

# 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.



S.U.C.C.E.S.S. is one of the largest social service agencies in British Columbia and it offers a diverse set of programs including settlement services, ESL training, employment services, family and youth counseling, business and economic development services, health care services, social and affordable housing, and community and volunteer development.



# S.U.C.C.E.S.S.



Thomas Tam,  
Chief Executive Officer



Kelly Ng,  
Acting Chief Operating Officer

## About S.U.C.C.E.S.S.

S.U.C.C.E.S.S. is one of the largest social service agencies in British Columbia. The organizational mission is to “build, bridge, harvest diversity and foster integration” and the organization’s vision is to create “A world of multicultural harmony.” S.U.C.C.E.S.S. provides services in settlement, English as a second language training, employment, family and youth counseling, business and economic development, health care, social and affordable housing, and community and volunteer development.

## S.U.C.C.E.S.S.’s Diversity Mandate

Building a welcoming and inclusive workplace is part of S.U.C.C.E.S.S.’ mission and mandate. In order for S.U.C.C.E.S.S. to work towards its mission and “build, bridge, harvest diversity and foster integration” externally, the organization needs to work to create a harmonious working environment internally. Attracting and retaining a diverse staff is an organizational goal, because it helps the organization serve its multicultural clientele, and fosters the development of intercultural understanding and competencies within the organization.

Historically, S.U.C.C.E.S.S. stood for the United Chinese Community Enrichment Services Society. However, the name was legally changed to S.U.C.C.E.S.S. to reflect the fact that the organization had evolved to become a multicultural organization that serves a broad range of ethno-cultural communities. While S.U.C.C.E.S.S. has been a multicultural organization for at least fifteen (15) years, many community members still perceive S.U.C.C.E.S.S. to be a Chinese organization that serves only the Chinese community; as a result, S.U.C.C.E.S.S. has started to take deliberate steps to rebrand the organization and has made creating a welcoming and inclusive working environment for people from diverse backgrounds a deliberate priority.

## S.U.C.C.E.S.S. Diversity Initiatives

Recently, S.U.C.C.E.S.S. has taken a number of steps to reposition the organization as a multicultural organization. In addition to changing the organization's legal name, the organization has changed the way it approaches official holidays. Previously, Chinese New Year was an official holiday at S.U.C.C.E.S.S. where the office was closed and all staff members would have the day off. Now that the organization has a multicultural focus, the office is open during Chinese New Year and every staff member is entitled to one (1) "cultural heritage day" off per year. Some staff members choose to take Chinese New Year as their holiday, while other staff members celebrate a different day of their choosing. S.U.C.C.E.S.S. also works to ensure that staff parties are diverse by involving a diverse team in organizing events such as the annual Christmas party.

The organization has also implemented some workplace language policies in order to create a welcoming and inclusive work environment. The official language at S.U.C.C.E.S.S. is English, not Chinese, and the main reception switchboard is operated in English. During the staff orientation process, staff members are encouraged to speak English with one another at work in order to be inclusive of others who do not speak their mother tongue. Client brochures and handouts which are produced in other languages would also include English titles so that everyone on the team can know what they are about. Since S.U.C.C.E.S.S. serves newcomers and staff members are required to speak other languages when serving their clients, it is not possible for the organization to have an English-only language workplace policy; however, the organization has made a deliberate effort to encourage staff to speak English at work.

### *Board Diversity*

S.U.C.C.E.S.S.' Board of Directors has a committee, the Branding committee, which is tasked with rebranding the organization and projecting an image of a multicultural organization. There is a deliberate board policy that requires that the composition of the Board reflect the diverse communities S.U.C.C.E.S.S. serves.



# S.U.C.C.E.S.S.

## *Recruitment*

S.U.C.C.E.S.S.' commitment to becoming a multicultural organization naturally lends itself to increased diversity in new hires. While S.U.C.C.E.S.S. does not have a deliberate diversity recruitment strategy, the organization does hire on the basis of language qualifications, among others, which increases diversity over time. Because of the diverse clientele S.U.C.C.E.S.S. serves, the organization is regularly recruiting candidates that speak non-official languages that are under-represented at S.U.C.C.E.S.S.

## *Staff Orientation and Diversity Training*

When new staff members join S.U.C.C.E.S.S., they are introduced to the concept of culture as part of the standard orientation process. It is the goal that every two years at S.U.C.C.E.S.S., the entire staff completes a cultural diversity "refresher" training session. In addition, there is an internal staff portal on the intranet with articles about cultural diversity. Staff members are encouraged to read these resources in order to become more culturally competent.

## *Welcoming Workplace and Communities Initiatives*

S.U.C.C.E.S.S. is also involved in promoting welcoming and inclusive workplaces in the broader community, and is currently the lead agency of Welcoming and Inclusive Workplaces Program (WICWP) projects in Abbotsford, the Tri-Cities and Fort St. John. S.U.C.C.E.S.S. has also partnered with Douglas College in the Tri-Cities to embark on a Leadership Training Program which has nine (9) participating organizations. At the end of the program, each participant is expected to produce an individual project to apply what they have learned to make their respective workplace more welcoming and inclusive.

## **The Results**

As a result of S.U.C.C.E.S.S. diversity initiatives there has been a substantial increase in the representation of non-Chinese staff members, managers, and board members. S.U.C.C.E.S.S. is also better positioned to serve its increasingly diverse clientele.

For instance, as part of the Community Airport Newcomers Network project, S.U.C.C.E.S.S. hires a multi-lingual team of officers which are tasked to provide assistance to all newcomers on their first day of permanent residence in Canada, and support refugees. This team has staff speaking over twenty (20) languages. In addition, S.U.C.C.E.S.S. has become involved in managing some BC Housing units for low to moderate income individuals (e.g., Hillside Gardens, Orange Hall, and Solheim Place) where the majority of residents are not Chinese. S.U.C.C.E.S.S. would not be able to serve their diverse clientele if they had not expanded its mandate and increased diversity within its teams.

### S.U.C.C.E.S.S.' Advice for Others

When asked what advice S.U.C.C.E.S.S. has for other organizations considering undertaking similar work, the following pieces of advice were offered:

- A new direction for an organization has to come from the top
- It takes time. It is difficult to change people's minds and attitudes
- Just try. You have to take the first step.

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.