

2018
IMPROVING YOUR WORK ENVIRONMENT
COMMENT REPORT - WES 2018
FORESTS, LANDS, NATURAL RESOURCE
OPERATIONS AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT



The 2018 Work Environment Survey (WES) and reports have been commissioned by the BC Public Service Agency on behalf of the BC Public Service.

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Results at a Glance

The BC Public Service Work Environment Survey (WES) was administered to 27,220 employees from January 30 to February 23, 2018. 84% percent of employees participated in the survey, providing feedback that sharpens our awareness of how their current work environment experiences are impacting their engagement.

This report moves beyond the statistical survey data provided in other WES reports and focuses instead on employees’ answers to the following open-ended question from the survey:

What one thing would you like your organization to focus on to improve your work environment?

In your organization, 2,029 employees (64% of the total number of survey respondents) answered this question. All comments were reviewed and categorized into main themes and sub-themes. Your organization’s five most commonly discussed areas for improvement are highlighted in Figure 1 below.

FIGURE 1: MOST COMMON THEMES (% OF RESPONDENTS)

Tools, Equipment & Physical Environment	22%
Vision, Mission & Goals	18%
Stress & Workload	15%
Supervisors	15%
Compensation & Benefits	11%



About the Analysis

This report complements the statistical data from other 2018 Work Environment Survey (WES) reports by looking at employee comments from the open-ended question in the survey: *“What one thing would you like your organization to focus on to improve your work environment?”*

This question solicited rich, in-depth feedback that is valuable for gaining a more thorough understanding of employee experiences in the work environment in your organization, and for identifying new issues that would not otherwise be discovered.

To analyze the feedback, each comment was read and categorized as belonging to one or more themes and sub-themes. A theme is a commonly expressed topic or suggestion that many employees chose to write about. Within each of the major themes, sub-themes capture what respondents were referring to in more detail. For more information about the methodology, please refer to *Appendix A: Comment Analysis & Codebook Development*.

A total of 11 major themes surfaced when analyzing all employees’ comments. A summary of the relevant themes and sub-themes for your organization are presented in this report in varying levels of detail:

- **In Brief – Themes by the Numbers:** A summary table for your organization, showing respondent counts and percentages for all major themes and sub-themes.
- **Digging Deeper – Theme Rankings by Division and Demographics:** A more focused view of the themes most commonly referenced by commenters across your organization, by division and demographic category.
- **In Their Own Words – Theme Examples:** A theme-by-theme sample of actual comments, in the words of employees from your organization.



In Brief – Themes by the Numbers

All major themes and related sub-themes for improvements to the workplace are presented in the table below, with counts and percentages showing how many respondents from your organization made comments related to that theme. As a comparison, the percentage of all BC Public Service respondents who referenced that theme in their comments is also included.

TABLE 1: SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING THE WORK ENVIRONMENT^{1,2,3}

THEMES AND SUB-THEMES	ORGANIZATION COUNT	ORGANIZATION %	BC PUBLIC SERVICE %
Tools, Equipment & Physical Environment	445	22%	23%
Improve facilities (e.g. office space, noise levels, air quality, etc.)	158	8%	9%
Provide better office furniture (e.g. desks, chairs, etc.)	117	6%	5%
Upgrade/improve software	115	6%	4%
Provide better computer-based hardware (e.g., desktops, laptops, etc.)	99	5%	4%
Provide better supplies and equipment (e.g., office supplies, field instruments, printers, etc.)	46	2%	3%
Ensure safety and security of employees	26	1%	3%
Vision, Mission & Goals	363	18%	13%
Assess plans, priorities and strategies for the organization	124	6%	4%
Improve collaboration between work units or regions	72	4%	3%
Review funding or budget allocation to program	69	3%	2%
Improve program and/or policy implementation	54	3%	2%
Pay attention to the public interest and service delivery	51	3%	2%
Reduce political influence	6	0%	0%
Stress & Workload	307	15%	17%

¹ Individual comments containing multiple suggestions were categorized to more than one theme or sub-theme. Therefore, counts and percentages across or within themes may not add to the theme or respondent totals.

² Comments that relate to a particular theme but do not touch on any major related sub-themes are also represented in the Theme total respondent counts.

³ For themes with five or fewer related comments within your organization, sub-theme counts and percentages are suppressed in order to protect the privacy and confidentiality of respondents.

