2018
IMPROVING YOUR WORK ENVIRONMENT
COMMENT REPORT - WES 2018
BC PUBLIC SERVICE

BRITISH COLUMBIA
BC Public Service

Where ideas work

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?*

Across the BC Public Service, 14,796 employees (64% of the total number of survey respondents) answered this question. All comments were reviewed and categorized into main themes and sub-themes. The five most commonly discussed areas for improvement are highlighted in Figure 1 below.

FIGURE 1: MOST COMMON THEMES (% OF RESPONDENTS)

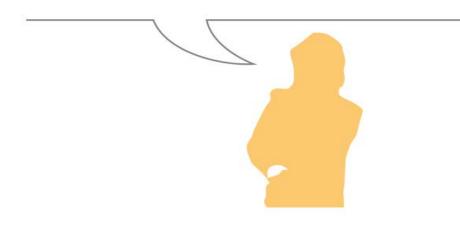|	
Tools, Equipment & Physical Environment	23%
Compensation & Benefits	19%
Stress & Workload	17%
Supervisors	14%
Vision, Mission & Goals	13%

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, 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 are presented in this report in varying levels of detail:

- **In Brief – Themes by the Numbers:** A summary table showing respondent counts and percentages for all major themes and sub-themes.

- **Digging Deeper –Theme Rankings by Ministry and Demographics**: A more focused view of the themes most commonly referenced by commenters across the public service, by ministry and demographic category.

- **In Their Own Words – Theme Examples**: A theme-by-theme sample of actual comments, in the words of employees.

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 made comments related to that theme.

TABLE 1: SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING THE WORK ENVIRONMENT[1,2]

THEMES AND SUB-THEMES	RESPONDENT COUNT	RESPONDENT %
Tools, Equipment & Physical Environment	**3367**	**23%**
Improve facilities (e.g. office space, noise levels, air quality, etc.)	1359	9%
Provide better office furniture (e.g. desks, chairs, etc.)	678	5%
Upgrade/improve software	649	4%
Provide better computer-based hardware (e.g., desktops, laptops, etc.)	616	4%
Ensure safety and security of employees	414	3%
Provide better supplies and equipment (e.g., office supplies, field instruments, printers, etc.)	393	3%
Compensation & Benefits	**2773**	**19%**
Increase salary	1562	11%
Ensure salary parity with other organizations	592	4%
Improve benefits	546	4%
Review job classifications and/or reporting levels	321	2%
Ensure salary parity across government	147	1%
Stress & Workload	**2446**	**17%**
Hire more staff	995	7%
Review workload expectations	940	6%
Improve productivity and efficiency	514	3%

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[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.

THEMES AND SUB-THEMES	RESPONDENT COUNT	RESPONDENT %
Support a healthy workplace	283	2%
Supervisors	**2066**	**14%**
Strengthen quality of supervisory leadership	1074	7%
Improve communication between employees and supervisors	491	3%
Hold employees accountable for performance	412	3%
Cultivate effective teamwork and communication within teams	298	2%
Vision, Mission & Goals	**1979**	**13%**
Assess plans, priorities and strategies for the organization	611	4%
Improve collaboration between work units or regions	483	3%
Review funding or budget allocation to program	343	2%
Pay attention to the public interest and service delivery	324	2%
Improve program and/or policy implementation	280	2%
Reduce political influence	60	0%
Career & Personal Development	**1894**	**13%**
Improve training and development opportunities	1208	8%
Provide opportunities for career advancement	513	3%
Improve new employee orientation	215	1%
Improve performance management process	103	1%
Executives	**1567**	**11%**
Improve communication between executives and staff	810	5%
Strengthen quality of executive leadership	610	4%
Improve stability and/or change management	273	2%
Staffing Practices	**1531**	**10%**
Ensure hiring and promotions are fair and merit based	802	5%
Focus on Human Resources planning (recruitment, retention, succession)	611	4%
Make hiring process more efficient	129	1%
Recognition & Empowerment	**1321**	**9%**
Provide more and/or better quality recognition	483	3%

