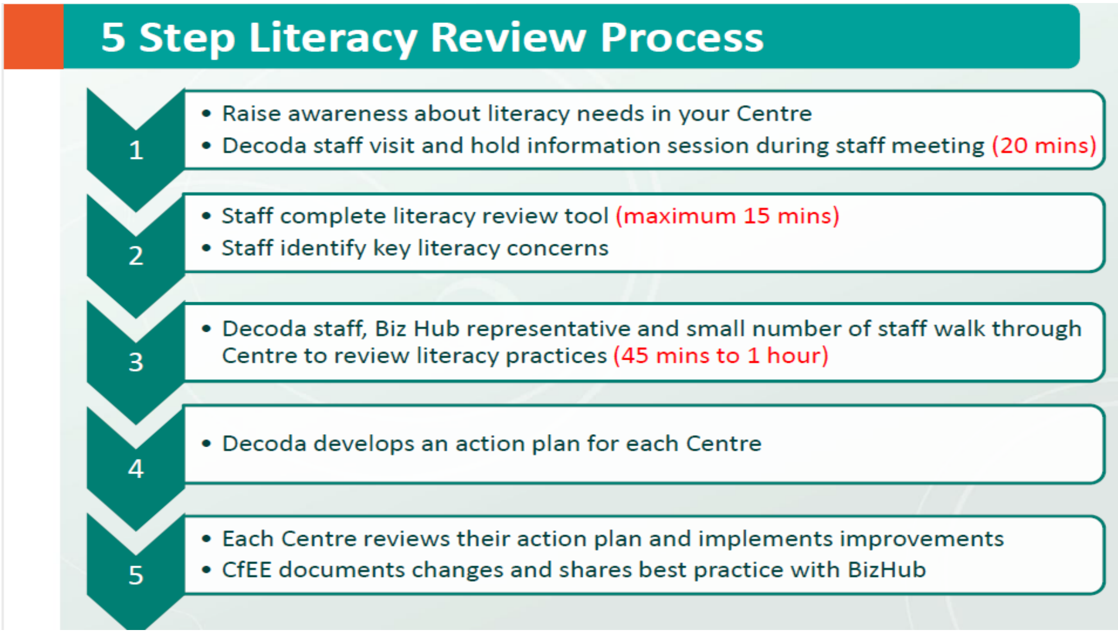
## Literacy review process

The literacy review was conducted by a Decoda Literacy Consultant in partnership with the project team. The literacy review process consisted of five steps which are outlined in Figure 10 and described below.

Decoda scheduled a meeting/workshop with the WorkBC centre when the majority of staff were able to attend. This was often during one of the regular staff meetings attended by management staff.

1. The literacy review process began with a Decoda consultant raising awareness about the significance of literacy difficulties amongst adults in BC and how this affects their access and use of services. During this information session, staff were presented with some of the signs that might suggest clients are struggling with literacy issues. This session was designed to be informal and to generate discussion. It lasted approximately 20 minutes.
2. WorkBC staff attending the workshop/meeting completed a Literacy Review tool. This was designed by the project team and Decoda and collected information on areas of practice that could be improved. It also encouraged staff to reflect on best practice and how they could change their practice to improve the experience for clients. The final section of this tool asked staff to identify the three areas they believed were the most important to address to reduce the barriers for clients with literacy difficulties. This section was approximately 15 to 20 minutes in length.
3. Decoda led a small group of staff on a walkthrough of the employment centre to understand how clients experience their centre. As part of this process, staff and Decoda discussed and identified barriers or supports and considered the experience from the perspective of someone with literacy difficulties.
4. The Decoda consultant used the data from the review tool and the office walkthrough to develop an action plan and identify resources and supports.
5. The final step was the delivery of the action plan and report to the employment centre. During this meeting, WorkBC centre staff described their short and long-term literacy action plans and Decoda provided advice on how to support additional changes.

**Figure 10 Literacy review process**




## Development of an action plan

Once the Decoda consultant had completed steps 1 to 3, they created an action plan. This plan identified resources, supports and recommendations for the employment centres. The Decoda consultant highlighted areas for improvement by categories, including office environment, entry and reception, client accommodations and other areas. Suggested actions in the short (three to six months) and long term (six months to one year) were detailed for each area of improvement. Four employment centres participated in the literacy review. Overall, the response to the process was very positive. Awareness of literacy issues was helpful for staff members and allowed them to view their clients with a slightly altered lens. Organizations reported that staff had been surprised how pervasive literacy challenges were; by raising awareness, staff looked for indications that clients might need additional help and provided it. In addition, organizations made changes to the ways they displayed information (e.g., job boards).

## Biz Hub facilitation and peer support training guide

One of the aims of Biz Hub was to increase the capacity of those working in employment centres. To support this aim, the project team partnered with PeerNetBC to develop a facilitation and peer support training guide. The participants in the client engagement sub-hub agreed to participate in the training delivered by PeerNetBC. The training highlighted the principles of peer support which are the foundational elements for not only creating successful peer-led groups, but also for peer learning and group development. The aim of the guide was to improve the facilitation skills and confidence of employment staff. The training and the guide introduced participants to these principles and to the roles and responsibilities facilitators had to ensure safe and engaged spaces and processes for peer learning and support to happen. A total of 12 hours of training was provided via one in-person session and two online sessions. The guide was circulated to participants after they completed the training.