THEMES AND SUB-THEMES	ORGANIZATION COUNT	ORGANIZATION %	BC PUBLIC SERVICE %
Hire more staff	127	6%	7%
Review workload expectations	96	5%	6%
Improve productivity and efficiency	85	4%	3%
Support a healthy workplace	22	1%	2%
Supervisors	298	15%	14%
Strengthen quality of supervisory leadership	158	8%	7%
Hold employees accountable for performance	58	3%	3%
Improve communication between employees and supervisors	52	3%	3%
Cultivate effective teamwork and communication within teams	48	2%	2%
Compensation & Benefits	221	11%	19%
Increase salary	102	5%	11%
Review job classifications and/or reporting levels	51	3%	2%
Improve benefits	49	2%	4%
Ensure salary parity with other organizations	40	2%	4%
Ensure salary parity across government	19	1%	1%
Staffing Practices	218	11%	10%
Focus on Human Resources planning (recruitment, retention, succession)	101	5%	4%
Ensure hiring and promotions are fair and merit based	93	5%	5%
Make hiring process more efficient	20	1%	1%
Career & Personal Development	207	10%	13%
Improve training and development opportunities	132	7%	8%
Provide opportunities for career advancement	54	3%	3%
Improve new employee orientation	30	1%	1%
Improve performance management process	1	0%	1%
Executives	173	9%	11%
Improve communication between executives and staff	88	4%	5%
Strengthen quality of executive leadership	80	4%	4%
Improve stability and/or change management	20	1%	2%

THEMES AND SUB-THEMES	ORGANIZATION COUNT	ORGANIZATION %	BC PUBLIC SERVICE %
Recognition & Empowerment	150	7%	9%
Listen to staff input	54	3%	3%
Provide more and/or better quality recognition	39	2%	3%
Enable staff to make decisions	30	1%	2%
Make better use of employees' skills and abilities	24	1%	1%
Engagement & Workplace Culture	113	6%	9%
Treat employees and colleagues better	48	2%	3%
Address discrimination and harassment (including bullying)	28	1%	2%
Value diversity	18	1%	1%
Improve morale and workplace culture	17	1%	2%
Act on engagement initiatives	9	0%	1%
Flexible Work Environment	95	5%	6%
Increase flexibility in work location	52	3%	3%
Increase flexibility in work schedule	29	1%	2%
Improve and/or expand Leading Workplace Strategies (LWS)	17	1%	1%
Positive Comments	42	2%	2%
Other related comments	3	0%	0%
Total Respondents	2029	100%	100%

Digging Deeper –Theme Rankings by Division and Demographics

Table 2 below identifies which themes occurred most often within your organization overall, as well as by division (or highest level grouping within your organization), service years, age, and employment status. Within each divisional or demographic category, themes are ranked based on comment volume, with higher rankings coloured more darkly. All themes are ranked for the organization overall, while the five most common themes, the “hot spots”, are displayed for each divisional or demographic category.

In some cases, a divisional or demographic category may have multiple themes with the same ranking. This occurs when two themes received the same number of comments. In other cases, divisional and demographic categories may display fewer than five hot spots, or none at all. This typically occurs when there are relatively few commenters in the demographic category; in order to avoid over-emphasizing the significance of a small body of comments, themes require a minimum of three comments to be considered a hot spot.

TABLE 2: THEMATIC HOT SPOTS, BY DIVISION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Demographic Breakdown	Career & Personal Development	Compensation & Benefits	Engagement & Workplace Culture	Executives	Flexible Work Environment	Staffing Practices	Recognition & Empowerment	Supervisors	Stress & Workload	Tools, Equipment & Physical Environment	Vision, Mission & Goals
Your Organization	6	7	10	8	11	5	9	4	3	1	2
By Division											
BC Wildfire Service		5		2				1	4		2

FORESTS, LANDS, NATURAL RESOURCE OPERATIONS AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Demographic Breakdown	Career & Personal Development	Compensation & Benefits	Engagement & Workplace Culture	Executives	Flexible Work Environment	Staffing Practices	Recognition & Empowerment	Supervisors	Stress & Workload	Tools, Equipment & Physical Environment	Vision, Mission & Goals
Corporate Initiatives				5	2			3		1	3
Corporate Services for the Natural Resource Ministries	1							3	4	1	4
Deputy Minister and Associate Deputy Minister's Office									1		2
Integrated Resource Operations							5	4	3	1	2
Natural Resource Transformation Secretariat				1			5		4	2	2
Office of the Chief Forester						3		4	2	1	4
Regional Operations-Coast Area		5				4			2	1	3
Regional Operations-North Area						5		3	4	2	1
Regional Operations-South Area						5		4	3	1	2
Resource Stewardship				2				5	2	4	1
Rural Development, Lands and Innovation	2			3		5		4		1	
Timber Operations, Pricing and First Nations		2						4	3	1	5
By Service Years											

Demographic Breakdown	Career & Personal Development	Compensation & Benefits	Engagement & Workplace Culture	Executives	Flexible Work Environment	Staffing Practices	Recognition & Empowerment	Supervisors	Stress & Workload	Tools, Equipment & Physical Environment	Vision, Mission & Goals
Less than 3 years	2	5						5	4	1	3
3 to 9.99 years		5						4	3	1	2
10 to 19.99 years				5				4	3	1	2
20 years or more						5		3	4	1	2
By Age Group											
Under 35	3							5	2	1	3
35 - 44						5		4	3	1	2
45 - 54		5						3	4	1	2
55+						5		3	4	1	2
By Employment Status											
Included	5							3	4	1	2
Excluded		4				5			2	3	1

In Their Own Words – Theme Examples

This section of the report further describes the seven most common themes for your organization overall. Each theme includes a brief description based on the most common sub-themes referenced by respondents, as well as a sample list of comments. Both themes and sub-themes are presented in order of frequency, from the most to least common theme cited.

