

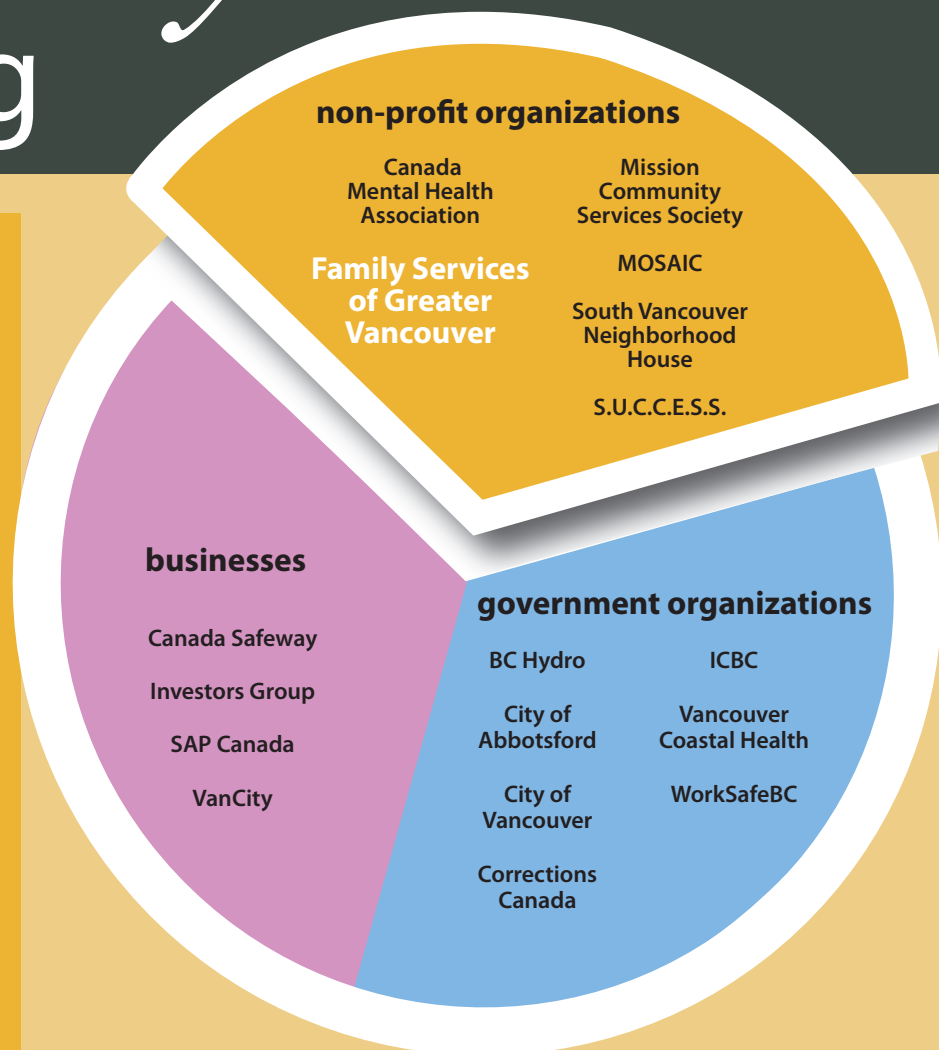
diversity is working

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.



Family Services

of Greater Vancouver

Creating brighter tomorrows.

Family Services of Greater Vancouver (FSGV) is a community-based not-for-profit organization that has been serving a diverse clientele of children, youth, adults, and families since 1928. FSGV provides professional counseling, therapy, education, advocacy, planning and support services.



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About Family Services of Greater Vancouver

Family Services of Greater Vancouver (FSGV) is a community-based not-for-profit organization that has been serving a diverse clientele of children, youth, adults, and families since 1928. FSGV provides professional counseling, therapy, education, advocacy, planning and support services. FSGV provides their services in over thirty (30) languages at twenty (20) locations throughout the Lower Mainland, and has approximately 525 staff, 295 volunteers and thirty-eight (38) students on its team.