## Summary

Participants in the client engagement sub-hub found the initiative useful not only in terms of their own professional development but to their organizations as well. The project team received positive feedback about this first sub-hub. The nudges implemented in organizations were designed to be as straightforward and as easy as possible. The findings from the evaluations of these nudges were that they did bring about improvements in the operating processes in organizations and that they remained in place after completion of the sub-hub.

## Sub-hub 2: Staff engagement

The advisory committee acknowledged that, across their sector, staff engagement was challenging for all organizations and identified this as the focus for the second sub-hub. This sub-hub began in May 2017.

Macleod and Clarke[11] see staff engagement as a workplace approach designed to ensure that employees are committed to their organization's goals and values, motivated to contribute to organizational success, and are able at the same time to enhance their own sense of well-being. As such they regard employee engagement as a two-way process between the employer and the employee, which recognizes that staff are as important as clients or customers. The reason for this is that engaged employees have a positive effect on all aspects of an organization's performance.

Staff engagement has been defined as "*a positive attitude held by the employee towards the organisation and its values. An engaged employee is aware of business context and works with colleagues to improve performance within the job for the benefit of the organisation. The organisation must work to nurture, maintain and grow engagement, which requires a two-way relationship between employer and employee.*"[12]

Engaged employees are important because they have:

- a belief in the organization
- a desire to work to make things better
- an understanding of context and the big picture
- a respectful attitude to colleagues
- a willingness to go the extra mile
- a desire to keep up to date with developments in the field.

Employee engagement studies suggest the most effective way to achieve high levels of employee engagement is through deliberate and sustained organizational efforts to create a culture that values its employees. A key element of this is ensuring employees have a clear understanding of their role and the importance of their contribution and that there is clear and effective communication between employees and employers.

The purpose of sub-hub 2 was to work with the eight participants to find ways to improve employee engagement within organizations.

11 Macleod D., Clarke, N., 2015. Engaging for success: enhancing performance through employee engagement. A report to Government.

12 IES, 2004, The Drivers of Employee Engagement.

## Staff engagement in participating organizations

The initial survey was important in understanding the policies and practices already in place in organizations to support staff engagement. A number of questions were added to the survey completed by participants before they attended the first sub-hub meeting. The survey found:

- All organizations had a written mission statement, a corporate values statement, code of ethics and a communication policy; seven had a diversity and inclusion statement or policy and seven had a compensation and benefits policy.
- Five organizations had an in-house human resources department, and these took the lead on compensation and benefits issues and employee health, with most other functions being shared between HR and other departments.
- Five organizations had an employee wellness policy in place.
- The most frequently used method of communicating with employees were staff meetings, emails and regular department or team meetings.
- Four organizations had employee recognition events. These ranged from potlucks and breakfasts to email recognition. Other organizations hold regular staff social events, annual dinners, annual holiday parties and quarterly recognition of work anniversaries. The employee recognition events were open to all.

However, despite the above policies and practices, organizations reported that staff engagement remained challenging.

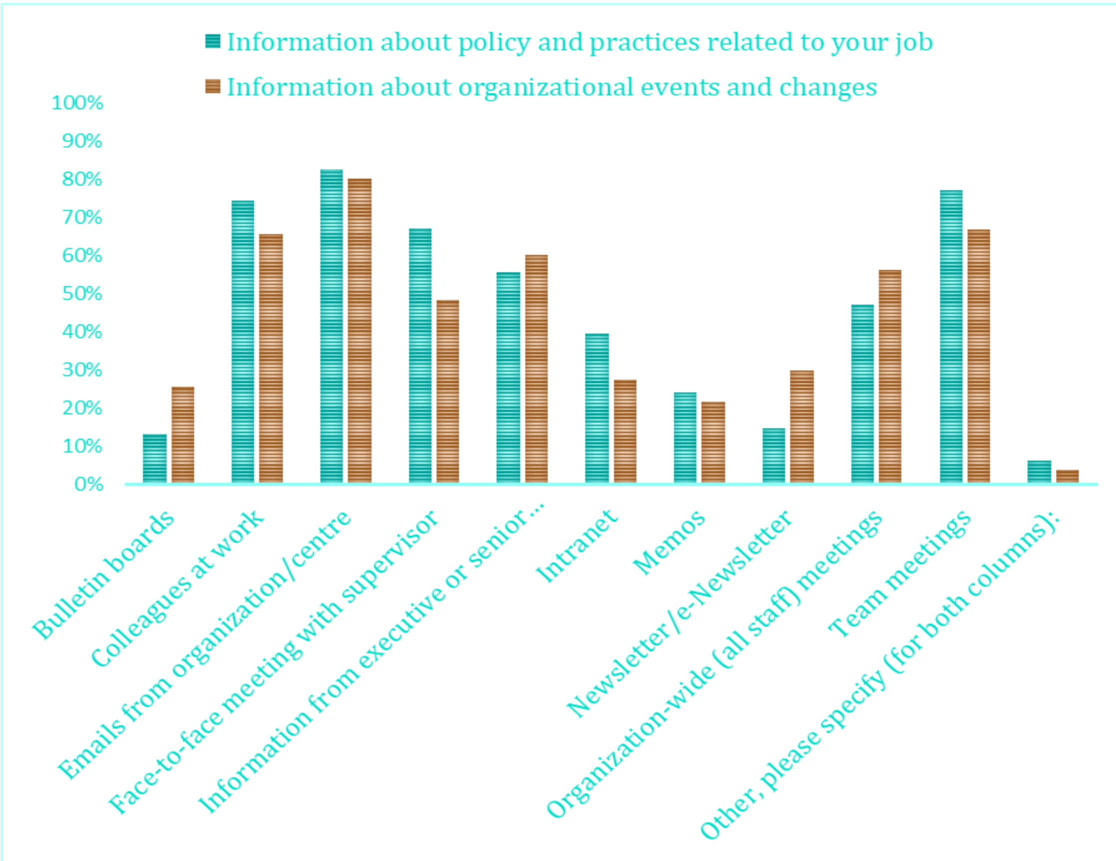
In the first sub-hub meeting, business process mapping was used to identify how the policies and practices were implemented, what worked well, and which areas could be improved. The consensus across participating organizations was to focus on improving internal communications strategies so that staff received the necessary information while at the same time encouraging feedback.