Sample comments are provided in order to further illustrate the types of improvements your colleagues feel are most important for enhancing engagement in your organization.

Comment examples were carefully selected for inclusion based on how well they represent other comments categorized in this theme and to demonstrate the variety of topics touched upon in comments. Therefore, the examples represent the general sentiments expressed by other colleagues, albeit in different words.

Comments selected for inclusion in this report have been edited for readability and to remove any information that could identify the original writer.



Thematic Index (in order of relevance)

Tools, Equipment & Physical Environment (22%).....	10
Vision, Mission & Goals (18%).....	11
Stress & Workload (15%).....	12
Supervisors (15%).....	14
Compensation & Benefits (11%).....	15
Staffing Practices (11%).....	16
Career & Personal Development (10%).....	17

Tools, Equipment & Physical Environment (22%)

This theme is comprised of comments and suggestions related to making improvements to the tools, equipment, and physical environment. The most common topics explored within this theme relate to improving facilities, providing better office furniture, upgrading/improving software, and providing better computer-based hardware.

Tools, Equipment & Physical Environment - Sample Comments

Below are some comments that were provided by colleagues within your organization related to this theme.

TOOLS, EQUIPMENT & PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

"Invest in building upgrades that provide for a healthier work place. My work place has been using the same cubicle dividers for over 35 years. The carpet has been replaced once in the last 35 years."

"Sort out restrictions & approval process for furniture/chair replacement process. An increase in staff, requires new desks, chair, and the breakage of existing equipment."

"Technology and the correct tools to perform our jobs in an efficient manner. Our technology, software and network connections are so old they are in some cases not even supported anymore. We should be industry leaders in innovative use of technology, not 10 years behind others."

"Stop cutting the office cleaning budgets! The quality of cleanliness throughout the District and Regional offices I have visited has dropped noticeably. Office spaces, common areas and washrooms are definitely not as clean as they should be! The standard of clean has been reduced creating an environment for colds and the flu, germs to flourish. This translates to lost time as a result."

"Refresh technology and address serious facilities issues. The computer equipment available to us is dated, slow, and prone to glitches which create delays. The facility itself has significant issues which impact comfort and safety... Better equipment and facilities would allow me to be more effective in my work."

"Less limitations on computer hardware and software. We are trying to be innovative but are constantly hindered by slow computers, not enough drive space etc."

"Improve options for reducing noise in the workplace (e.g. noise cancelling headphones, laptops to take calls/Lync meetings in small meeting rooms, more small meeting rooms, and increase communication to staff of reducing noise in the office)."

TOOLS, EQUIPMENT & PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

"... Better flooring than old carpet that holds dirt and off-gasses. In fact, working in buildings with quality air and light control is a big part of wellness. Maybe as a government we can better leverage our influence to have the landlords we rent from update their spaces."

"Older phones and lack of modern media devices set us back in working with clients. Need to modernize to keep up with increasing workload and limited capacity within organization. Increased pressure on staff to excel requires tools to do job effectively."

"Technological support, specifically access to software and hardware outside standard office programs and equipment needs. This would also include raising capital expenditure limits which have not raised in over a decade consequently it does not keep pace with equipment costs."

"Make Ergonomic desk options more available for every employee to serve as a preventative and proactive measure rather than a reactive measure. It shouldn't be treated as a last resort and should be easier for employees to obtain. Sitting is not healthy even for people that don't have health issues - shouldn't need previous health issue to qualify."

Vision, Mission & Goals (18%)

This theme is comprised of comments and suggestions related to making improvements to your organization's vision, mission, and goals. The most common topics explored within this theme relate to assessing organization plans, priorities and strategies, improving collaboration between work units or regions and reviewing funding or budget allocation.

Vision, Mission & Goals - Sample Comments

Below is a list of sample comments that were provided by colleagues within your organization related to this theme.

VISION, MISSION & GOALS

"The organization needs to determine what its role is. There is little leadership on strategic direction."

"The range of branches and programs within FLNRO is huge creating an extremely complex Ministry. I believe that reducing the spectrum of programs (and size of the Ministry) would assist in making the Ministry function more effectively and would focus the vision/mission."

VISION, MISSION & GOALS

"Improve the coordination of business prioritisation and planning between business units to build a proper sense of mutual support and during the process, increase the pace of decision making on pressing issues, particularly in reconciling competing priorities and demands on capacity."

"Increase in budget - this would allow us to have AGMs as well as more training opportunities. Because we can't afford this, it results in inconsistency across the province, a decrease in good teamwork, less communication, etc."

"Changing the name of my organization to remove specific programs out of the title as there are several programs that are not identified. I don't think we should have all the programs listed but a composite of the work we focus on. When I tell people who I work for (the full and proper name), people think it is a joke."

"Clearly articulating the vision and goals and provide the resourcing to meet those goals that is equitable between branches, regions and departments (most importantly between regions) and equitable between economic and sustainability focused departments."

