

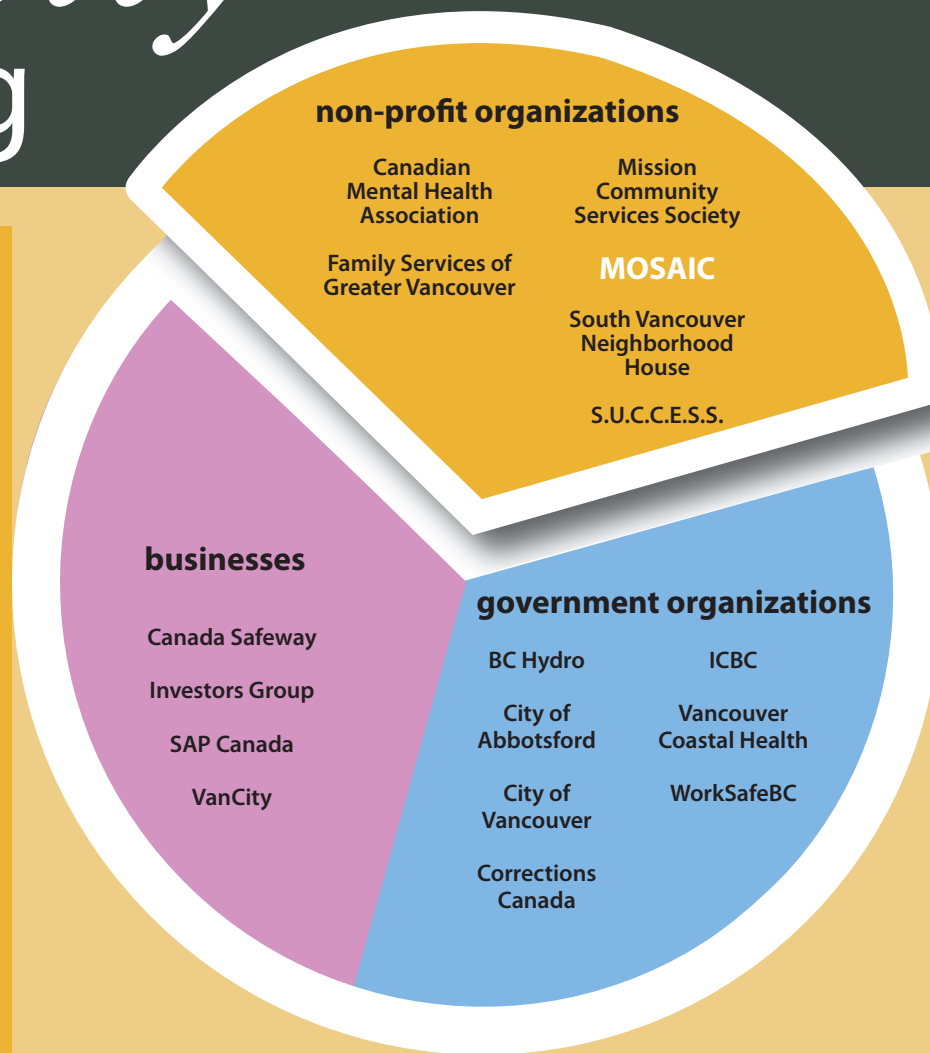
diversity is working

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.



MOSAIC

MOSAIC is a non-profit organization that was founded in 1972. It is dedicated to addressing issues that affect immigrants and refugees in the course of their settlement and integration into Canadian society.

MOSAIC



About MOSIAC

MOSAIC (Multilingual Orientation Service Association for Immigrant Communities) was founded in 1972, but started its operation as a registered multilingual non-profit organization in 1976. It is dedicated to addressing issues that affect immigrants and refugees in the course of their settlement and integration into Canadian society. MOSAIC's mandate is to empower immigrant and refugee communities, and to help them address critical issues in their neighborhoods and workplaces.

As an organization working with immigrants and refugees, MOSAIC operates a diverse services and programs at a number of locations around the Lower Mainland including employment support, language skills training, family programs, settlement services, community outreach, social impact research, legal advocacy. It also has a social enterprise which offers interpretation and translation services. MOSAIC has an annual budget of over \$19.4 million and employs over 200 staff and 300 contractors.

MOSAIC's formation as an organization and its mandate were heavily influenced by the historical context of the Canadian Multiculturalism policy of the 1970's. Within this context, MOSAIC has always promoted social inclusion within the broader society and target communities and the "rights and responsibilities" agenda.

MOSAIC's Diversity Mandate

Since MOSAIC's earliest days, it was recognized that MOSAIC had a role to play in promoting diversity and inclusion within the broader community. Some external activities that MOSAIC became involved in include:

- Developing engagement strategies, including partnerships with other community organizations, governments, and other partners on issues that are important to immigrants and refugees.
- Bringing attention to challenges experienced by immigrant communities around issues such as race, language and experience, to promote awareness and understanding.
- Advocating for systemic institutional changes and systems that will assist the settlement and integration of immigrants and refugees.