## Internal communications survey

The sub-hub agreed that the first step was to find out what was and was not working in how organizations communicated with staff. With input from participants, the Biz Hub team developed an online survey which was sent to staff at each organization and explored the type of communications in place, as well as the preferred types of communication and content. The Biz Hub project team distributed the survey to all staff in the participating organizations. The survey was anonymous. Reminders were sent to staff and incentives were offered to boost the response rate. The survey was in the field for approximately four weeks and a final response rate of 63 per cent was achieved.

The survey highlighted that organizations used a variety of methods to communicate with staff (Figure 11). The top three methods of communication were emails from organizations, team meetings and colleagues at work.

**Figure 11 Findings from the Internal Communications Survey**




Survey respondents reported the most effective and preferred methods of communication were emails, team meetings and face-to-face meetings with supervisors. Table 1 shows the aspects of internal communication that were working well were around the overall goal and mission of the organizations.

**Table 1 Respondents' views of internal communications**

| | Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Neither | Somewhat agree | Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I have a clear understanding of the organization/centre mission statement. | 1% | 4% | 4% | 28% | 63% |
| I have a clear understanding of the organization/centre vision statement. | 2% | 5% | 6% | 29% | 59% |
| I am kept well-informed about my organization's/centre's plans and progress. | 5% | 13% | 13% | 42% | 28% |
| I am kept well-informed about my team's plans and progress. | 4% | 14% | 10% | 40% | 32% |
| I have opportunities to provide feedback to management. | 6% | 9% | 6% | 31% | 48% |
| There is good communication in my team. | 4% | 13% | 6% | 39% | 38% |
| I understand how my job contributes to the organization's/centre's goals. | 2% | 3% | 6% | 25% | 63% |
| I am notified in advance of changes in my job. | 6% | 13% | 14% | 37% | 30% |
| I am satisfied with the explanations from organizational/centre leadership about reasons for decisions. | 10% | 13% | 14% | 34% | 29% |
| My job requirements are specified in plain language. | 4% | 10% | 8% | 40% | 38% |
| The emails I receive from organizational/centre leadership are useful. | 2% | 8% | 10% | 38% | 41% |
| The volume of internal emails I receive is difficult to manage. | 22% | 21% | 19% | 24% | 13% |

Table 1 also shows that approximately 90 per cent of respondents had a clear understanding of their organizational mission and vision statement and they understood how their job contributed to these. Eight out of ten respondents reported they had opportunities to provide feedback. However, areas where communication could be improved were identified as:

- Employees wanted more information about the organization's plans and progress as well as that of their teams.
- Employees wanted more advanced notice of changes to their jobs. Just over 50 per cent of respondents had a clear understanding of their career development.

- Less than two-thirds of respondents were satisfied with the explanations from their organizational leadership about the reasons for decisions. They wanted more transparency with clear and concise information.

An additional area of improvement around communication involved performance feedback. Only one-third of respondents reported they received feedback on an ongoing basis. Just over 30 per cent received feedback at formal performance reviews and 15 per cent stated they only received feedback when mistakes were made, or issues arose.

Survey respondents were asked about the best way to share information on day-to-day operations. The results are shown in Figure 12.