"Budget restraints are inconsistent between work units as well as Divisions/Departments within the organization. One unit needs to negotiate to purchase small items while other Divisions/Departments are given additional year end funding for improvements and training. This can result in a department/unit feeling less valued. I fully support saving money for the Province as long as it is done equitably."

"The province and my organization need to figure out what strategies are going to be employed with regards to First Nation rights and title and implementation of UNDRIP. Most of our program's stress and workload is the result of unclear or unfulfilled expectations of our local FN's..."

"I am significantly concerned over the apparent lack of support for rural communities/field units in favor of centralizing in larger centers. I would like to see a return of support to the rural area's/field units in terms of resourcing specifically staffing."

"Clear and constant updates on priorities. Priorities for the land base, priorities for spending, priorities for engagement, priorities for communication. People are being spread too thin and without clear guidance, they gravitate to their preference which may or may not be aligned with government's current priorities."

Stress & Workload (15%)

This theme is comprised of comments and suggestions related to making improvements to stress levels and workload issues. The most common topics explored within this theme relate to hiring more staff, reviewing workload expectations, and improving productivity and efficiency.

Stress & Workload - Sample Comments

Below is a list of sample comments that were provided by colleagues within your organization related to this theme.

STRESS & WORKLOAD

Low staffing levels continue to be a threat to job satisfaction and contribute to employee stress. Ensure staff resources are included before taking on any new initiative"

"The administrative workload is too large; having employees to help offload some of that work so our level can focus on other aspects would be beneficial for all."

"I would like to see more defined application and referral processes established to support our projects. Also, with most of our team working remotely I think it would be beneficial to explore a digital filing system."

"Better analyze how many employees are needed to do the work in each region. It seems like we do not have enough staff to complete our workload in the timelines that we are given."

"Add capacity in the form of FTE, both included and excluded. Despite workload prioritization, projects and core work aren't getting completed."

"Review current workload and eliminate unnecessary work or procedures. Current workload is not sustainable."

"Align expectations with resources. Expectations to deliver are through the roof (land use planning, First Nations reconciliation, wildfire recovery, increased complexity of managing lands and resources, social license, etc.). We don't have the people we need to deliver. Stress is extremely high throughout the organization. We need to start saying no to some things, or have the resources we need to deliver. I am seeing staff burning out, starting to look for other employment, etc. I think we're near a tipping point and I'm extremely concerned, for myself, but also for my staff."

"The administrative burden associated with contract administration is overwhelming. The current system focuses more on having all the check lists and forms completed than on efficiency or effectiveness. One form in particular, [form number] is a multi-page monster... There is a serious need to re-do the lean process that produced this abomination and come up with a short form for common and simple contracts..."

"The organization, Senior staff, and public work load expectations are continuing to increase. Daily, monthly, annually, new processes and job requirements are added. This work increase does not come with a prioritization of what is lowest and can drop. This ever-increasing expectation (Exponential) creates enormous stress on staff in our work place."

STRESS & WORKLOAD

"Streamline decision making at all levels. Consider an alternative to the working group model to streamline decision making. Ensure feedback mechanisms are in place and functioning to avoid organizational silos when implementing decisions. The organization is dynamic and we need to be able to react to issues efficiently when needed."

Supervisors (15%)

This theme is comprised of comments and suggestions related to making improvements to supervisory-level management. The most common topics explored within this theme relate to strengthening the quality of supervisory leadership, holding employees accountable for performance, and improving communication between employees and supervisors.

Supervisors - Sample Comments

Below is a list of sample comments that were provided by colleagues within your organization related to this theme.

SUPERVISORS

"Ensure Executives and managers have extensive experience in their line of work. Working for people who do not understand the job is very difficult..."

"My organization needs to engage in two way communication and be more engaging with staff. Many decisions are made without operational input and staff feel managers are not making good decisions about organizational direction. There is no trust between operational staff and the managers."

"Personal Accountability - when people are just not doing their core job functions then make them aware and have personalized goals for those individuals."

"Spend more time mentoring new supervisors. Some new supervisors are not aware of the best ways to supervise staff."

"My direct supervisor and Manager need to communicate changes more effectively and often. There is no open door policy. We often have to book appointments to discuss work related topics, these appointments are often changed without notice. There is a definite lack of continuity, messaging, approaches to problem solving and the changes and reasons for the changes are not being messaged to the staff that are impacted. Messaging and clarity are required and the supervisory staff must make themselves available."

SUPERVISORS

"Ensure staff are doing their jobs; holding others accountable. Hire supervisors who actually like supervising people (and care about them!)"

"Stronger channels of communication with the individual who directly supervises my work and more feedback and guidance would make me much happier in my current position and work unit."

Compensation & Benefits (11%)

This theme is comprised of comments and suggestions related to making improvements to employee compensation and benefits. The most common topics explored within this theme relate to increasing salaries, reviewing job classifications and/or reporting levels, and improving benefits.

Compensation & Benefits - Sample Comments

Below is a list of sample comments that were provided by colleagues within your organization related to this theme.