THEMES AND SUB-THEMES	RESPONDENT COUNT	RESPONDENT %
Listen to staff input	443	3%
Enable staff to make decisions	296	2%
Make better use of employees' skills and abilities	150	1%
Engagement & Workplace Culture	**1274**	**9%**
Treat employees and colleagues better	466	3%
Improve morale and workplace culture	364	2%
Address discrimination and harassment (including bullying)	308	2%
Act on engagement initiatives	134	1%
Value diversity	126	1%
Flexible Work Environment	**927**	**6%**
Increase flexibility in work location	493	3%
Increase flexibility in work schedule	288	2%
Improve and/or expand Leading Workplace Strategies (LWS)	200	1%
Positive Comments	**349**	**2%**
Other related comments	**22**	**0%**
Total Respondents	**14796**	**100%**

Digging Deeper – Theme Rankings by Ministry and Demographics

Table 2 below identifies which themes occurred most often within the BC Public Service overall, as well as by ministry, service years, age, and employment status. Within each ministry or demographic category, themes are ranked based on comment volume, with higher rankings coloured more darkly. All themes are ranked for the public service overall, while the five most common themes, the "hot spots", are displayed for each ministry or demographic category.

In some cases, a ministry 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, ministry 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 MINISTRY 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
BC Public Service	6	2	10	7	11	8	9	4	3	1	5
By Ministry											
Advanced Education, Skills and Training			4	1			4	2		3	

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
Agriculture	4			1					5	2	3
Attorney General	4	2				5			3	1	
BC Public Service Agency	2			3				5		1	4
Children and Family Development	5	1						4	2	3	
Citizens' Services	4			5					2	1	3
Education				2				5	3	1	4
Emergency Management BC	3			4					2	5	1
Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources	5			4					3	1	2
Environment and Climate Change Strategy	5	4							1	3	1
Environmental Assessment Office	4	4						3	2	1	
Finance & Treasury Board Staff	5	2						3	4	1	
Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development		5						4	3	1	2
Government Communications and Public Engagement	1			3					3	3	2

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
Health				1	4			5	2	3	
Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation	4			3		5			2	5	1
Jobs, Trade and Technology	3			4				5		2	1
Labour	4	1							3	2	5
Mental Health and Addictions				3		4				1	2
Municipal Affairs and Housing	5			3					2	1	4
Office of the Premier	5		3	1	3			5	2	5	
Public Guardian and Trustee	4	3		5					2	1	
Public Safety and Solicitor General		1				5		3	4	2	
Social Development and Poverty Reduction	5	2							3	1	4
Tourism, Arts and Culture			3	1			3	5	2		5
Transportation and Infrastructure		2				5			4	1	3
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	3	2						5	4	1	
3 to 9.99 years		2						4	3	1	5
10 to 19.99 years		2						4	3	1	5
20 years or more		2						5	2	1	4
By Age Group											
Under 35	4	2						5	3	1	
35 - 44		2						4	3	1	5
45 - 54		2						4	3	1	5
55+		4						5	2	1	3
By Employment Status											
Included	5	2						4	3	1	
Excluded		5		4					3	1	2

In Their Own Words – Theme Examples

This section of the report further describes the six most common themes touched upon 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.

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 (23%)

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 fellow colleagues related to this theme.