### Figure 12 Preferred methods of sharing information

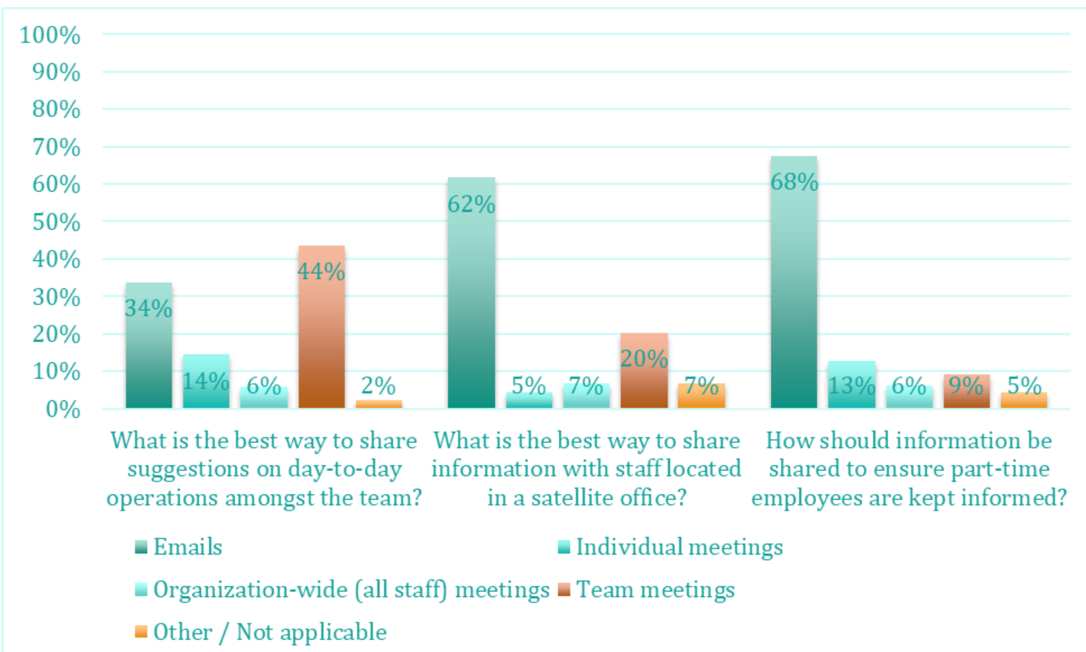



Figure 12 shows that over 40 per cent of employees preferred to learn about operational issues in team meetings with a third choosing email communication. For staff in satellite offices or those who work part-time, email was the preferred choice. While email communications were preferred by staff, one-quarter of respondents felt overwhelmed by the number of emails received and found it challenging to manage the volume of emails. As a result, some important information was overlooked.

## Identifying potential nudges

The sub-hub participants were provided with a summary of the overall survey findings as well as a detailed report for their own organization. Once the findings were reviewed and discussed, potential nudges to improve internal communication were identified. The two main nudges were:

1. Reducing the volume of emails; and
2. Increasing the effectiveness of sharing information including improving the content and timeliness.

The sub-hub participants suggested potential low-cost interventions that would reduce the volume of emails and improve the effectiveness of the internal communications. Participants then shared this information with their own organizations who adapted the nudges to suit their own needs. The nudges are described below.

1. Email: Content and frequency

   Initially, sub-hub participants wanted to develop a template to improve email communication. However, given the diversity of the type and content of emails sent, the project team produced a best practice guide to writing clear and concise emails. Sub-hub participants shared this PowerPoint with colleagues. This guide encouraged senders to use clear headings so that readers knew what the email was about, to flag if action was required from the reader, and to make content concise. The feedback from organizations was that these simple changes improved response time to emails as well as generated more effective responses.

   Within organizations email was the preferred method staff used to share information about work related social events and other non-operational information. While this information was important to staff, it increased the overall volume of emails. Examples of organizational innovations included the development of social messaging boards and expanding internal newsletters to include information about social and other events. The response to these changes from staff was positive and they reported it significantly reduced the volume of emails received.

2. Effectiveness of information: Content and timeliness

   Organizations took different approaches to implementing this nudge. Some organizations implemented a brief morning huddle in which they shared information about what was happening that day (workshops, meetings, etc.), who was available to answer questions and to discuss any operational issues including any changes. This morning huddle took between 10 to 15 minutes. Sub-hub participants reported this improved the information shared as staff were able to ask questions and provide feedback. It also ensured all staff knew what was going on. The organizations that implemented a morning huddle reported very positive feedback from staff and increased staff engagement as demonstrated by an improved team spirit and staff feeling they “were on the same page.” In two organizations, the morning huddles were observed to have contributed to reduced meeting times because issues were addressed as they arose. In one organization, these huddles reduced their team meetings from 90 to 60 minutes.

For some organizations it was not possible to hold morning huddles because of staff locations. Some organizations implemented a morning email which provided similar information to the morning huddles. This approach also received positive feedback from staff.

In one organization, the survey results showed that front desk staff felt they were out of the loop in terms of what was happening in the organization. An additional regular meeting amongst these staff was implemented; it improved the sharing of information between staff which thereby improved operational issues.

## Evaluation

The innovations (nudges) developed were not formally evaluated as they were highly tailored to each organization. Participants collected feedback from staff at team and staff meetings. This feedback was then shared at the sub-hub meetings and the nudge was refined and improved. This sharing of information also served to inspire participants to try different strategies to improve internal communication and staff engagement. Participants supported each other to try different strategies and shared resources.

Participants did consider repeating the internal communications survey to explore changes but felt that it was too soon after the initial survey. Organizations were provided with copies of the survey to enable them to repeat perhaps on an annual basis if they so desired. Instead organizations sought feedback from staff about changes implemented through discussions at team and staff meetings. A copy of the internal communications survey is available on request.

