
Facilitating Innovation in the Employment Program of British Columbia through Stakeholder Collaboration

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March 15, 2014

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598 Masters Project Report: Facilitating Innovation in the Employment Program of British Columbia through Stakeholder Collaboration

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PROJECT OBJECTIVE

The objective of this project is to contribute to understanding how to support and encourage continuous sustainable innovation of the Employment Program of British Columbia (EPBC).

PURPOSE OF PROJECT

The purpose of this study is threefold:

1. To better understand how the EPBC differs from previous program designs and how those differences may impact the ministry's approach to managing the program.
2. To examine the steps, concepts and conditions necessary to support continuous innovation of the program and to identify tools that support the innovation process.
3. To review current governance structures and practices within the Employment Labour Market Services division against the findings in the literature to identify gaps between promising practices and how the program is currently operating.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This project used a three stage literature review. The first examined how to characterize and articulate the change that occurred in BC employment programming when the EPBC was launched. Research questions that guided the review at this stage were:

- What is meant by sustainable innovation and how can innovation be sustained over time?
- How is this program different from a traditional employment program? What are the implications of those differences?

The second stage review looked at the definition of collaboration and how collaboration could be used at each of four steps of an innovation cycle. Questions that guided this section of the research review were:

- What is meant by collaboration?
- What conditions are required to be in place in order to support collaboration at each step of the innovation cycle?

Finally, tools were examined which have been used to involve stakeholders in continuous improvement of projects or programs. Questions that guided this section of the research were:

- What existing tools or practices support collaboration and which of these can be adapted for use by the Ministry?

[i]

- What elements of these tools support effective collaboration in a social innovation context?

In reviewing the literature, particular interest was paid to projects which were completed using multidisciplinary networks; public sector collaborations between contractors and/or employees from multiple disciplines; and, to evaluating effective practices and challenges faced in completing projects that spanned several months or years.

THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: STRUCTURING THE DISCUSSION

The discussion is structured in three sections: The first reviewed the paradigm shift that occurred when the EPBC was launched and includes a review of the four phases of the innovation cycle against current ministry processes.

The discussion then focusses on what collaboration means, the importance of collaboration to program success, identifies areas to consider when entering into collaborative processes.

The section concludes with a comparison of the ministry's collaboration practices against promising practices in the literature.

FILLING THE GAPS: STRENGTHENING SOCIAL INNOVATION THROUGH COLLABORATION

Results of stage one of the literature review introduced three ideas that informed the direction of further research.

- 1) When the EPBC was launched it introduced a paradigm shift to the way employment services were delivered in the province. That shift introduced a horizontal program designed to eliminate the silos that were present in the ten predecessor (legacy) programs. This type of horizontal programming is also known as a social innovation project. Maintenance of this program requires a complex governance system and strong collaborative relationships to effectively deliver consistent quality employment services.
- 2) This was a significant shift from traditional programming as past programs were delivered and managed in a hierarchical (or vertical) 'command and control' manner. Managing the new program using practices designed to manage its predecessors, are likely to impede program success.
- 3) To achieve service consistency, the program relies upon the strength of relationships with the ministry's contractors to deliver those services. Contractors must continue to engage with the ministry, and with each other, to build the capacity to effectively deliver services and to continually improve quality. Ideally, contractors will become a networked learning organization with a common goal of continuous improvement.

Stage two of the research examined the meaning of collaboration and what conditions are required to support effective collaboration at each of four stages of an innovation cycle.

The ministry has not provided a formal definition of collaboration to contractors. Without a consistent, shared understanding there is a risk of misunderstanding, and erosion of trust between the ministry and contractors. To better understand collaboration, research was conducted into stakeholder engagement and collaboration theory.

Collaboration is identified by the International Association for Public Participation as one area on a spectrum of possibilities for public participation (see table 1). This definition of collaboration was chosen because the Public Participation Spectrum is frequently cited in the literature. For the purposes of this project the spectrum was interpreted to apply to contractors which, other than the clients using the program, are the largest external group involved in program delivery. Staff involvement can also be considered under this definition.

The spectrum identifies collaboration as a partnership with stakeholders (in this case the contractors and staff) in each aspect of decision-making, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution. When using a collaboration approach, governments are promising to look to stakeholders for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and to incorporate their feedback into the decisions being made to the maximum extent possible.