TOOLS, EQUIPMENT & PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT
"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."
"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."
"I know no one likes spending money on infrastructure, but honestly the computer network issues, insanely slow printer and the embarrassing state of my office environment are my biggest daily aggravations and drains on time I could spend doing my job much more effectively."
"Some work units have the latest laptop/tablets/ while others are still using old/outdated technology. Please provide fair and equal access to tools. If one unit gets an upgrade, please provide to all units."
"The office space is very bland and colourless. I feel that should statement walls around the office be painted in public service colours (blue & yellow) and even in chalk paint (to share ideas and write reminders) the office would feel more progressive and current with work place trends… The public service offers fulfilling work, with competitive pay and benefits, but could stand to compete with the private sector in terms of office atmosphere."
"Loosen the purse strings or advocate for an adequate budget to provide us the space, furniture and tools we need to do our jobs efficiently and without long-term injury. Doing so will have the added bonus of boosting morale since it will recognize that we all deserve well-lit, quiet office space; modern, fully functioning, mould-free furniture; and up-to-date technology that we can work with rather than work around."

TOOLS, EQUIPMENT & PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

"The heating in our building is often on high which leads to a stuffy, uncomfortable work environment and contributes to higher than normal levels of stress. The heat is not controlled in [this location] and not able to be adjusted. This leads to a waste of energy, taxpayer funds and windows have to be opened to provide relief. While this may seem like a small thing to most, as an employee I can say that our team feels the negative effects daily."

"In order to do our work well, it is important to have necessary, up-to-date tools. We are constantly fighting for proper chairs, pens, books, monitors, locations, etc. A welcoming environment can make the difference of one staying and leaving the organization. Workers have so much to offer with their experience, dedication, and passion for BC Public Service- they deserve to be recognized with proper tools to do their job well, rather than feel like a burden or underpaid each time they look at their workstation(s)."

"Give us up-to-date equipment and software (not 2010 versions in 2018)."

"Appropriate amount of workspace for staff. Cubicles are getting tinier and closer together! We are packed in like sardines, more workspace makes it easier to work as a team, collaborate, discuss. Being so closely packed it's disruptive to those in cubicles around us to have discussions or collaborate on problems - we have to book a room, which means setting aside specific time and usually a delay."

"Changing our physical work environment from closed cubicles to open spaces - keeping the team together. This creates an environment so employees can speak freely with one another. Changing desks from one level to better ergonomic height adjustable desks, so to allow employees to move their body around freely and reduce body stress and exhaustion.   Change lighting to softer light. Change enclosed environment to include windows that can be open for fresh air; minimize recirculated air. Allow staff to have the ability to work outside on nice days. Include a relaxed common break room."

"The building is very dirty and is not properly cleaned. Bathrooms and common spaces in particular are not well maintained. Also, you took away garbage cans in offices, which has led to people leaving garbage on their desks. This does not contribute to a clean or productive environment and in cold and flu season is actually a health concern."

Compensation & Benefits (19%)

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, ensuring that there is salary parity with other organizations, and improving benefits.

Compensation & Benefits - Sample Comments

Below are some comments that were provided by fellow colleagues related to this theme.

COMPENSATION & BENEFITS

"One thing: Improved Pay and Benefits ... I do feel valued as a public servant in the job that I do and I feel proud to work for the BC Government and the contribution I make to this province. However, the level of pay and benefits for the work I do and the cost of living where I live falls short. I feel government wages in the province/region I live in are chronically low compared to other provincial governments - especially when you compare it to the cost of living where I reside. Benefits could also be improved - especially dental and vision, and also allowing for at least 5 full sick days a year (without having to top up)."

"The financial struggles that admin workers suffer due to the progressively lower and lower wages versus cost of living in BC is having a negative and unhealthy effect in the workplace. The employees are always in a state of worry and apprehensive as to how to pay just the basics (i.e., rent, food, transit, childcare etc.). We cannot continue to work in public service at these wages when the private sector is offering at least twice the amount (combined wages and benefits) for the same skills. For this reason I could not (and do not) recommend the BC Government as an employer at this time."

"There is one major problem within my work unit. We are paid very poorly. We are losing valuable, experienced, hard-working people to other high paying agencies. We are in dire need of a raise. This will alleviate most of our issues and attract more people to apply for our service."

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

"Wages and benefits need to be more in line with other provinces and job types in the private sector. I would give public service a very high ranking if public servants were financially compensated fairly."