While MOSAIC promotes diversity and inclusion outside of the organization, it was considered equally important to build a welcoming and inclusive workplace culture within the organization. Because of its mission and mandate, MOSAIC has always been a meeting place for cultures from around the world. The challenge was to ensure that MOSAIC could serve as a role model for other organizations by providing a practical example of a welcoming and inclusive organization. This is what is commonly referred to at MOSAIC as "learning through exposure."

Because of its unique position as a service provider for immigrants and refugees from around the world, MOSAIC learned early on that the organization's credibility and quality of service are enhanced when the staff team reflects the diversity and backgrounds of the people being served. From MOSAIC's perspective, a welcoming and inclusive environment is created when people arriving to Canada from around the world can see their communities reflected in the organization that is serving them.



MOSAIC



MOSAIC's Diversity Initiatives

Recruitment

In the early years of MOSAIC, many board positions and most of the staff positions did not reflect the diversity of the population that the organization served. However, the commitment to diversity started to appear in the organization's strategic plans. In the early 1990's, one of MOSAIC's strategic goals was to "promote multiculturalism," and every senior manager was expected to report on progress in this area. In the late 1990's, the organization became more explicit on the subject. In the organization's guiding principles, two (2) out of the five (5) principles reflect the desired outcome: "Value cultural diversity" and "Being a model employer promoting equity in the work place." MOSAIC set out to diversify its staff by actively recruiting skilled staff from a range of cultures and considering diversity as part of the hiring process. Over time MOSAIC's Board of Directors and workforce have become much more diverse, and more reflective of MOSAIC's clientele.

Despite the strategic directions, the recruitment process that MOSAIC uses is relatively organic, without a formal diversity recruitment strategy. However, recruiting skilled people from diverse backgrounds is aligned with the organization's vision "of a Canada that welcomes and empowers immigrants, refugees, and newcomers." And more recently, the organization inscribed this as part of its hiring policies and procedures in 2009. As a result, senior management regularly "keep their eyes open" for people with skills and backgrounds that would be assets to the organization. Once talented potential employees are identified, it is a matter of watching out for future hiring opportunities and following up with potential hires.



MOSAIC's approach emphasizes the skills and experience that potential applicants can bring to the organization. Diversity, particularly the value added from language and cultural experience, is seen as one important element in a complex array of considerations that comprise the hiring process.

Developing Leaders within MOSAIC

While there is no formal "leadership development" program, staff are regularly encouraged to seek out opportunities for advancement within the organization. Staff members are also provided with ongoing professional development opportunities within the organization that support them as they build the skills and experience necessary to move into senior roles. The current Executive Director, who came to Canada as a refugee from Eritrea, reports that he was encouraged to seek the ED role as part of an open hiring process. There were no promises that he would get the position, but he was encouraged to apply. More recently, the practice of "promoting within" (provided the person is equipped with the required and desired skills for the position) has become part of the organization's human resource policies and procedures.

Creating a Welcome and Inclusive Work Environment

At MOSAIC, the most successful and satisfying activities for building inclusion within the organization have utilized food and celebrations. Multicultural potlucks have been a long-standing tradition at MOSAIC. These and other informal cultural events provide staff with an opportunity to highlight and share their cultures in an inclusive workplace setting. It sets a platform for sharing and understanding cultures through practical exposure.

Over the years, these informal events have been supplemented with more formal diversity training opportunities. Training and professional development workshops are held regularly for staff at all levels of the organization. Training activities are based on principles of engagement, dialogue and learning.



MOSAIC

MOSAIC's results

Over the years MOSAIC has managed to embed a philosophy of diversity and social inclusion within the general operations of the organization. Compared with its early years, the composition of the board, management and staff more closely reflect the composition of the client-base. This outcome is related to a number of internal and external factors including recruitment and support practices within the organization as well as a greater number of qualified applicants from immigrant and refugee communities. More importantly, there is a gained commitment and vigilance to the issue of social inclusion and diversity across the organization, and specifically among the senior management team.

Within the organization, informal coaching and mentoring practices have helped build an organizational culture in which MOSAIC employees can identify career goals at supervisory and management levels within the organization. Ongoing training opportunities which provide information on a range of issues help build skills and promote discussion.

MOSAIC's advice for other organizations

- Recognize that diversity is an ongoing process. MOSAIC continues to look at diversity through multiple lenses and actively works to address issues such as gender, sexual orientation, and ability. The organization is also working to build stronger bridges with First Nations and Aboriginal communities.
- Understand and address the unique circumstances of each individual and community. This approach suggests that there may be large differences in experience between different groups within particular communities. For example, experiences of first, second and third generations within ethno-cultural communities will be very different.
- Build a learning culture. Diversity is an issue that cannot be owned by a single individual or department. It must be shared as a value throughout the organization. Although commitment at the top is an essential component of social inclusion, there is also a need for ongoing efforts to build understanding and support in all corners of the organization through discussion, dialogue and learning.



- Ongoing discussion and training is important groundwork that will support the success of qualified candidates from diverse communities. If the groundwork is not done, people may be set up for failure.
- Diversity is not the business of any single organization or person. It is a shared responsibility between all components of society. Not addressing this issue results in waste of talent and human capital.

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.