COMPENSATION & BENEFITS

"Underpaid for the work we are responsible to deliver."

"By promoting and following a clear and transparent reclassification process."

"Benefits are limited in terms of what I need. I pay a lot out of pocket for prescriptions. Physio and massage benefits are quite limited. Counselling is extremely limited... In terms of extended health, we would be much better off if one of us worked for the Federal government or a private organization..."

"Increase pay so that it is competitive with industry and the private sector."

"Better equity on job classification. Newly created jobs are classified higher than established jobs while having less accountabilities, requirements (professional and education)."

"Paid sick days at 100%. It is the norm with other employers to have a certain number of fully paid sick days. In an otherwise good organization, I feel undervalued when forced to choose between going to work sick and losing out in pay."

COMPENSATION & BENEFITS

"Salaries/Benefits/ and Compensation should be reviewed to reflect the labour market."

"I would like my organization to focus on increasing salaries for people in remote areas, for specialists, hard to fill positions, and for positions that are located in expensive areas (e.g. Vancouver, Victoria), for financial support. At least to the federal government standards. This will probably never change, but it should be looked at and fixed. We lose some excellent people due to the attraction of higher salaries and benefits to the federal government because of this."

Staffing Practices (11%)

This theme is comprised of comments and suggestions related to making improvements to staffing and hiring practices. The most common topics explored within this theme relate to the need to focus on Human Resource planning and ensuring that hiring and promotion are fair and merit-based.

Staffing Practices - Sample Comments

Below is a list of sample comments that were provided by colleagues within your organization related to this theme.

STAFFING PRACTICES

"There's lack of knowledge transfer process. Experienced staff are retiring without adequate training and knowledge transfer to the incoming new staff. We must have one to two years overlap at the technical skills level to effectively hand over the torch."

"Reduce the major importance of the competency interviews when it comes to selecting candidates for new job positions. I find that throughout the organization individuals are not chosen by merit and or experience but by who they know and how well they can embellish themselves. This is a common complaint throughout the province for those who are not in the practice boasting about themselves what they have done in the past. In practice, we are encouraged to act as a team and to be truthful. We are to use 'We' instead of 'I' but when it comes to the interview process for a new position we must embellish our past experience which to some individuals is hard to do... "

"Human Resources: reducing staff turnover, filling positions quickly, resourcing appropriately to meet demand."

STAFFING PRACTICES

"Hire more appropriate employees for the work. Many people are coming from a different educational background than what is needed for the work."

"Start a mentoring program immediately before the Gen X and Baby boomers are all gone. These groups are leaving the service in hoards and the values, service orientation, common knowledge and bush skills are being lost and degraded by the lack of crossover with the 'grey hairs'. Knowledge of the history goes with the retirees and I fear for the future of the province with the short sightedness that seems to be happening. New employees don't have the skills and experience and aren't getting them fully because there is no one to learn from now in many departments. Learning from books or industry is not adequate."

"A faster posting and hiring process for filling staff positions."

"Succession and retention strategies to retain and utilize key [work unit] auxiliaries. Examine making them full time regular employees, which will assist with succession planning and retention, and the workload."

Career & Personal Development (10%)

This theme is comprised of comments and suggestions related to making improvements to career planning and development. The most common topics explored within this theme relate to improving training and development opportunities, and providing more opportunities for career advancement.

Career & Personal Development - Sample Comments

Below is a list of sample comments that were provided by colleagues within your organization related to this theme.

CAREER & PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

"There is support for training in concept but limited time to actually go to training...Even an active encouragement of a mentoring program to find out what occurs in different ministries, and how training could lead to different career paths, might be another way to support resiliency and engagement. This might exist already but I think it needs to be formalized strongly to be effective."

"It would be nice if there was more opportunities to enter into a career path set of jobs (meaning start at an 18 and clearly see a way to advance through 21s, 24s, 27s, and 30s)"

CAREER & PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Continue to promote leadership training and development for all staff at all levels, not just managers. (E.g. Leader in You, LEAD, AETP, Co-Op program, Temp. Assignments).

"Career paths in specialty areas is limited, we need to pay attention to how we can improve on this."

"Training and/or instruction manuals for new computer equipment is virtually non-existent. IE : Forest Techs use IPADS with mapping capabilities on them, and when given this equipment do not receive any training on how they are to be used...It would be useful when giving people this newer technology, some guidance on how to use the technology."

"It is unethical and exploitative to keep bringing the same long-term auxiliaries on as employees for an indefinite amount of years, sometimes decades, without any clear path or expectation toward regular employment status. I have seen this happen for years and it continues to be a problem in the Ministry of Forests..."

Making the Most of Your Results

This section touches briefly on the use of qualitative research in the context of the Work Environment Survey (WES) and how to make the most use of your results.

Digging into the Comments

While it is important to take note of which themes were referenced more frequently than others, it is equally valuable to dig into the sample verbatim comments to gain a greater understanding of what drives the calls for improvements within your organization. Readers are encouraged to read through the included comments to provide organization- and division-specific context when planning improvements.