"We have been asking for 10 years and 4 WES surveys to tell the employer we are so underpaid and under-valued and can't continue to support our families with the low pay and minimal benefits."

"Ensure the pay and benefits provided to new employees and current staff is comparable to the pay and benefits in the private sector."

"Pay and compensation is the elephant in the room. Compared with other large provinces, federal and municipal governments the pay and compensation is severely lacking. How does the BCPS expect to attract and retain talent?"

"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..."

COMPENSATION & BENEFITS

"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."

"I would like to see a review of pay and benefits for excluded managers that would lead to salaries reflective of the work that we do. We are sorely underpaid."

Stress & Workload (17%)

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 are some comments that were provided by fellow colleagues related to this theme.

STRESS & WORKLOAD

"We need more staff in many departments… It's unfair to have the heavy workloads with time constraints in several departments resulting in hours of overtime and ending up with overwhelmed, exhausted staff. We need the help and we need to hire more people so that the work can be divided fairly. If this could happen I believe it would have such a positive impact on team environments and morale."

"Be strategic about work load. We have far too much work, too many negotiations with unrealistic expectations, and we are setting ourselves up to fail. Our experienced staff are rapidly aging out, and people are burning out. We need to be smarter about how we focus our efforts - currently, we are spread thin, not training up new staff the way we need to, and very, very fragile as an organization."

"Overly complex procedures for what should be simple tasks/requests consume a disproportionate amount of time. One of very few drawbacks of working for BC Public Service but has a major impact on job satisfaction."

"Provide adequate coverage, which probably means hiring more people, so that employees know their work can be covered if they are sick or away on vacation. It's hard to leave work behind and take a break when you feel the people/business/projects fall behind or don't have help while you are away. Also, returning to a huge volume of work feels like being punished for having time off."

STRESS & WORKLOAD

"We must be able to get approval to hire an appropriate number of extra staff before taking on a considerable number of new projects in addition to keeping up with daily client orders. At present staff are in more of a reactive mode than proactive mode which leads to stress and mistakes being made."

"More people. The members of my team are stressed by new and expanding demands on their time, yet no one is available to backfill if they are sick, on vacation or asked to perform new duties. I have concerns about their health and the possibility that the team will 'break' if the trend to 'do more work with less people' continues."

"Deconstructing some of the processes that have been put in place (i.e., Decision Notes for everything!) The process heavy environment makes it hard to do the actual work."

"Provide us with enough staff to do the work we need to do. We are all burning out quickly being so understaffed. We are currently dealing with huge backlogs and immense external pressure from clients. We cannot provide the level of service we should be able to provide. We're drowning and it's awful. We keep getting told that there is no way we are going to get more staff which leaves us feeling hopeless and unsupported."

"Please work to reduce the amount of 'red tape' involved with most decisions regarding policy or practice. This is especially the case with any decision that has financial implications - far too many levels of approval required before a decision ever comes before the DM or Minister."

"The 'tyranny of the urgent' often ends up consuming the vast majority of available time - leaving little time or energy left to focus on important work that requires longer periods of focused thinking and work. It would be great to find a way to achieve a greater balance - corporately. This will require a significant re-thinking of the political-bureaucratic interface."

"The ministry needs to hire more employees, so offices won't be understaffed. Currently, lack of staff causes high workload (sometimes overwhelming), frequent change of work assignment, more stress at work and difficulties to balance work-life (as it directly affects vacation planning)."

Supervisors (14%)

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, improving communications between employees and supervisors, and holding employees accountable for performance.

Supervisors - Sample Comments

Below are some comments that were provided by fellow colleagues related to this theme.

