

diversity is working

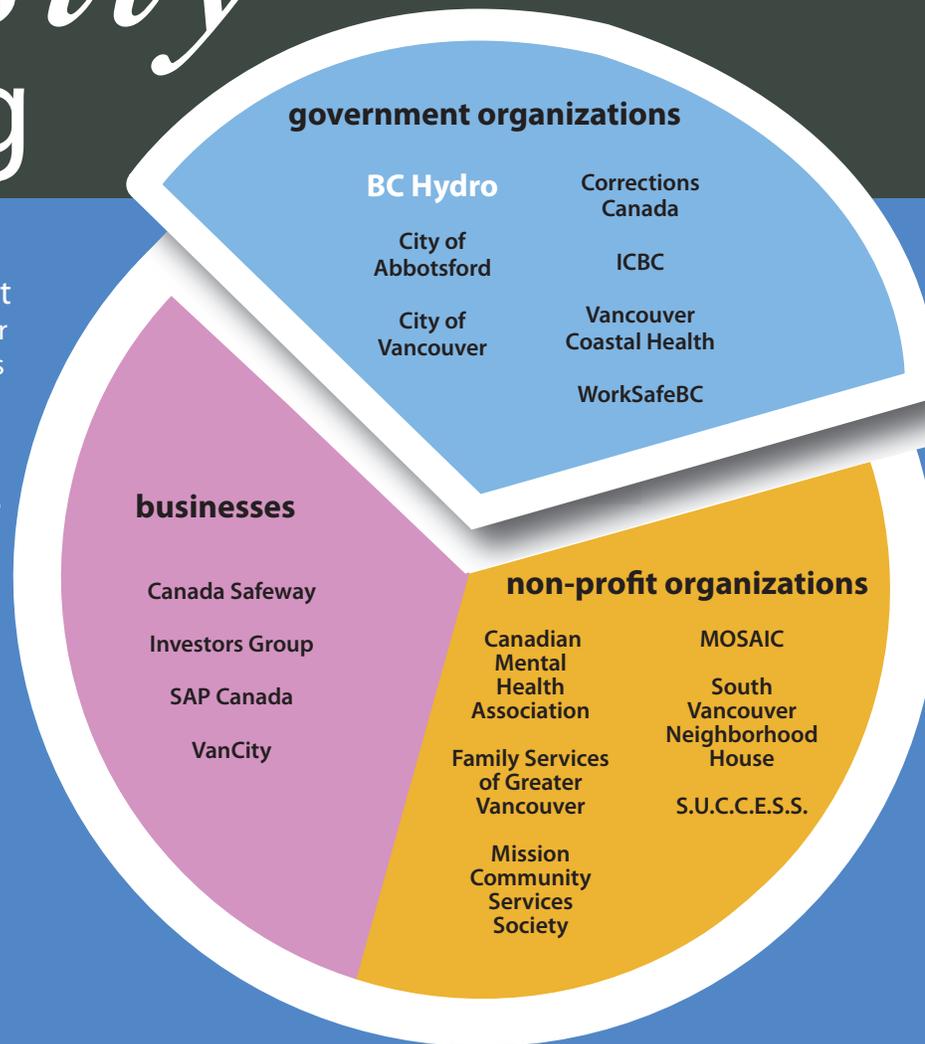
SPARC BC's *Diversity is Working* project provides seventeen (17) case studies of Lower Mainland organizations that have taken steps to make their workplaces more welcoming and inclusive for employees with diverse backgrounds. The purpose of the case studies is to celebrate successes in workplace diversity by highlighting best practices.

The set of case studies includes examples from organizations with small Human Resources departments to larger organizations with large Human Resources departments and designated diversity managers. The case studies are also drawn from a range of different sectors including businesses, non-profit organizations and government institutions. Some of the organizations being profiled have been implementing diversity and employment equity initiatives for decades while others have started to look at diversity in recent years.

Because of the diverse range of organizations being profiled, there are relevant best practices for any organization that is working to make their workplace more welcoming and inclusive of people from diverse backgrounds. Refer to the adjacent diagram for a list of participating organizations.

The following pieces of information are provided in each organization's case study:

- diversity business case or mandate for diversity;
- diversity initiatives and results; and,
- advice for other organizations considering undertaking similar work.



BC hydro
REGENERATION



BC Hydro is the main electricity distributor in BC. As a provincial crown corporation, BC Hydro is mandated to provide "reliable power, at low cost, for generations." BC Hydro operates thirty (30) hydroelectric facilities and three (3) natural gas-fueled thermal power plants.



BC Hydro



About BC Hydro

BC Hydro is the main electricity distributor in BC. As a provincial crown corporation, BC Hydro reports to the BC Ministry of Energy, Mines, and Petroleum Resources, and is mandated to provide “reliable power, at low cost, for generations.” BC Hydro operates (thirty) 30 hydroelectric facilities and three (3) natural gas-fueled thermal power plants.

