

diversity is working

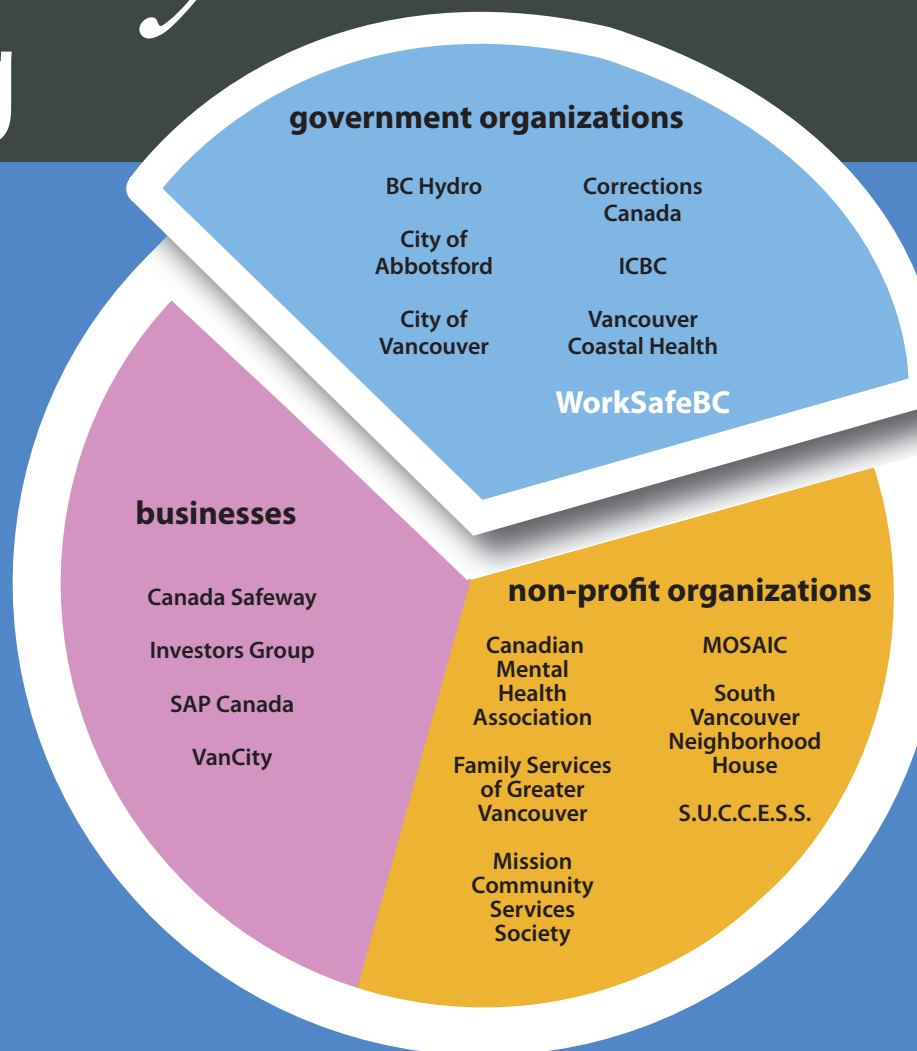
SPARC BC's *Diversity is Working* project provides seventeen (17) case studies of Lower Mainland organizations that have taken steps to make their workplaces more welcoming and inclusive for employees with diverse backgrounds. The purpose of the case studies is to celebrate successes in workplace diversity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



WORK SAFE BC

WORKING TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

WorkSafeBC is the operating name of the Worker's Compensation Board of British Columbia, a statutory agency created by an act of the provincial legislature in 1917. WorkSafeBC is the exclusive worker's compensation issuer in British Columbia, covering more than 200,000 registered employers and 2.3 million workers.



WorkSafeBC

About WorkSafeBC

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WorkSafeBC is governed by a seven-member Board of Directors (BOD) appointed by the Minister of Labour, Citizens' Services and Open Government, which is entrusted with the stewardship of WorkSafeBC. The President/Chief Executive Officer (CEO) has the authority to exercise the powers and responsibilities described in Part 3 of the Workers Compensation Act.

WorkSafeBC's Diversity Mandate and Business Case for Diversity

WorkSafeBC has been looking at the issue of diversity since the 1990s, when it started looking at diversity through an employment equity lens focused on eliminating employment barriers for women, persons with disabilities, Aboriginal people, and visible minorities.