## Summary

All participants recognized the importance of staff engagement because low levels of engagement impacted staff retention, absenteeism, and performance as well as how staff interacted with clients. Participants agreed to focus on improving internal communication to increase staff engagement. An online survey with participants explored what was and what was not working with respect to internal communications. Participants discussed the aggregated data and their own survey results within their organizations with a view to identifying approaches to improve internal communications. The approaches developed were shared at subsequent meetings with all participants. The discussion of the findings suggested simple, low-cost approaches that could be implemented that improved communication and ultimately resulted in more engaged staff. Key approaches that worked for participating organizations included morning huddles to ensure staff knew what was happening which helped to address issues as they arose. Organizations also reduced the volume of emails sent to staff by creating other avenues for information (social messaging boards, newsletters, etc.) and implemented a best practice guide to sending emails.

# Sub-hub 3: Strengthening staff capacity

Sub-hub three began in October 2017 and its focus was strengthening staff capacity for career development professionals (CDPs). The broad remit of this sub-hub was intended to focus attention on the range of supports and skills career development practitioners need to perform their roles effectively, to encourage individuals to enter the profession and to support retention and career progression. As participants in this sub-hub required a detailed understanding of the range of training and supports available to CDPs, the advisory committee agreed to a targeted recruitment process to ensure participants had the necessary domain expertise. The advisory committee helped to identify participants from across BC and six individuals, who represented the broad spectrum of interests in this sector, agreed to take part. This sub-hub brought together experts who had a thorough understanding of developing and delivering training for career development practitioners with representatives from the employment service sector.

Business process mapping was not used during the initial discussions on improving staff capacity as the issues were more generic than process-driven. Instead, the research team presented an overview of the key issues and challenges for increasing staff capacity. These included:

- The disconnect between skills deemed important to specific roles and incumbents' current competencies
- Preferred approaches to skill development
- Perceived barriers to acquiring training.

Sub-hub participants then engaged in a roundtable discussion which explore the following three questions:

1. How does your organization perceive career development?
2. What career development supports are needed by career practitioners?
3. In terms of career development supports for career practitioners, what works and what needs improving?

The roundtable discussion included the following:

1. Recognition that career development was the lifelong process of managing learning, work and transitions in order to achieve personally determined goals. It was a holistic process that took account of the whole person.
2. Highlighted that career development is focused on understanding labour market complexities and ensuring individuals have the critical knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to effectively navigate educational and employment choices, transitions and progression.
3. Career development is important not only to the individual but to the employers because without the possibility of career development, organizations risk losing effective staff. Participants acknowledged the irony that CDPs help clients with their career development but were not always able to achieve this for themselves.

4. Barriers to career development included a lack of time and financial constraints. Suggestions to removing these barriers included making access easier and affordable, and providing high quality, consistent and professionally recognized competency-based training.
5. A key challenge was the diversity of the CDP role and the range of clients/individuals CDPs worked with. Therefore, what was important was training that focused on practical tools and strategies for working with diverse client groups with diverse needs.
6. Participants agreed there were many positive career development supports available to CDPs and the sub-hub should avoid duplicating these.

   The roundtable discussions concluded by discussing the opportunities and challenges for strengthening staff capacity amongst CDPs. Two distinct areas for support were identified: individuals who were new to the profession or in training, and CDPs who had been in post and were hoping to progress.

Both options 1 and 2 were discussed as potential innovations (nudges). Participants agreed to develop an intervention to support individuals who were new to the profession or in training.