A second aspect to this phase of the research was to consider the purpose of collaboration at each step of the innovation cycle and to understand ways to support that collaboration during the innovation cycle.

The following table describes the findings.

Table 1: Practices and areas to consider by stage in the innovation cycle

Stage of the Innovation Cycle	Promising practices and areas to consider
Idea Generation	<p>To optimize idea generation through definition of shared goals at the outset. Use staff and other stakeholders to determine the shared goals to be achieved when determining innovative ideas would help all involved to understand which ideas would later be supported</p> <p>Tap into the diverse knowledge of the field through two -way communication and the use of collaboration tools (e.g. icollaborate sites with a chat function)</p>
Idea Selection	<p>Involve the system in selecting ideas rather than putting the onus on a small group to determine.</p> <p>Open up the process of idea selection to the wisdom of the crowd by asking for feedback from the system in order to choose the best ideas</p>

<p>Idea Implementation</p>	<p>Focus on outcomes rather than on a detail oriented plan. This provides the “flexibility to adapt to changed circumstances” and “detect and correct errors as they occur”</p> <p>Key factors to successfully implementing innovations include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving employees and outside partners a stake in the results • Creating customer feedback loops • Ensuring effective communication between leadership and the line organization • Incorporating implementation of good ideas into strategic thinking at the managerial level • Clearly defining a mission against which progress can be assessed
<p>Idea Diffusion</p>	<p>Gain support from all stakeholders (especially top leadership and citizens); break down organizational silos ; and, utilize effective change management processes to overcome organizational reluctance to change</p>

Stage 3 of the research findings involved a review of common tools used to engage in collaborative exercises. These tools were reviewed with an eye to determining which of their elements and processes best support the development of a sustainable learning and innovation network.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the ministry consider the following options:

1. Ensure it is commonly understood by staff and contractors that the EPBC is a social innovation program and that it is understood how social innovation differs from programs from previous paradigms.
2. Ensure a common vision and goals for the organization are articulated, shared and owned by contractors and staff who have a role in delivering the program.
3. Clearly define the term collaboration to ensure a common understanding with staff and contractors.
4. Establish specific goals and a strategy for achieving the goals for each fiscal year, to guide program improvement.
5. Practice intentional collaboration at each stage of the innovation cycle
6. Move toward a learning organization with leadership at all levels.
7. Increase internal leadership capacity to operate in a distributed leadership model

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1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 INTRODUCTION TO PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND PROBLEM

1.1.1 PROJECT OBJECTIVE

The objective of this project is to contribute to understanding how to support and encourage continuous sustainable innovation of the Employment Program of British Columbia (EPBC or “the Program”) over the life of the Program.

1.1.2 PURPOSE OF PROJECT

The Employment Program of British Columbia was designed using a systems approach, which incorporated information from multiple stakeholders and research sources to create a one stop, client-centered employment program. The design requires services to be delivered through a franchise-type model intended to support consistent and similar service offerings to improve employment outcomes for unemployed British Columbians throughout the province.

The purpose of this study is threefold:

1. To better understand how the EPBC design and delivery differs from previous program designs and delivery approaches and how those differences may impact the ministry approach to managing the program
2. To better understand the steps, concepts and conditions necessary to support continuous innovation during the life of the program and to identify tools that support the innovation process in a program such as the EPBC.
3. To review current governance structures and practices within the Employment Labour Market Services division against the findings in the literature to identify gaps between promising practices and how the program is currently operating.

The project finishes with recommendations for filling the identified gaps for the division to consider.

The scope of this project consists of four phases:

- 1) Provision of background information concerning the project client, the current state of the program and existing collaborative efforts used to engage contractors.
- 2) A literature review that provides the basis for understanding the nature of the employment program, an introduction to an innovation cycle and provides information for understanding the importance of collaboration in supporting program success as well as key information about two practices that have been used with some success to encourage collaboration: communities of practice and learning networks.

- 3) A review of the existing ministry processes against findings in the literature to identify gaps between current ministry practices and promising practices as well as to identify areas where the ministry practices support effective collaboration.
- 4) Provide a series of recommendations for consideration.

1.2 BACKGROUND

1.2.1 CLIENT AND RATIONALE/IMPORTANCE

The client for this project is the Program Management Branch within the Employment Labour Market Services Division of the British Columbia Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation.