Over the past few years, many of WorkSafeBC's diversity initiatives have been talent driven. As the baby boomer generation retires in greater numbers, most of the labour market growth will come from immigrants and newcomers. Targeted recruitment strategies and the creation of a welcoming and inclusive work environment can help to position WorkSafeBC as an employer of choice for diverse talent. In addition, WorkSafeBC's clientele has become increasingly diverse, and employing staff members from diverse backgrounds can assist WorkSafeBC in understanding and serving a diverse clientele better.

WorkSafeBC's Diversity Initiatives

Early diversity initiatives

Some of WorkSafeBC's first diversity initiatives took place in the 1990's and include:

- establishing a joint diversity committee between the management and the union; and,
- hiring an external consultant to conduct an Employment Systems Review (ESR), which is an in-depth assessment of all employment systems, policies, practices in order to identify barriers to the full employment of under-represented groups.

A lot of the recommendations that came out of the diversity committee and the ESR set the foundation for many of WorkSafeBC's diversity initiatives. One project that resulted was an equal pay review, where the wages for jobs that were traditionally female dominated were compared to the wages for jobs that were traditionally male dominated to ensure that there was no unintentional discrimination and to correct for differences.

WorkSafeBC's Outreach and Recruitment Strategies

Over the past few years, WorkSafeBC has developed a targeted recruitment strategy to raise awareness of and the profile of WorkSafeBC among job seekers as a whole, as well as under-represented groups. This involved the creation of a community education initiative since many job seekers did not understand who WorkSafeBC was and what type of work it does.

The outreach strategy also included partnering with organizations who work with newcomers and people with disabilities such as S.U.C.C.E.S.S, MOSAIC, Immigrant Services Society, DIVERSEcity, Community Resources Society, Progressive Intercultural Community Services (PICS), the Greater Vancouver Business Leadership Network, and Open Door. As part of WorkSafeBC's outreach strategy, the organization would conduct information sessions with up to thirty (30) of their clients at one time, and offer one-on-one sessions where WorkSafeBC would meet with individuals and talk about their resume and WorkSafeBC. As part of WorkSafeBC's broader community engagement strategy, it also participates in various parades and cultural events (e.g., the Vancouver Pride Parade) to increase the profile of the organization.

Staff Training and Education

WorkSafeBC provides a number of training opportunities to staff around issues of diversity and inclusion including the following:

- Delivering training on creating a respectful and harassment free workplace;
- Providing frontline staff training around intercultural competencies and communication;
- Offering training modules about working across generations; and,
- Supporting lunch and learns which are organized by employee resource groups (e.g., the Q network, which is for LGBT employees).

Another ongoing initiative that WorkSafeBC's Human Resources department has been involved in is celebrating important dates to increase recognition, awareness, and understanding. For instance, WorkSafeBC celebrates Ramadan as it is happening and hosts a lunch and learn to provide staff with an opportunity to learn more about it. This past Chinese New Year, dragon dancers were invited to come to the office for a performance. During multiculturalism week, WorkSafeBC has shown movies related to multiculturalism during lunch time and invites directors to come in and talk about their films. WorkSafeBC has also invited a holocaust survivor to come in and share his experience, as well as Aboriginal peoples to come in and talk about their experiences. In addition, WorkSafeBC has hosted a Canadian citizenship ceremony in its Richmond office to welcome new Canadians who are swearing the oath of citizenship.

Leadership development

WorkSafeBC supports a leadership development program that is open to current leaders and aspiring leaders. WorkSafeBC reports that there is currently a significant proportion of females and visible minorities participating in this program.

Other diversity initiatives

Once the HR team started to look into what sorts of diversity initiatives/partnerships were in place within the organization, they learned of many initiatives that have emerged organically because of the diverse clientele that WorkSafeBC serves. For instance, WorkSafeBC staff has started working with the Mexican consulate, and different levels of government, around the treatment of migrant agricultural workers to ensure that workers are properly paid and treated well.

The Results

Since WorkSafeBC started its new recruitment strategy over four (4) years ago there has been a dramatic increase in the volume of interest from new job seekers, which can be partly attributable to the success of WorkSafeBC's outreach strategy.

Advice for other organizations

When asked if WorkSafeBC has any advice for other organizations considering undertaking diversity initiatives, the HR team provided the following pieces of advice:

- Just do it. It's the future of who is working for you and who you are serving. It makes business sense.
- When you do it, be realistic with what you can accomplish and how you can resource these initiatives.
- A fundamental starting point is to involve senior leadership.

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