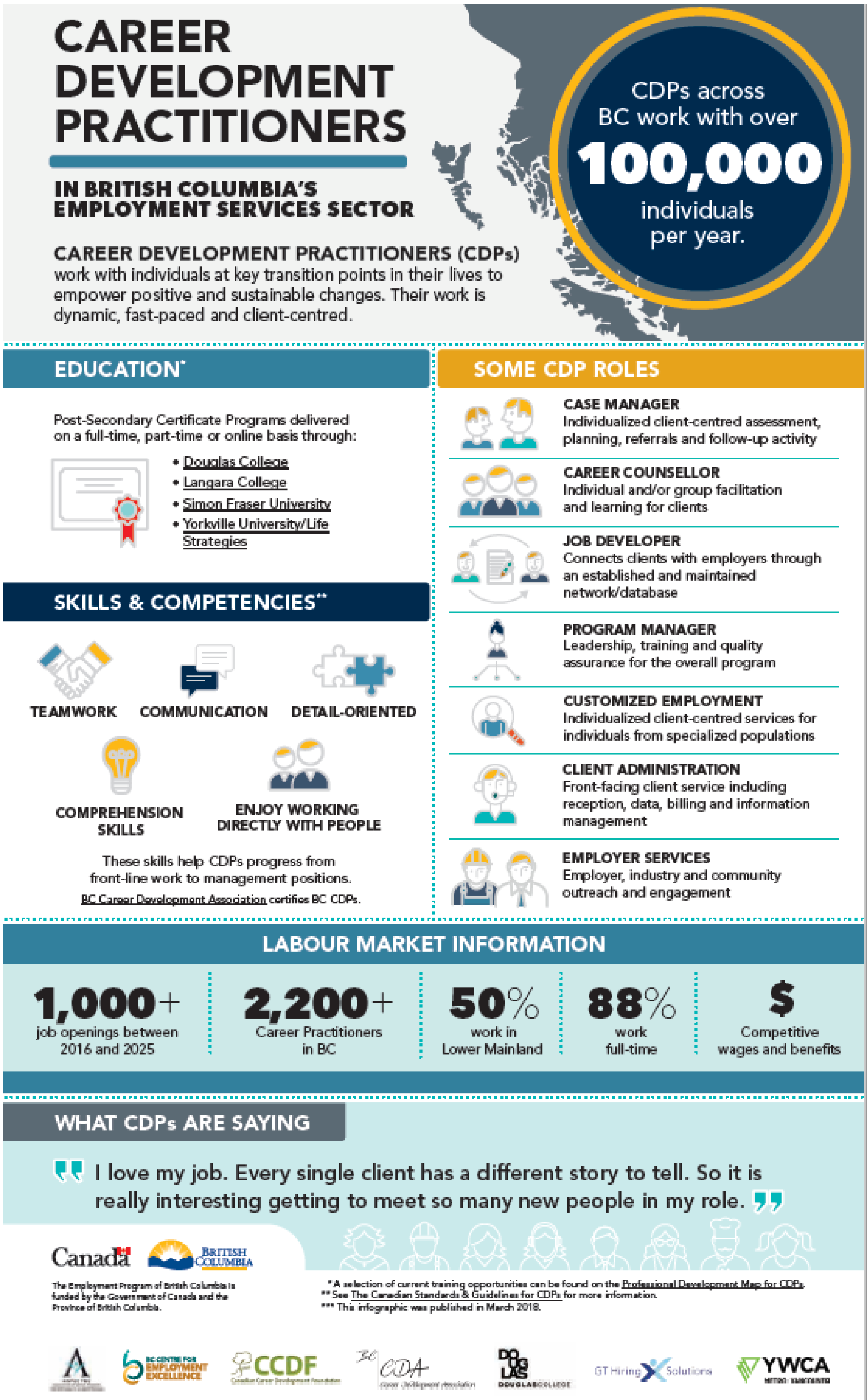
## Nudge 1: Resource for individuals new to CDP or in training

The goal was to develop an appropriate resource for all new CDPs as well as those in training to provide an overview of the role, the education required, the skills and competencies necessary and the potential for development. Different options were considered but the sub-hub agreed to develop an infographic that could be used to help recruit new CDPs but that would also form the basis of a conversation about their own career development.

The format and content of the infographic was discussed during sub-hub meetings. The Biz Hub project team was responsible for developing the initial infographic drafts based on the discussions. When a final draft was agreed, a graphic design company was engaged to develop the infographic shown below.

The CDP infographic was launched at the BCCDA 2018 Conference and the response to it has been very positive. Hard copies of the infographic were distributed at this and subsequent annual conferences and workshops. The infographic is also available online at the CfEE Biz Hub resource page.

**Figure 13 Career Development Infographic**



## Supporting established CDPs

The challenge in supporting CDPs who were in post and were established in their careers was that the supports and progression available varied across organizations. This level of variation was seen to be outside the scope of the sub-hub. Instead, a key resource was identified to encourage CDPs and their managers to discuss their own career development. This resource Talk The Talk: How Ongoing Career Conversations Drive Business Success[13] outlined a purposeful career conversation process designed to address career development needs. A link to this resource is provided on the CfEE Biz Hub resource page.

[13] Right Management, Manpower Group https://www.right.com/wps/wcm/connect/728860eb-e39f-4d31-a75c-aae2810e8864/RM_TalkTheTalk_Whitepaper_lo.pdf?MOD=AJPERES

# Sub-hub 4: Employer engagement

Employer engagement was the topic for the fourth and final sub-hub. This sub-hub began in March 2018 and met over a period of nine months. Participants to this sub-hub were recruited from across the province and represented the broad spectrum of employment service organizations.

Employer engagement is an important component of the work undertaken by employment service organizations. Employment organizations essentially have two ‘client’ groups – employers (demand side) and jobseekers who want to find work (supply side). The role of employment service organizations is to understand the needs of both clients and employers and to align their needs to find the appropriate candidates for the available employment.

The aim of the initial meeting was to identify the focus of the employer engagement sub-hub. The discussion highlighted that employer engagement is an ongoing and evolving process: one-off events such as trade or job fairs were important, but they were the beginning of an engagement process. Successful employer engagement required proactive engagement demonstrating how available employment services and supports could benefit the employer. The question it should address was: *what's in it for the employer?* It was agreed many employers were unaware of the range of services available to them and part of the job developer's role was to increase awareness by engaging with employers and demonstrating how they could help employers find the right staff. Participants agreed the goal of this sub-hub was to develop nudges or interventions that would help organizations engage employers in a more meaningful and effective manner.

The business mapping exercise identified five key components to employer engagement:

1. Initial engagement with employers
2. Identifying employer needs
3. Demonstrating the value added of the services provided by the employment service agency
4. Sharing information on employer needs within the organization to place job seekers
5. Maintaining and sustaining employer relationship.

These five components were common across all organizations, and while there were similarities in approaches, there were differences in how organizations implemented these components. Some differences were related to organizational mandates and structures, location and populations served while others were based on experience of working in communities and with different employers. As a result, the mapping exercise did not identify a complete step-by-step process of the tasks involved in engaging employers but rather provided an overview of the processes involved and identified three areas which could be improved by the sub-hub.