BC Hydro’s Business Case for Diversity

In 2006, the following vision for diversity was endorsed by BC Hydro’s Board of Directors:

Diversity at BC Hydro is understanding, recognizing, and valuing the differences that make each person unique. BC Hydro is committed to developing a diverse workforce that represents the communities that BC Hydro serves within BC, and strengthens our inclusive workplace.

In 2007, BC Hydro’s executive team followed up on the Board’s vision for diversity by establishing a more focused, 10-year goal:

To have a workforce fully representative of the BC labour market by 2017.

At BC Hydro, building diversity throughout the company, its business groups, and teams, means hiring people with different perspectives, experiences and ways of thinking. BC Hydro has developed its business case for diversity in response to leading research which suggests that diversity can result in improved organizational performance. According to BC Hydro’s business case, diversity:

- strengthens organizational innovation and creativity by providing access to the widest possible pool of talent available in the labour market;
- supports improved financial performance;
- improves stakeholder and customer relations by strengthening relationships with the communities BC Hydro serves; and,
- improves the company’s reputation as a top employer.

BC Hydro's Diversity Initiatives

BC Hydro's Strategy to Improve Workplace Diversity and Inclusiveness

As a first step, BC Hydro developed a strategy to improve workplace diversity and inclusiveness based on leading research. Some key foundational elements of BC Hydro's diversity and inclusiveness strategy that are viewed to be essential for success include:

- Clearly defined diversity goals including accountabilities, reporting, measurement and timetables;
- A supporting business case for diversity which accompanies the goals;
- Effective sourcing and recruitment strategies;
- Awareness, engagement, and capacity building activities targeted at leaders who understand the diversity strategy and can build and manage diverse teams; and,
- Policies and infrastructure that support equity and inclusion.

Recruitment

As part of its diversity and inclusiveness strategy, BC Hydro has conducted some targeted recruitment and outreach activities in order to encourage a broad range of skilled applicants from diverse groups to apply for positions at BC Hydro. For example, BC Hydro has developed active relationships between its corporate recruitment team and employment outreach organizations in the Metro Vancouver area. As part of these relationships, BC Hydro has:

- educated the outreach organizations on BC Hydro qualifications, values, businesses and expectations; and,
- interviewed job candidates referred to BC Hydro by outreach organizations, and shared feedback with candidates on how they did during the hiring process, and opportunities for development.

In addition, BC Hydro has reviewed its hiring process for systemic barriers which may unintentionally limit the hiring of qualified, skilled people from diverse backgrounds. Some steps that BC Hydro has taken to address systemic employment barriers for people from diverse backgrounds includes:

BC Hydro

- advertising job postings in multicultural media;
- reviewing job qualifications and drafting job postings which focus on broad competencies in addition to technical requirements;
- training recruiters to consider international credentials, recognize cultural differences, and provide some hiring coaching and development pre and post interview to potential hires who are new to Canada;
- encouraging hiring managers to offer interviews to candidates who are qualified and might not fit the traditional package of qualifications/attributes/characteristics;
- encouraging hiring managers to hire qualified immigrants with a specific career path in mind (e.g., hiring at a more junior level with timelines for performance and development to increasing levels);
- recognizing provisional membership to technical regulatory bodies as a job candidate's personal commitment to Canadian accreditation, and supporting the process for new hires;
- embedding diversity related questions into all interview processes, along with questions related to BC Hydro's values and business strategies;
- developing focused diversity sourcing strategies to target occupational categories or business areas where representation of designated groups (e.g., women, visible minorities, Aboriginal people, people with disabilities) is significantly below BC labour force levels); and,
- creating an Aboriginal Education and Employment Strategy.



Creating a Welcoming and Inclusive Work Environment

BC Hydro has also worked to create a positive work environment within the organization that makes people from diverse backgrounds feel welcome and included once they join the organization. One way that BC Hydro works towards this goal is by providing diversity training opportunities to staff and managers within the organization. For example, mandatory respectful workplace policy training has been in place since 1990 for all staff. In addition, BC Hydro delivers specialized cross-cultural diversity workshops to its staff on the following topics:

- Cross-Cultural Communication;
- Four Generations in the Workplace; and,
- Aboriginal Awareness (offered at three (3) levels of discussion).

Managers are also provided additional diversity training. For instance, there is an online managers' diversity resource centre and toolkit which is available to all managers on the HydroWeb intranet. In addition, general diversity awareness and expectations discussions have been integrated into BC Hydro's frontline leadership training program—Supervising for Results.

Moreover, BC Hydro has incorporated some additional training into the employee orientation process in order to meet the needs of newcomer staff. For instance, new hires have access to a web-based tool for building career paths, which outlines "unwritten rules in the office" and helps Canadian newcomers orientate themselves to working within a Canadian workplace. In addition, BC Hydro staff have access to a multipurpose quiet space for reflection and prayer.