Avoid Drawing Comparisons

While it is straightforward and acceptable to compare statistical data from surveys cycle-to-cycle or between groups of employees, qualitative data does not lend itself to such direct comparisons for a few reasons:

1. Different concerns emerge across cycles, which affects whether themes are included, removed, or fundamentally changed. As a result, new themes and sub-themes emerge over time, which can affect percentages for similar themes from previous years. Because of these issues, retrospective comparisons across years (e.g. the proportion of comments in the same theme categories) should be made with caution.
2. While the thematic categories represent what was most commonly discussed by employees, the ways in which the themes are discussed, and the specific concerns raised, can vary over the years and between respondents.
3. Results are based on responses from only those who chose to answer the question, and what each respondent chose to write about at the time.

Interpreting the Results

With these comparison guidelines in mind, here are some suggestions that may serve as a guide to interpreting results and developing a plan for action:

1. Look at the major themes. What did your colleagues have to say the most about? How do the common themes align with your own perceptions of what improvements are most needed in order to enhance employee engagement in your organization?

2. Examine the sub-themes. Which sub-themes were most common within each theme? Are any of the results surprising in terms of how often certain topics were (or were not) mentioned?
3. Spend time reviewing the different ideas provided by your colleagues within a given theme. Think about what you can do as an individual, or as part of a group, to support and contribute to positive changes in your workplace.
4. Gain a fuller understanding of peoples' perceptions of their work environment by considering how the comments relate to the statistical data in your organization's 2018 Work Environment Survey Results report. Use the results in this report to lend a "voice" and provide further context to the numbers.

Appendix A: Comment Analysis & Codebook Development

The open-ended question “*What one thing would you like your organization to focus on to improve your work environment?*” provides an opportunity for respondents to candidly share concerns or observations that would otherwise have gone unexpressed in the agreement scale portion of the survey. These responses add context to the statistical data presented in the other WES reports.

To analyze responses, comment data was categorized based on a theming system comprised of descriptors and key terms, making up 11 major themes and 58 sub-themes. The content analysis has been guided using a codebook originally developed in 2006 for the BC Public Service WES. This codebook is updated every cycle in order to demonstrate the evolving nature of work and the differing work environments which affect results over time.

There are a few factors to note when reviewing the results contained in this report:

- Many employee comments were categorized into multiple themes where several distinct concerns were identified within one single comment.
- Not all sub-themes were identified in comments by employees from every organization.
- This analysis represents only the opinions of employees who took the time to provide a comment. The absence of comments related to a theme does not necessarily indicate that a particular theme is not relevant or applicable.

For more information, please contact the Work Environment Survey Team at:

Work.Environment.Survey@gov.bc.ca.

Appendix B: Sub-Theme Descriptions

THEME	SUB-THEME	DESCRIPTION
Career & Personal Development		
	Improve new employee orientation	Comments in this sub-theme were specific to improving the information and welcome provided to employees either new to government or to an organization including providing consistent high-level information about government values and culture, job-specific training, and reducing delays in setup of basic access required for new employees (e.g., IDIR, computer access, key access, etc.).
	Improve performance management process	Most comments in this sub-theme focused on the need to have on-going performance feedback and two-way conversations with supervisors with key words including My Performance, EPDP, 360 reviews, and performance review/measurement.
	Improve training and development opportunities	Suggestions in this sub-theme included requests for more time and funding for training, broadening the set of offerings and/or job-specific training, and other types of opportunities to assist in career development such as temporary assignments, mentorships and cross-training opportunities.
	Provide opportunities for career advancement	Suggestions in this area outlined the need for additional job openings or career path direction/advice for employees looking to advance their careers within government and also included comments re: auxiliary and on-call employees being able to convert to regular status/FTE, and having more opportunities for auxiliary employees.
Compensation & Benefits		
	Ensure salary parity across government	Comments in this sub-theme were largely related to either the wage compression issue between included and excluded positions, or the belief that roles with similar responsibilities are not being paid at the same rate across different organizations with the BC Public Service.
	Ensure salary parity with other organizations	Employees with comments in this theme outlined the perceived disparity in pay between the BC Public Service and other private sector organizations or areas of government (e.g., Crown corporations, federal government, other provincial governments, etc.).
	Improve benefits	This sub-theme includes suggestions to improve existing benefits as covered by the collective agreement and examples included health, medical, dental, and vacation time as well as access to benefits for auxiliary employees.
	Increase salary	This sub-theme includes general comments regarding the need to pay more, increase salaries, and lift the wage freeze.