The Program Management Branch is responsible for the oversight of the EPBC including the policy, quality assurance, budget and other financial aspects, and program evaluation. The branch works closely with the Program Operations Branch, which is responsible for ensuring effective management of the seventy three service delivery contracts through which the program services are delivered.

The Program was designed to deliver the equivalent of ten legacy employment labour market programs with the aim of supporting all unemployed British Columbians to achieve sustainable employment. The Program was launched on April 2, 2012 and the current service delivery contracts were put in place for five years with the option of renewal for a further two one-year terms. (Ministry of Social Development, 2012). This means that, in order to meet the continuously changing labour market demands, the Program must be able to adapt during the life of the current contracts.

A governance framework was implemented shortly after program launch, which utilizes formal collaboration processes with the contractors who deliver the program services, and solicits advice and recommendations from two external advisory panels, one with a special focus on the specialized populations served through the program¹.

The contractors are responsible for direct client service and for ensuring successful client outcomes. Therefore, in order to increase program responsiveness and make uniform changes to the program, it is necessary to determine effective ways for the ministry to work with the contractors, and to leverage and share the knowledge, skills and innovative practices that are present in the different contractor organizations in the province. Encouraging collaborative practices between contractors

¹

“For the purposes of the Program, Specialized Populations include People with Disabilities, Immigrants, Francophones, Multi-barriered Clients, survivors of violence and/or abuse, Aboriginal peoples, rural and remote populations and youth”. (Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation, 2013, p. 12)

is also desirable as it is expected to lead to more consistency of service across the province, and to increase learning and service improvement between contractors.

Developing an understanding of the conditions required for effective stakeholder engagement processes that encourage innovation, is expected to provide information on which to base future engagement practices and support improvement of the overall program outcomes. Though the EPBC has several stakeholders including clients, other levels of government and the public at large, this project focusses on the two groups responsible for delivering and monitoring the program: the contractors and Ministry staff.

1.2.2 PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

1.2.2.1 ESTABLISHING THE GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

The Employment Program of BC (EPBC) was launched on April 2, 2012 and during the three months after program launch a governance framework was implemented to support the new horizontal nature of the program. Formal committees were put in place that would support the engagement of the 47 contractors holding 73 service contracts around the province in a series of collaborative processes that continue to be maintained. (Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation, 2013)

The introduction of a governance framework represented a significant shift away from previous practices as previous BC employment programs had been managed through a more hierarchical approach.

For a description of the EPBC Governance Framework, please see Appendix 1.

1.2.2.2 INITIAL PROGRAM ISSUES

The launch of the Program saw most services being available in most locations but there were communities that required considerable capacity building in order to effectively provide the full suite of services offered under the program, particularly in areas of the Province that did not previously serve all client groups or provide all services. Of specific concern was the need to build capacity to deliver services to the Program's "Specialized Populations."

A related concern was the payment model used to reimburse contractors for their services. Contractors expressed significant concern about their ability maintain businesses viability as the program matured: initial client volume was less than anticipated and because all communities in the province were making the transition to a new program simultaneously; there was concern about retention of staff, and ensuring capacity to serve all clients in all locations.

1.2.2.3 MINISTRY RESPONSE: INTRODUCTION OF CPAC WORKING GROUPS:

The ministry engaged the Corporate Program Advisory Committee (CPAC), made up of a member from each of the seventy-three contracts and the ministry program steering committee, soon after

the launch of the program, to discuss these and other design concerns that were impeding the successful delivery of client services.

To facilitate discussion and dialogue, the Ministry engaged in the following processes:

- i. Held an in-person meeting with the CPAC to identify issues that had been raised to the Ministry through staff and service providers. An Open Space Conference² was used to encourage a free dialogue with contractors and ensure all issues were raised for discussion.
- ii. Eleven initial areas were identified that required deeper discussion and so eleven CPAC working groups were formed consisting of an average of ten participants: 70% contractors or their staff and 30% Ministry staff. The working groups were co-chaired by a ministry and contractor representative. All contractor names were put forth voluntarily.
- iii. The working groups worked together for two months to analyze issues, generate options to address the issues, and presented them to the Program oversight body, (the Ministry Program Steering Committee) for consideration.
- iv. To support the working groups, a project management team was put in place to facilitate ongoing project managed meetings using conference calls to support collaboration. Each working group was required to establish their deliverables, their work plan, timeline, and training and communications requirements. (Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation, 2012).
- v. The Program Steering Committee, using Program Principles as a reference point, agreed to either implement the options or asked the working group to further explore the options presented, or explained why the options were not viable. For example, budget or system constraints, or deterring from the program objectives. The ministry program steering committee was solely responsible for making the decisions about which options to implement.
- vi. Ministry staff and contractors then continued to work to implement and/or refine the options. (Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation, 2012)
- vii. A communications plan was established to ensure staff and contractors and other governance bodies were aware of the work being done by the CPAC working groups. To ensure consistency in understanding it was felt to be important that the communication be clear and frequent. In practice, communication was not on a planned schedule.