FSGV's Diversity Mandate

As an organization that is committed to developing and providing a broad range of quality services that are responsive to diverse community needs, FSGV has considered diversity to be an important organizational goal since the beginning. The organization's focus on diversity has also increased over time as Metro Vancouver's population and FSGV's clientele has become increasingly diverse. FSGV has learned that if you recruit talented staff that reflect the diversity in your clientele, it results in better service delivery.

In recognition of the importance of diversity, FSGV's has made diversity one of its five (5) core values, which are provided below:

Quality: We are committed to excellence in all our programs and services.

Respect: We deal with individuals in a fair, honest, and respectful manner.

Possibility: We believe in the capacity of people to overcome life's challenges.

Diversity: We respond to diversity in the community through our commitment to provide services that recognize and respect our differences.

Accountability: We uphold the public's trust through responsive management of our resources and a commitment to social justice.

CARF Accreditation

In addition, FSGV is also mandated to look at diversity as part of its CARF accreditation process. FSGV is currently accredited through the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF), which requires it to meet quality standards across a number of different domains. One of CARF's commitments is to "diversity and cultural competency in all CARF activities and associations."

FSGV's diversity objective, philosophy and hallmarks of a diverse environment

FSGV has also clearly articulated its diversity objective, diversity philosophy and the organization's definition of the hallmarks (or characteristics) of a diverse environment. These help to guide the direction of FSGV's diversity initiatives.

FSGV's diversity objective is "to foster service excellence and employee satisfaction in a diverse society by building and reinforcing the right skills, attitudes and behaviours."

FSGV's diversity philosophy is articulated as follows:

"We are working to develop behaviors that bridge our many differences in order to further our work toward making the world a better place, a place of equity, fairness, and justice for all. On the way, we must continue to embrace diversity in order to do the very practical work of helping others in their day-to-day living, and so that our workplace is both welcoming to and reflective of the diverse communities we serve."

Furthermore, FSGV has outlined its "Hallmarks for a Diverse Environment" which articulates the organization's view of what a diverse and inclusive environment looks like. According to FSGV's hallmarks, a diverse environment:

- fosters respect for each individual;
- takes into account the real barriers that people face because of discrimination and unequal access to resources;
- seeks differences of viewpoints, style and thinking;
- promotes a free flow of ideas, risk taking and diverse approaches;
- encourages open and honest communication and effective listening skills;
- addresses barriers and maximizes each individual's potential and personal growth;
- promotes a participative process of employee development and rewards behaviors that promote individual growth; and,
- instigates flexibility in job models and career paths.



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Family Service's Diversity Initiatives

Diversity Plans

FSGV works towards its diversity goals through developing regular diversity plans. FSGV's diversity plans are revisited each year and are re-written every three years. Each year, the diversity plan summarizes the actions that were taken as a result of the previous year's plan and reaffirms FSGV's diversity objective, philosophy, and hallmarks for a diverse environment. For example, the 2011/2012 plan reports that the following actions took place in 2010/2011:

- The Agency continued to be an Equal Opportunity Employer;
- Accessibility for clients was reviewed through an Accessibility Survey as well as through an Employee Climate Survey;
- Employees were asked to assess FSGV's approach to diversity in the Employee Climate Survey;
- The Employment Equity policy was disseminated;
- The Agency conducted its Employment Equity Survey with staff;
- Each new employee received individual orientation to Agency policies and procedures including discussions of diversity;
- The diversity site on the Agency's intranet was updated to include links and training opportunities;
- Translation services were provided both internally and externally as required;
- Targeted hiring to provide language services occurred; and,
- Training opportunities for staff on diversity were made available.

In the most recent 2011/2012 plan, key goals/objectives were outlined, as well as the responsible groups/individuals, and target completion dates. At the end of the year, progress on the following goals/objectives will be assessed:

- Provide mandatory training on diversity related matters to all staff;
- Require staff to recertify their diversity training every three years;
- Conduct an Employee Climate Survey which will engage staff on issues of diversity;
- Continually search for and explore innovative programs and approaches to promote and encourage diversity awareness and competency at the program level; and,
- Conduct the Employment Equity Survey on an annual basis.