Employee Groups

Another way that BC Hydro fosters a welcoming and inclusive company culture is by supporting employee-run resource groups. Since 1994, BC Hydro has provided corporate support for the Hydro Employees' Multicultural Society (HEMS) which celebrates and promotes multiculturalism and inclusion through employee activities and celebration events. HEMS also offers a cultural buddy program. The company also supports the BC Hydro Women's Network, an eight year-old organization that provides female employees with networking, learning, and development opportunities. On average, ten (10) networking and career development skills events are held each year, as well as panel discussions featuring BC Hydro Women Executive Team members.

The Ethics Office and Ombuds Program

In addition, all BC Hydro staff have access to the company's Ethics Office and Ombuds Program, which can be a valuable resource when responding to workplace conduct that is not consistent with BC Hydro's values around diversity and inclusiveness. For example, if an employee was experiencing any challenges with discrimination or racism, both the Ethics Office and Ombuds Program can serve as an excellent, confidential resource.

The BC Hydro Ethics Office helps to create ethical standards around diversity that are consistent with BC Hydro's values, and the company's goal of creating a welcoming and inclusive workplace that is a great place to work for all BC Hydro staff. In particular, the BC Hydro Ethics Office:

- Sets ethical standards;
- Communicates those standards;
- Integrates the standards into the culture of the business; and,
- Promotes compliance with those standards.

One of the primary goals of the Ethics Office is to build trust across the organization, through working in confidence with employees, both unionized and management staff, who are experiencing difficult or uncertain ethical situations. The Ethics Office helps BC Hydro be proactive in assisting employees and the organization deal with ethical concerns before they become a problem. This helps BC Hydro make sure that the organization is providing employees with a great place to work, that people are working with integrity, and that wrongdoing is not only discouraged, but prevented. The Ethics Office is also responsible for developing policies and procedures that are consistent with the Code of Conduct, and also for developing and delivering ethics and compliance communications and training programs.

The Ombuds Program, which began in 1999, is intended to complement existing programs such as: the Respectful Workplace Program, the Return-To-Work Program, and the Code of Conduct. The Ombuds Program deals specifically with terms and conditions of employment matters. While the Ombuds Program was initially established to deal with the concerns of management and professional employees, it does also work with unionized employees. Employees who choose not to use the Ethics Office still have access to the Ombuds program.

Diversity Measures

As part of BC Hydro's ongoing delivery and monitoring of its diversity strategy, BC Hydro tracks a number of diversity measures. This helps the company track successes and opportunities for improvement over time. Here are a couple examples of the types of diversity measures that BC Hydro tracks:

- On a quarterly basis, BC Hydro tracks the number of BC Hydro employees from diversity groups by business group, occupational category and career progression.
- Annually, BC Hydro runs an enterprise-wide engagement survey to understand how employees experience and view the organization. Survey questions about how safe employees feel to voice their opinion, whether leadership behavior is consistent with BC Hydro values or whether employees feel that they have the opportunity for personal development and growth provide a lens on how employees think and feel about BC Hydro.

The Results

Through tracking results over time, BC Hydro has reported an overall increase in representation across all the equity groups that the organization measures. BC Hydro also reports that its specific focus on particular business areas or groups has paid off since the results show improved diversity in recruitment, retention, and skills development in the targeted areas. BC Hydro's increasingly diverse teams also report that they are realizing some of the positive benefits of diversity, because they report that cross-functional diversity results in better decisions and more effective and resilient teams.

In 2012, BC Hydro has also been recognized by an annual competition as: one of Canada's Top Employers; one of BC's Top Employers and one of Canada's Best Diversity Employers.

BC Hydro

Advice for Other Organizations

When asked if BC Hydro had any advice for other organizations considering implementing a similar strategy, the organization shared its “checklist for an effective strategy” which requires a diversity and inclusiveness strategy to be subject to the same planning process and scrutiny as any other business initiative. Some items on the “checklist for an effective strategy” include:

- Identify or create a dedicated program sponsor/champion for diversity within the organization;
- Develop the business case for diversity within the organization;
- Establish a vision, mandate, metrics and budget. In order for this to work, the outcome of the vision needs to be a SMART goal (which means that the outcome has to be specific, measureable, attainable, results-focused and time bound), and there needs to be senior buy-in for a long-term commitment;
- Ensure that there is top level endorsement from the Board and Executive, and that diversity metrics are tied to Executive scorecards;
- Ensure that there is strategic and operational alignment with other areas of the business;
- Provide regular reports on progress toward the goal; and,
- Provide an escalation path to identify and clear barriers.

This project was led by the Social Planning and Research Council of BC (SPARC BC).



In partnership with the Committee for Cultural Pluralism: Native Education College, Italian Cultural Centre, Vancouver Japanese Language School and Japanese Hall and S.U.C.C.E.S.S.



This project has been made possible with funding from the Province of British Columbia and the Government of Canada.