1.2.2.4 INCREASING CONTRACTOR CAPACITY: THE RESEARCH AND INNOVATION FUND

Research and Innovation funding has been used to invest in two different but related ways to increase capacity of contractors to deliver EPBC services in both the year prior and the year following program launch.

² Open Space : a tool where participants brainstorm the issues to be discussed and break into discussion groups For more information see Tools for Leadership and Learning: <http://www.managers-gestionnaires.gc.ca/eng/tools-leadership-and-learning-building-learning-organization#toc17>

The first way was to invest directly in capacity building of the staff of service providers delivering client services. Training was developed and delivered to service contractors to ensure common understanding of the newly developed Integrated Case Management System, which is used by all service providers delivering client services. Training was also developed to create a common understanding of program policy to prepare contractors to deliver the program consistently around the Province. Research and Innovation funds have also been used to increase capacity to deliver specific services to Specialized Populations, most specifically customized employment³, through a symposium and subsequent posting of educational information on the Program extranet. The extranet is a platform where service providers delivering services to clients can access information and resources to support their delivery of the program.

The second area of Research and Innovation investment was in the BC Centre for Employment Excellence. This entity is arm's length from government and was created to support capacity building of all career development practitioners⁴ in the province through engaging in novel research, and translating current and new research into practice which can support capacity building. The Centre also has the mandate to support employers to build capacity by providing them with tools and resources to hire, train and retain employees. (BC Centre for Employment Excellence, 2013)

The Research and Innovation fund is a potential source of support to assist contractors to determine more effective ways to deliver employment services and to support the increase of capacity to more effectively deliver program services.

1.3. ARGUMENT AND MAJOR FINDINGS

The EPBC is completing its second year of operation and the ministry has been successful in that time in engaging stakeholders to work on solutions for a significant number of issues that have arisen since program launch. The Ministry has used an iterative approach to developing collaboration processes to respond to emerging issues and contractor concerns.

Though many issues have been addressed using this iterative approach, challenges have also arisen from this approach including:

- difficulty planning and utilizing resources due to competing priorities
- inconsistent communication to staff and contractors about ongoing work, with contractors often learning about progress before staff are aware, and,

³ Customized employment is a service that involves customizing a job to suit the needs of a person with a disability (see EPBC policy for specific steps)

⁴ Career development practitioners provide services that help people manage their careers, make occupational and study decisions, plan career transitions and find career information. The EPBC relies on these practitioners to support clients to find and maintain sustainable employment.

- implementation plans that do not always provide the time for contractors to successfully implement changes in their organizations

The program still faces challenges. The most significant of these are continued inconsistency in understanding and application of program policy and procedures; inconsistent access to services and decreased capacity of some contractors to deliver the full suite of program services. The Program is also delivered inconsistently around the province due to lack of capacity of some contractors to deliver all services offered through the program. The program does not yet fully support all clients accessing its services, specifically clients from the specialized populations.

In order to more effectively focus the work of collaborative processes to encourage innovation the ministry would benefit from a formal approach that can be planned, directed and continuously evaluated.

The work of this project is intended to support the ministry to make informed decisions about how and when to use collaborative processes, what collaboration is and why it is important, and provide the ministry the opportunity and background necessary to more effectively plan and execute collaboration processes.

1.4 ORGANIZATION OF REPORT

The research is reported out in three phases with key findings summarized at the end of each of the three stages of research.

The first stage provides context for understanding the social innovation focus of the Employment Program of British Columbia and how its characteristics differ from previous employment programs.

The second stage discusses collaboration and the importance of collaboration to program improvement and innovation.

The third stage discusses specific processes and tools to support collaboration, and the strengths and drawbacks of each.

The findings are then discussed in reference to current ministry practices to compare and contrast promising practices in the literature with the current state of the program to determine gaps and potential solutions to fill those gaps.