Recruitment

In their current plan, FSGV reaffirms its commitment to actively promoting employment equity and equal opportunity in human resources practices. This applies to all positions throughout the organization: leadership positions, management positions, direct service positions, support service positions, and Board positions. Some actions that FSGV has recently committed to undertake in order to achieve this goal include:

- continuing to designate FSGV as an “equal opportunity employer” in all job postings and in its published information materials;
- continuing to monitor the accessibility of its premises for people with disabilities and remove barriers to the employment of people with disabilities;
- starting to analyze the make-up of the workforce on an annual basis and compare this analysis with the data on the representation of targeted groups in the immediate community;
- identifying and removing systemic barriers which prevent the full participation of underrepresented groups (e.g. targeted advertising, new training opportunities);
- posting job positions in ethno-cultural media; and,
- using behavior-based questions in interviews which reflect job requirements and limit systemic discrimination.



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In addition, FSGV has a policy of “under-hiring” in cases where it is viewed essential that a new hire speaks a particular language and has experience with a particular target group, and they are unable to find a candidate from the target group that meets all the job qualifications. In these situations, FSGV sometimes “under-hires” people from the communities it needs to serve and provides them with an “internal apprenticeship” because they recognize that the candidate possesses invaluable intercultural and language skills that makes him/her a key asset to FSGV programming and services. While completing their on the job training, the “under-hired” staff person is paid at a step lower than other staff members in the same or similar position, but moves up to equal pay once the new hire has developed all the necessary skills and competencies for the position. This practice has been invaluable to the organization because it enhances service delivery to hard-to-reach target populations, and provides a valuable learning opportunity for other staff members who are involved in the training process. It is important to note that FSGV never “under-hires” in situations where it has the potential to threaten the quality of service.

Staff training and retention

In its 2010/2011 Agency and Program Accountability report, FSGV lists one of its strategic objectives “to be the employer of choice in the community services sector, attracting and retaining quality professionals.” FSGV believes that diversity training is critical to creating a welcoming and inclusive workplace that engages and retains staff from diverse backgrounds. Some staff training and cultural awareness activities that FSGV is currently involved in include:

- using the employment orientation process to discuss diversity in the workplace, including recognizing and accepting differences, and stressing diversity-specific accountability for staff;
- providing mandatory diversity training to all staff members that must be recertified every three (3) years;
- supporting cross-program events where different ethno-cultural communities have an opportunity meet one another and learn from one another; and,
- celebrating important cultural holidays as an organization (e.g., Passover).

FSGV also supports ongoing learning among managers by providing an “essential learning” platform on its Intranet, which includes online modules on inclusivity. These modules are incorporated into FSGV’s leadership training and are mandatory for staff when hired at the management level.

FSGV has used their “Employee Climate Survey,” “Accessibility Survey,” and “Employee Equity Survey,” as “temperature checks” to monitor the diversity of their staff on a continual basis. These surveys attempt to collect information on staff diversity, employee engagement, and staff suggestions to make FSGV a more diverse, inclusive, and welcoming environment.

FSGV has found through experience that it is beneficial to hire an external organization to do staff surveys (e.g., CARF). Some employees are more comfortable when an outside organization is hired to report on the aggregate findings (as opposed to the individual findings) to the HR department. Otherwise some staff members may fear that someone within the organization will look at their individual responses and that their answers could potentially affect their future employment prospects.

The Results

Because a commitment to diversity has been embedded within FSGV for a long time, it is difficult to track recent changes. However, FSGV reports that the organization has become increasingly diverse over time as the community has become increasingly diverse. FSGV reports that they are pleased to “see the face of the community within the staff” and that the organization is a welcoming and inclusive environment that encourages staff to be their authentic self and “bring their culture into the workplace.”

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Family Services' Advice for Other Organizations

When asked if FSGV has any advice for other organizations considering undertaking similar work, the following advice was offered:

- Organizations really should seek to institutionalize diversity so that it becomes part of their culture and not something they feel they need to do out of obligation.
- Diversity can be a sensitive topic and needs to be approached carefully.
- After you do this diversity work for a while, people start asking why are we still doing this? We are already diverse and inclusive. It is important to frame the issue positively and point out that "we do things well, but could do better."
- Hire a third party to do an Employment Equity Survey, and use a Canadian third party because some people have privacy concerns about surveys conducted in the United States because of differences in privacy legislation.

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