SUPERVISORS
"I find that while our managerial staff are excellent and very responsive to concerns, our supervisors are not always the same. There has been a high turnover in supervisors in our branch and they lack consistency, confidence and empathy with the staff on personal levels. The attitude is very 'us vs. them' and doesn't always lead to a positive, happy environment."
"Have clear ways of dealing with interpersonal team conflicts, and supervisors/managers willing to rapidly step in when they notice inappropriate behaviour."
"Inclusion. My direct supervisor has neglected to include, inform or share any relevant work related information with me. This impacts my job as I am not informed of routine business and I spend time chasing up information that should be afforded to me. I feel marginalized and excluded and my confidence is being eroded."
"My team needs a thorough review of supervisory skills within our team. Some supervisors take minimal responsibility and accountability and have little to no output. There needs to be a process in place to review and continuously improve supervision within our team."
"Supervisors should better monitor staff for equal contribution. I see some team members doing the minimum amount of easier assignments, take long breaks and get to book time off during the busiest times of the year, so others have to constantly work twice as hard to meet deadlines."
"People who supervise other employees should have a good understanding of how to do the work that their employees do in order to direct their work and make decisions about the work, or how to do the work, or which tools to use. Change hiring practices to ensure supervisors know the work done by the people they supervise. Good public speaking skills do not make up for lack of knowledge."
"I would like to see employees held accountable for the work they are not doing. It seems like there is never any disciplinary action taken and employees who severely underperform are permitted to keep their positions. It makes it difficult to strive to excel in my role when others that skate by receive the same recognition and opportunities."
"Communication and sharing of information from management/supervisors is poor. There's a definite hierarchy and folks that get supervisory positions often don't have the training or the personality to be good leaders."
"I don't feel supported by my team leader or manager. When I go above and beyond there is no recognition. Things are unstable at work and I am not supported by the management in the changes."

SUPERVISORS

"Too often teams are isolated, and do not know what other teams do or what programs or contracts they have access to. More information between teams needs to be shared. Of course more access to resources or abilities to build natural community connections would be nice in order to support our day to day work as well."

"I believe there is little accountability for supervisors. The system does not make it easy to complain about supervisor behaviour to their supervisor as you have to go through the person being complained about. This is a serious flaw. There is also no standardized way for front line workers to confidentiality evaluate the performance of their direct supervisors."

Vision, Mission & Goals (13%)

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, and improving collaboration between work units or regions.

Vision, Mission & Goals - Sample Comments

Below are some comments that were provided by fellow colleagues related to this theme.

VISION, MISSION & GOALS

"Clear direction regarding priorities related to the new government. We have been given some broad principles, but no direction or details.   In many cases, we are still following the priorities of the last government."

"Focus on identifying goals and objectives and sharing them with employees in the organization. Then prioritize the work to support those goals and objectives, allocating resources accordingly."

"Provide a working budget early in the operating season, so that projects can be planned and executed effectively rather than providing the bulk of the budget towards the end of the year when most field projects can't get done."

"Communicate more clearly with staff about the strategic direction of our department. What are we trying to achieve? How do we want people to think about our department? What's our identity, what are our values, and why is my role important for BC and British Columbians?"

VISION, MISSION & GOALS

"With such a big change-over of priorities and values in government in the past year, it has been somewhat confusing to be a new employee for my organization. Some of the changes in organizational structure don't seem to make sense for our line of work. I would like my organization to focus on being a little clearer about the strategy that informs these changes. The strategy seems a bit opaque - maybe almost as if we don't really know what we're doing."

"Integration and cross-pollination between related initiatives. Work is too often completed in silos when different branches would work more effectively if we were kept aware of other initiatives that may impact our work and stakeholders."

"Improved communication about the work being undertaken across branches within the division. As a relatively new employee to this division, it has been difficult to navigate the landscape in terms of who does what and where the overlaps/opportunities for collaboration are/may be."

"Develop clear business plans specific to business units and ensure employees understand what their role and accountabilities are toward the success of the organization."

"… Communication between teams and business units needs to be improved. Things are often very segregated with little to no information about other teams, what they do, and who to contact with questions. There is a tendency to create too many silos that prevent open communication and collaboration between units."