Finally, the report concludes with recommendations from each stage of the literature review for the ministry to consider for future action.

2.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research for this project was conducted in three stages:

The first stage involved a literature review to determine how to characterize and articulate the change that occurred in employment programming in British Columbia when the EPBC was launched.

Research questions that guided the process at this stage were:

- What is meant by sustainable innovation?
- How is this program different from a traditional employment program? What are the implications of those differences?
- How can innovation be sustained over time?

The results of research at this stage led to an examination of social innovation, discovery of an innovation cycle that could be used to base the research findings upon, and an understanding that successful sustainable innovation relies upon strong, ongoing collaborative processes with stakeholders.

The second stage of the research examined collaboration and the requirements of collaboration at each step of the innovation cycle.

Questions that guided this section of the research review were:

- What is meant by collaboration?
- What conditions are required to be in place in order to support collaboration at each step of the innovation cycle?

Stage three of the research examined common tools that have been used successfully to involve stakeholders in continuous improvement of projects or programs.

Questions that guided this section of the research were:

- What existing tools or practices support collaboration and which of these can be adapted for use by the Ministry?
- What elements of these tools support effective collaboration in a social innovation context?

In reviewing the literature, particular interest was paid to projects which were completed using networks of participants from multiple disciplines; research done in the public sector that examined collaboration between contractors and/or employees from multiple disciplines; and, literature that evaluated effective practices and challenges faced in completing longer standing projects that spanned several months or years, from the point of view of participants.

3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 STAGE ONE

The initial stage of the research was undertaken to learn more about the nature of the EPBC and to provide context within which to articulate that nature. This stage also looked at what was meant by the idea of sustainable innovation and how that impacted the program. The findings related to these concepts led to discussion about the program paradigm, social innovation and finally a social innovation cycle.

3.1.1 SUSTAINABLE INNOVATION

The terms *sustainable* and *innovation* are paradoxical in nature as the first is about reaching “an ideal equilibrium condition” (Sarkis, 2010: pg2) while the latter is about “doing something different” (Costello, 2013, P. 64).

Innovation occurs on different scales and the nature of an innovation and how it is introduced to an organization or society depends upon the type of innovation being introduced, the social context, the aim and the intent of the innovation (Baregheh, 2009). Small innovations can be achieved through incremental change to an existing system. However, when needing to resolve “persistent societal problems, structural transformations or transitions are necessary.” (Loorbach, 2006, p. 188) This means that a fundamental shift occurs in order to accommodate the new innovation, which was the case when the EPBC was introduced in the province. This fundamental change is often referred to as a paradigm shift.

To sustain a paradigm shift and strengthen the resilience of the new program, innovation must be continuous because “without the introduction of novelty, systems will gradually lose their resilience, become more rigid and thus more vulnerable” (Andatze, 2012).

To sustain a shift to the new paradigm, it is necessary to understand the nature of the paradigm shift and to strengthen ways to manage and work within the new paradigm. The nature of the shift caused by the launch of the EPBC away from traditional employment programming, along with the resulting need to adjust processes to sustain that shift, is examined below.

3.1.2 GOVERNANCE VERSUS GOVERNMENT PARADIGMS

Increasingly in recent years, major policy issues, such as unemployment, have arisen that can only be tackled in a horizontal fashion, meaning the issues are so complex that they must be addressed not by one government or one governmental department but rather by crossing traditional boundaries and jurisdictions and including the expertise of many (Bakvis, 2004).

The need to address complex issues differently has led to a shift away from a traditional hierarchical ‘government’ approach to solving issues to a governance approach, which uses collaborative processes to include a wide range of stakeholders. (Phillips, 2001) Shifting traditional government to work more horizontally requires understanding of the paradigm shift and

its implications on program management. Government is “centred on control,” “works on the strength of a hierarchy”, and has the advantage of being able to deliver uniform programs “unilaterally to a broad segment of an eligible population” (Phillips, 2001, p. 183). The “legitimacy of government flows from its authority,” and its success “hinges largely on programming.” (Ibid)

In contrast, the governance paradigm “involves collaboration and co-ordination, both across sectors and across policy areas”. The strength of the governance approach is in its horizontality, and the advantage to governance is that it “recognizes difference and the value of flexibility.” The legitimacy of governance “derives from its credibility with citizens and partners” and its success “depends on relationship building.” (Phillips, 2001, p. 183)

3.1.3 SOCIAL INNOVATION

Another term used to describe projects requiring horizontal management in the social sector is social innovation.