## Potential nudges for Sub-hub 4

1. Employers were not always aware of the value-added from working with employment services organizations.
2. Information about employer needs was not shared effectively across the organization.
3. There was considerable variation between employers in their readiness and willingness to hire individuals with diverse needs.

Sub-hub participants discussed these three ideas and sought input from colleagues in their own organizations. The decision was to address the first issue — that employers were not always aware of the value-added from working with employment service organizations. This lack of awareness and knowledge served as a barrier. Raising awareness about the usefulness of the relationship with employment service organizations was the first step in the engagement process. Participants agreed that, time permitting, they would address the second potential nudge to improve sharing information about employer needs across the organization.

## Nudge 1: Developing an infographic to raise awareness and support engagement

After some discussion, participants agreed to design an infographic that provided two types of information: generic information on the front page about the range of supports and services available to employers to help them recruit staff, and a customizable back page to allow organizations to highlight the actual services they provided along with contact information.

Participants agreed to get feedback from employers about the infographic. The Biz Hub team developed key questions to collect this information. Sub-hub participants used these questions to obtain employer input. The response to the infographic was positive. In addition to providing information to employers about the range of supports and services available, the infographic would help to create consistent messaging and language which would help raise awareness.

The infographic contained the following sections.

Front of infographic:

- Clear message explaining “what’s in it for the employers”;
- List of reasons why employers choose to work with employment services;
- Quote from employer stating the benefit of employment services received; and
- Information about the number of employers helped or positions filled.

Reverse side of the infographic:

- Employment service organization logo and information;
- List of services provided; and
- Contact information.

It was agreed that employment services organizations would be able to customize some of the information on the infographic; however, the layout and general messaging should remain consistent. To test the feasibility of this approach, participants provided information to the Biz Hub team to trial the approach. A graphic design company developed the infographic template and the Biz Hub team created infographics for each organization. Participants collaborated on designing the infographic and a graphic design company finalized the content and format. Organizations were very excited by the design and agreed to create a rack card as well as the infographic.

Participants envisaged using the infographic or rack card as a way of starting a conversation with employers by asking whether they knew about the range of services and supports available. The infographic and rack card are available online and organizations can customize to reflect the services they provide and are shown in Figure 14.

**Figure 14 Employer Engagement Infographic**

## Nudge 2: Improving the sharing of information about employer needs across organizations — Introducing team huddles

Participants reported that it was challenging to share information about employer needs across organizations in a timely and efficient manner. Those working with employers worked separately from case managers who worked directly with clients. Organizations had electronic systems to track information about current job postings, but participants felt that some of the more qualitative information about the employer and the available position were not always available. Organizational staff and team meetings took place, but participants felt the right information did not always get to the right people.

Participants agreed to continue to meet for two extra sessions to try and develop a nudge that would address this issue. Given the small window to develop an intervention, participants decided to try implementing morning huddles (see Sub-hub 2 for a more detailed description) to bring together staff to share information about current postings and employer needs. The Biz Hub team provided information about how to run a team huddle to participants. Morning huddles were convened first thing and lasted between 10 to 15 minutes. The huddle discussion was kept on time and track by the sub-hub participant. Staff had the opportunity to raise concerns or issues, but the focus of the hub was to make sure everyone was on the same page and had current information. The overall response was positive and was seen to improve the sharing of information across organizations.

# Evaluation of Biz Hub

The goal of the evaluation was to establish whether Biz Hub achieved its two main objectives which were:

1. Create and support a collaborative network of individuals from participating organizations to address business process issues that affect organizations in the employment services sector and identify and implement changes for business process improvements. Biz Hub aimed to both generate evidence and make use of already collected data to support its activities.
2. Share knowledge about business process management (BPM) and what works with other organizations in the broader employment services sector. As the project developed, this aim expanded to include increasing awareness about behavioural insights and how this approach could be used to support small, low cost improvements to service processes.

To conduct the evaluation the Biz Hub team developed a pre- and post-questionnaire that was completed by sub-hub participants. The pre-survey provided organizational information, data related to the specific sub-hub and identified what individuals and organizations hoped to achieve. The post-questionnaire provided information about whether participants and organizations found Biz Hub useful.

The main reasons for participating in Biz Hub were to develop relationships and share knowledge with other sub-hub members and to develop practical strategies that would improve the business process. Participants reported that these goals were met; they appreciated the collaborative approach and the innovations that were implemented resulted in improvements to the business processes. Participants found the collaboration professionally and personally beneficial. At an organizational level, Biz Hub raised the capacity of staff within this sector to develop and implement evidence and data-based innovations. Participants and organizations stated they would recommend Biz Hub to others in their organization and sector.

## Participant feedback

**Meetings** — all participants stated the meetings created a comfortable learning environment; everyone had the opportunity to contribute; the time constraints of participants were respected; meetings were held at convenient times with a good mix of in-person and online. The majority of participants also found that the meetings provided a good opportunity to network and the sub-hub helped to develop their professional practice.

**Meeting Content** — all participants found the topics interesting and useful. The majority of participants improved their knowledge of business process mapping and behavioural insights, which benefited their organization.