"A clear idea of what it is that we are trying to accomplish. A clear concise mission statement of what it is we are trying to do, how we are going to do it and the qualitative measurement to say that we are hitting those milestones. There is too much 'ethereal ideas' passed around as hard solid things we are doing, how we are going to do it. I have no idea how the work I do day to day fits into the 'mission statement' of my ministry. As the mission statement is so vague that no one can really tell us what it actually means."

Career & Personal Development (13%)

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 are some comments that were provided by fellow colleagues related to this theme.

CAREER & PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

"As a new employee, I feel there would be great benefit in training and orientation. My experience thus far has been a lot of figuring things out on my own (computer systems, protocol, office procedure, HR and benefits, etc.). While my team and supervisor have been supportive and willing to assist in any way possible, I am conscious of just how busy my work environment can be, and don't always want to bother people with questions. Orientation and training specific to job duties/role would help to make new employees much more efficient, confident, and competent in their position, and therefore stronger members of the team. This would help a new employee feel more capable in their role, and would also help them transition and settle in."

"It is very difficult to attend supervisor training. There is a very long wait list and it is only offered perhaps once or twice a year. It is outrageous, in my opinion that supervisors have to wait years to attend two day training."

"More focus on learning and development and assisting staff to achieving their long term career goals. Part of that is about more relevant courses and part of that is about giving people time to take those courses. Government should also focus on supporting personal long term career growth."

"Invest the time in staff to understand their career aspirations and what motivates them. Thoughtfully consider how to create the development opportunities to enable your staff to incrementally achieve their goals. On their career path they need space to stretch themselves and grow, to make mistakes and learn valuable lessons, and through it all, as leaders it is your responsibility to be their safety net and mentor. People are your most valuable asset. Invest the time upfront to coach, support and develop staff, and the rewards will be ten-fold."

"More opportunities for people to advance in their careers that doesn't necessarily involve management. The salary structure means that you have to move to management or higher to earn more money and grow in your career but not everyone is good at management. It would be so great if there were other opportunities to grow in your public service career (both professionally and financially in terms of compensation) below the management level. I find the current set up forces people into management and neglects to compensate people who do stellar work at more junior level."

"More investment in staff training. Employees are the most valuable asset within any company. Taking the time and effort to maintain an employee's skills is smart and effective investment. I hope to see training opportunities a priority in the near future. Providing the employee with the ability to attend conferences related to their job is essential. Cuts to employment training opportunities have effectively increased risk for employee's to be effective and stimulate growth in their chosen field."

"A better understanding of how to achieve promotions within my organization, for example, courses or training that would give you a better opportunity for promotion or new job within the organization."

"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 [my organization]."

CAREER & PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

"There is support for training in concept but limited time to actually do 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."

"Implement a training package or course and continued review process for staff who are new to the organization. With the departure of so many long-term staff during the transition to the new government (and increased workload from this transition), there have been few resources to train completely new staff. This has significantly burdened existing employees and left new employees scrambling."

"Succession planning and management. While some good work has been started, I have not seen evidence that anyone is seriously going to fill vacancies using this work, especially at the Executive level. Nor have I seen evidence that supplemental training or supports will be provided to those who wish to move up in their career. We are having good conversations...now we need to put our money where our mouth is as well as show how this work is actually being used."

"Positions within a Ministry should be offered to current employees within that Ministry based on past job performance within the Ministry. Employees who know the job, are competent and are already trained should be offered promotions without having to go through lengthy and time consuming hiring panels and 'role plays' to demonstrate that they are capable of performing a job they already do… Rewarding those who perform well with higher responsibilities encourages people to perform their best."

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. Readers are encouraged to read through the included comments to provide additional 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 the BC Public Service?

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 the 2018 BC Public Service 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 22,950 out of 27,220 employees participated (84%).

Comment Response Rate 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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