Social innovation is a relatively new term in the literature and it has been used in several different contexts including references to: social enterprise which creates organizations and projects within the social sector; social responsibilities of business organizations such as corporate citizenship, sustainability, ethical practices, business/community/government collaboration; and the social side of technological innovation (Nilsson, 2003) .

In the case of the EPBC, it refers to a need for ongoing collaborative input from contractors, staff, and other stakeholders to achieve continuous improvement. Social innovation is not just a way to address complex social problems, but rather is in itself “a complex process of introducing new products, processes or programs that profoundly change the basic routines, resource and authority flows, or beliefs of the social system in which the innovation occurs” and it has been found that when social innovations are successful, they have “durability and broad impact” (Westley, 2010, p. 2).

3.1.3.1 BARRIERS TO SOCIAL INNOVATION:

There are three primary types of barriers to governments successfully adopting and implementing social innovation projects: risk aversion and protectionism; problem complexity; and, networks and collaboration (Chalmers, 2012). These areas can be mitigated through the design and management of the project. Following is a description of each of these potential barriers along with factors to consider in developing an approach to mitigate for the barriers.

Elected officials and government executives are accountable for the programs they implement and when failure occurs, that failure can be quickly made public through the media. This in turn, can negatively affect a political career resulting in elected officials being understandably risk averse (Borins, 2001) (Andatze, 2012). Social innovation projects address complex issues in a new way and so come with inherent risks including the risk of failure.

Protectionism has also been identified as an issue because stakeholders, including the contractors who were awarded contracts through a competitive process, may have a vested interest in protecting the status quo and maintaining their current processes. This may make stakeholders reluctant to work together collaboratively or to engage in exercises that encourage innovation (Chalmers, 2012).

Problems tackled through social innovation are by nature complex and involve multiple stakeholders to work together to work on solutions (Westley F. a., 2010). Managing multiple stakeholders is a time consuming and complex process which needs to be maintained over time. The time required may contribute to the reluctance of government to become involved. Related to this is the risk of trying to manage a social innovation project using methods more appropriate to managing less complex projects.

Finally, networks and collaboration are seen as a barrier because failure to connect the right network and failure to grow the network to support the innovation have led to failure in achieving social innovation (Chalmers, 2012). It is important that the networks be strong and supportive but that they also include all the required actors to support success.

3.1.4 THE INNOVATION CYCLE

Though innovation is an iterative process, a model introduced by Eggers (2009) breaks the process into four distinct phases within a cycle. Putting specific conditions in place as they relate to each of the phases has been shown to encourage the innovation cycle to work effectively, and to support an organization in implementing innovative program changes (Eggers, 2009, p.7).

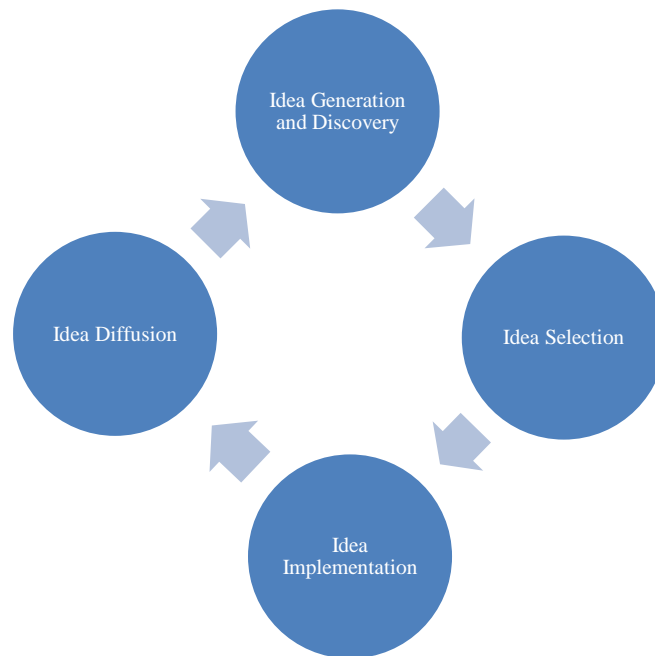
Further, “each of the constitutive phases in the innovation cycle can be strengthened through collaboration between relevant and affected actors from the public and private sector.” (Sorensen, 2011, p. 852)

The following section describes the innovation cycle and makes note of the conditions at each phase that can be strengthened through collaboration.