THEME	SUB-THEME	DESCRIPTION
	Review job classifications and/or reporting levels	Comments in this sub-theme were focused on ensuring jobs are appropriately classified to ensure pay and career opportunities are commensurate with the work being done by an employee as well as concerns with the time it takes for a reclassification review to be completed.
Engagement & Workplace Culture		
	Act on engagement initiatives	The majority of comments within this sub-theme are related to ensuring WES results are acted upon to initiate positive change in the organization.
	Address discrimination and harassment (including bullying)	This sub-theme is comprised of suggestions to recognize and deal with discrimination and harassment in a timely and decisive manner.
	Improve morale and workplace culture	This sub-theme encompasses comments regarding the need for team building and social/fun events, creating a welcoming and fun culture, and generally improving morale in the workplace.
	Treat employees and colleagues better	Comments in this sub-theme are related to treating others in the workplace with respect, fairness, integrity, honesty, consideration, kindness and professionalism and ensuring there is no favoritism or gossip in the workplace.
	Value diversity	Comments in this sub-theme are related to supporting and valuing differences in the organization, ranging from hiring choices and diversity training, recognizing unique cultural practices, gender equality, and ensuring those who require special accommodations have their needs met.
Executives		
	Improve communication between executives and staff	This sub-theme includes comments about the need for "better communication" as executives set the tone for effective communication in organizations and it encompasses specific suggestions for executives including: provide timely, relevant information about organizational strategies, priorities and vision; engage in more meaningful, frequent dialogue with staff; and, be more visible in day-to-day operations.
	Improve stability and/or change management	Comments in this sub-theme include: reducing the amount of change in organizational structure, leadership, processes and systems, and direction or goals; calls for better management of these types of changes through improved executive consultation, communication, planning; and, providing more time for employees to adjust to change.
	Strengthen quality of executive leadership	Comments in this sub-theme are related to having strong leadership that make timely and transparent decisions, provide clear direction, are accountable for their actions, and support and champion the needs of their staff.
Flexible Work Environment		

THEME	SUB-THEME	DESCRIPTION
	Improve and/or expand Leading Workplace Strategies (LWS)	Comments within this sub-theme were specific to wanting Leading Workplace Strategies (i.e. mobile workforce enhancements) implemented in one's work unit and/or organization and ensuring its implementation is fully supported by management. Also comments that are critical of it and that it needs to be improved/changed in its implementation to work better.
	Increase flexibility in work location	Comments in this sub-theme spoke to the desire to have more opportunities to work remotely, either on a more structured/scheduled basis or as circumstances require it, and there were also comments about no jobs being available outside Vancouver/Victoria.
	Increase flexibility in work schedule	Several suggestions were raised in this area such as implementing a four-day work week, allowing excluded employees to have flex time, and simply allowing more flexibility within the work day (e.g., flexible start/finish times, having more flexibility to manage breaks/lunch times or schedule appointments during the day, etc.).
Staffing Practices		
	Ensure hiring and promotions are fair and merit based	Comments in this sub-theme deal with the perceptions that either the process itself (i.e., competency-based interviewing) and/or those making hiring decisions are leading to biased selections that may not result in the best candidates being placed into jobs.
	Focus on Human Resources planning (recruitment, retention, succession)	This sub-theme deals with employees' concerns about the lack of succession planning and knowledge transfer currently taking place, particularly given the impending number of retirements. It also contains comments related to recruitment and employee retention.
	Make hiring process more efficient	Includes reduce complexity and time needed to fill positions. Includes hiring short term auxiliaries to fill an immediate need. Does NOT include calls to extend vacation, sick time or benefits to auxiliaries.
Recognition & Empowerment		
	Enable staff to make decisions	Related to concepts of delegation, empowerment and autonomy. This includes reducing executive micro-management and entrusting employees to make hiring, procurement, budget, and other decisions at a more "local" level.
	Listen to staff input	Comments in this sub-theme include providing more opportunities for consultation with employees, truly listening and acting upon employee input, and having a more collaborative approach (vs. top-down, hierarchical decision-making).
	Make better use of employees' skills and abilities	Comments in this sub-theme include: ensuring employees are placed in roles that best use their skills, experience and interests; and, complaints about doing administrative tasks when time should be spent on other tasks.

THEME	SUB-THEME	DESCRIPTION
	Provide more and/or better quality recognition	This sub-theme encompasses suggestions to provide both formal and informal recognition that shows employees they are personally valued and that their work is appreciated.
Supervisors		
	Cultivate effective teamwork and communication within teams	This sub-theme includes general comment encouraging more/better discussion and team work within a work group, as well as having more opportunities for employees within a team to connect face-to-face vs. virtually.
	Hold employees accountable for performance	Employees with suggestions in this area want their supervisors to ensure that those who are not performing to standard (or behaving in a professional manner) are held accountable and dealt with appropriately, as lack of action has a resulting impact on both the morale of others in the work unit as well as the potential workload resulting from others' poor work ethic.
	Strengthen quality of supervisory leadership	Comments in this sub-theme suggested that supervisory-level management be improved in the following ways: having more opportunities for leadership training; ensuring that those selected for supervisory roles have the required skill set to do so; showing stronger leadership in delegating responsibility; reducing micro-managing; being available and approachable; being accountable for their own work and behaviour; and, having strong interpersonal skills (e.g., being fair, respectful).
	Improve communication between employees and supervisors	Suggestions in this sub-theme include general comments about having better communication between managers/supervisors and their staff as well as supervisors providing more feedback to their staff regarding their work and overall performance.
Stress & Workload		
	Hire more staff	Comments in this sub-theme are related to the perceived need to hire more staff to meet workload demands and reduce the stress levels of existing employees.
	Improve productivity and efficiency	Comments in this sub-theme covers a wide variety of suggestions including streamlining processes, removing bureaucracy around decision-making/approvals, reducing paperwork, and standardizing and documenting work procedures, and more/better utilization of Lean principles to create efficiencies (though some employees suggest Lean is not appropriate in all circumstances).