**Organizational response to Biz Hub** — participants were asked about their organization's response to Biz Hub. They stated their organizations viewed Biz Hub positively. The majority of organizations did make changes to their business processes; those that did not were unable to do so due to other business priorities and requirements.

**Benefits of Biz Hub** — when asked about the benefits of Biz Hub, participants highlighted the collaborative nature of Biz Hub, networking with peers within their sector, and the sharing of best practices. Participants also identified the specific process improvements that were addressed in their sub-hub.

**Satisfaction with Biz Hub** — overall, participants were highly satisfied with their participation in Biz Hub. Across all sub-hubs, all participants stated that they learned new ways to improve their sub-hub's area of focus. Additionally, all participants were satisfied with the support they received and did not find the level of commitment and time required to be too much. The majority of participants stated that they were glad they participated in Biz Hub and would recommend Biz Hub to a friend. As one participant stated, Biz Hub was a "fun project and very important for the future of our industry."

## Feedback from the four sub-hubs

**Time commitment.** Participants were asked about the average time they devoted to Biz Hub each week. Estimates varied across the sub-hubs but in general participants devoted one to two hours per week to Biz Hub activities.

**Success of sub-hub for the organization.** When asked how successful their organization thought the respective sub-hub was for them, all or almost all of the participants in each sub-hub responded that the sub-hub was successful or very successful.

**Usefulness of resources and materials.** Participants found each of the initiatives and the tools and resources developed useful. Participants appreciated the Literacy Review in the client engagement sub-hub and the staff communications survey in the staff engagement sub-hub.

**Most significant change.** Participants were asked about the most significant change that occurred as a result of Biz Hub. Participants' responses varied greatly; however, the most common response was a greater awareness and understanding of the initiative examined in the sub-hub, particularly amongst senior managers.

# Impact of Biz Hub and lessons learned

Biz Hub was a new and innovative project that brought together staff from employment service organizations in four groups (sub-hubs) with the goal of sharing knowledge and expertise to improve business processes within and across employment organizations. Biz Hub provided the framework, the approaches and tools to support a process of collaborative and creative problem solving. The improved business processes or the nudges developed were small, low cost changes that were straightforward to implement. Biz Hub adopted a pragmatic approach to implementing the nudges and supported organizations to tailor changes to fit their context. The impacts of Biz Hubs for organizations were that it:

- Created an intentional space for collaborative and creative problem-solving;
- Empowered practitioners with resources, tools and support to identify and solve business process issues;
- Increased capacity and confidence of practitioners to apply the approaches to problem-solve; and
- Implemented strategies that resulted in impacts (some that were tested and determined to be significant).

A further aim of Biz Hub was to raise capacity within employment service organizations by providing staff with the skills and knowledge required to enable them to improve efficiency and effectiveness. The Biz Hub project team provided participants with training and support on three approaches: business process management, behavioural insights and design thinking. The rationale for using these approaches was to ensure changes implemented were based on evidence of best practice and organizational data.

As Biz Hub progressed, these approaches morphed into the following four-step process that participants were encouraged to use within their own organizations to improve other processes.

1. Discover — participant expertise, organizational data and knowledge of best practices were used to identify opportunities for service improvements.
2. Diagnose — BPM and BI were used to identify service bottlenecks.
3. Design — participants collaboratively designed adaptations and or innovations to remove bottlenecks.
4. Deliver — service improvements were tested in organizations and information was shared with sub-hub participants and with the main hub.

Participants in the four sub-hubs came from non-profit and for-profit employment service organizations across BC and were willing to collaborate and share their knowledge and expertise. They met approximately once a month for a period of between six to nine months, yet despite this relatively short window, the project managed to develop, implement and when possible evaluate the innovations. This was only possible because of the support of the participants and their respective organizations.

The response to Biz Hub has been overwhelmingly positive, with most participants stating they would be willing to take part in future initiatives. They also stated that they found the process rewarding and that the initiatives developed benefitted their organizations. Biz Hub would not have been possible without the commitment and support of senior staff within organizations. They allowed staff to participate in Biz Hub and supported the implementation of the innovations within their organizations.

The key lessons learned from Biz Hub included:

- The program raised organizational and staff capacity to problem solve in a collaborative and systematic way with a user-centric approach.
- Organizations and their staff have extensive knowledge and expertise which they were excited to use to overcome challenges to improve effectiveness and efficiencies. Some support was required but participants were enthusiastic to learn and empowered to make a positive difference.
- Biz Hub encouraged organizations to view challenges and solutions collectively and holistically.
- Some of the best insights and innovations occurred when participants took a step back and considered the challenge from different perspectives, including from the organization, staff and clients. The approaches used in Biz Hub facilitated this systematic, collaborative and creative problem-solving process.
- Biz Hub used organizational data to identify bottlenecks.
- Organizations have a wealth of implementation and outcome data, which, if used appropriately can support improvements in business processes and outcomes.
- Biz Hub examined best practices, adapted these to develop practical, low-cost innovations that worked in each organizational context.
- The nudges implemented as part of Biz Hub were small and low-cost. They were not complicated to implement, they were simple and straightforward. Participants were often surprised at the impact small changes had within their organization. Small changes can make a BIG difference!