THEME	SUB-THEME	DESCRIPTION
	Review workload expectations	This sub-theme encompasses suggestions to reduce workloads/cap caseloads to a more reasonable level, ensure fair distribution of workload, set priorities, establish realistic expectations, have proper coverage for sick days/vacation, and comments about the detrimental impact that existing workloads have on employees' stress, morale, and service delivery including how being on call 24/7 diminishes their work/life balance.
	Support a healthy workplace	Comments in this sub-theme are related to supporting a healthy work-life balance, providing more wellness programs, and simply having more understanding for physical and/or mental health issues.
Tools, Equipment & Physical Environment		
	Ensure safety and security of employees	This sub-theme is focused on providing more consideration for the safety of employees in terms of the tools/equipment provided, the processes and procedures in place, and the physical work environment.
	Improve facilities (e.g. office space, noise levels, air quality, etc.)	This sub-theme covers a wide range of comments related to the facilities including cleanliness/condition of buildings, lighting, heating/cooling, noise levels, and also about open concept/cubicle environments and the lack of privacy and concentration they afford employees.
	Provide better supplies and equipment (e.g., office supplies, field instruments, printers, etc.)	This sub-theme covers a wide range of general comments about "better equipment", having faster office equipment (e.g., printers, fax machines, etc.), and having more office supplies and equipment on hand (e.g., pens, paper, projectors, land lines, etc.).
	Provide better office furniture (e.g. desks, chairs, etc.)	Though a number of different suggestions were made in this category, a large proportion were related to having more furniture and workstations, including ergonomics and stand up desks, and include suggestions to make the process to request these less cumbersome.
	Provide better computer-based hardware (e.g., desktops, laptops, etc.)	Comments in this sub-theme dealt with having access to a wider variety of hardware tools (e.g., laptops, tablets, etc.) as well as having more updated/better functioning hardware.
	Upgrade/improve software	A variety of suggestions were made regarding improving access to and stability of different software programs and applications, as well as network/connectivity reliability, slow internet, access to different drives, and telephone systems.
Vision, Mission & Goals		
	Assess plans, priorities and strategies for the organization	Comments in this sub-theme call for setting clear direction, improving long-term planning and establishing organizational priorities.
	Improve collaboration between work units or regions	This sub-theme is related to breaking down silos between work units, branches or regions through better communication, collaboration, and consistency in approach.

THEME	SUB-THEME	DESCRIPTION
	Improve program and/or policy implementation	Comments in this sub-theme are specific to issues such as organizational structure and identity, clarity of roles and responsibilities of program areas, and improving policies that guide work.
	Pay attention to the public interest and service delivery	This sub-theme includes employee suggestions to set priorities and provide the required resources (e.g., funding, staffing) to ensure the needs of citizens, children, families, cultural groups and the environment are at the forefront.
	Review funding or budget allocation to program	Comments in this sub-theme call for more funding and/or better control of resource decisions for the organization or program area.
	Reduce political influence	Comments in this sub-theme are related to not allowing politics/political influence to derail organizational plans and include comments asking for evidence-based decision making instead of political whim.

Appendix C: Background

High Level

Study	Work Environment Survey (WES) 2018
Project Sponsor	BC Public Service Agency

Operations

Data Collection Method	Online survey
Fielding Window / Dates	January 30 - February 23, 2018
Project History	Annual survey 2006-2011, Biennial survey 2013, 2015, 2018

Population / Sample

Scope	Individuals who were deemed as active BC Public Service employees in the Corporate Human Resource Information and Payroll System as of January 16, 2018 (and remained active through to survey launch date of January 30, 2018) and had valid contact information.
Sampling Strategy	Census
Population Surveyed (FLNRORD)	3,193 out of 3,750 employees participated (85%)
Comment Response Rate (FLNRORD)	64% of respondents provided comments

Key Measure(s)

Type of Measure	Open-ended survey question
Methods of Analysis	Content analysis

Confidentiality

During survey administration, employees received personalized invitations and reminders. All survey responses were encrypted during submission and stored on a secure server accessed only by select employees at BC Stats. BC Stats employees are sworn under the [Statistics Act](#), and all information collected in the survey is protected by the *Statistics Act*. Only aggregate results are provided in the reports. Individual responses or information that could identify an individual cannot be disclosed.

BC Stats is the provincial government's leader in statistical and economic research, information and analysis essential for evidence-based decision-making. BC Stats, the central statistics agency of government, is excited to be taking a lead role in the strategic understanding of data sources and analysis across government. The goal is to increase overall business intelligence—information decision makers can use. For more information, please contact Elizabeth Vickery.



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