The four different phases are described as follows: idea generation and discovery; idea selection; idea implementation; and, idea diffusion (see figure 2 below). For each of these phases there are recommended conditions to be met in order to optimize the benefits at each phase of the process. For innovation to take root, government agencies need to “take an integrated view of the innovation process, from idea generation, to selection, to implementation and diffusion.” (Eggers, 2009, p12)

Note: Though not explicitly identified as an individual step in the innovation process, it is expected that a process for evaluating the effectiveness of innovative changes would be put in place to ensure it is achieving its goal.

FIGURE 1: THE INNOVATION CYCLE



Source: (Eggers, 2009)

3.1.4.1 IDEA GENERATION AND DISCOVERY

The initial phase in the innovation cycle is the generation of ideas to discover solutions for project related issues.

To optimize idea generation it is important to define “shared goals that, if met, would make a difference to the organization as a whole” (Eggers, 2009, p.7). Putting these parameters in place provides the opportunity for everyone to work toward the same end.

Secondly, it is important to tap into the diverse knowledge of the field. “Tacit knowledge which exists in the minds of employees is born of sheer experience” (Ibid. p. 34), and that knowledge can generate innovation. Strategies that have been used to tap the field are to establish two -way communication and to use collaboration tools, to engage staff and service providers at all levels. (Ibid)

3.1.4.2 IDEA SELECTION

Once ideas are generated, it is important to select those which will be implemented. There are ways to do this that provide buy-in to the ideas that will be selected and which will also provide opportunity for government to influence the ideas that are selected. The latter is important in light of the inherent risk involved in a social innovation project.

One caution Eggers (2009) makes with regard to idea selection is that in hierarchical systems ideas can quickly die: “when only a single person or committee at the top of an agency decides which ideas move forward, many ideas may never get anywhere.” (p. 20)

Therefore it is important to consider utilizing a less hierarchical process to select ideas. For example, using employees and other stakeholders to determine the shared goals to be achieved when determining innovative ideas would help all involved to understand which ideas would later be supported. Using these shared criteria, government could then tap into “the wisdom of the crowd by opening up the evaluation process and asking for feedback from the system in order to choose the best ideas” (Eggers, 2009, p. 8).

3.1.4.3 IDEA IMPLEMENTATION

Idea implementation is the part of the cycle that is often open to risk if the ideas are not well implemented. When the idea does not get enough financial support or expertise, then there is a risk of failure and attracting criticism. (Eggers, 2009, p. 24)

Because innovation is an iterative process it is important to focus on outcomes rather than on a detail oriented plan. This provides the “flexibility to adapt to changed circumstances” and “detect and correct errors as they occur” (Ibid p. 25).

Egger (2009) identifies some of the key factors to successfully implementing innovations as including:

- Giving employees and outside partners a stake in the results
- Creating customer feedback loops
- Ensuring effective communication between leadership and the line organization
- Incorporating implementation of good ideas into strategic thinking at the managerial level
- Clearly defining a mission against which progress can be assessed (page 8)

3.1.4.4 IDEA DIFFUSION

Diffusion “refers to spreading an innovation throughout an organization or organizations, often with a push from above or with the help of external agents.” (Eggers, 2009, p. 26)

Egger (2009) identifies three challenges that must be overcome in order to successfully diffuse an innovative idea: “Gaining support from all stakeholders (especially top leadership and citizens); breaking down organizational silos; and overcoming organizational reluctance to change”. (Ibid. P. 26)

In reviewing these findings, it shows that by the Ministry engaging staff and contractors throughout the innovation cycle, there are opportunities to strengthen support for ideas early in the process and leverage that support throughout implementation and dissemination.

3.2 STAGE TWO

Stage two of the research examined collaboration more closely through a review of four related topics: stakeholder engagement, collaboration theory, social capital and social network theory. The

purpose of this section was to examine what is meant by collaboration and which elements or practices support effective collaboration with stakeholders.

3.2.1 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Governments engage stakeholders for different reasons and so it is important to understand what is meant when we talk about collaboration. A stakeholder is defined as “any identifiable group or individual who can affect the achievement of an organization's objectives or who is affected by the achievement of an organization's objectives” (Freeman, 1983).

The level of involvement of stakeholders in an engagement process depends upon the purpose of the engagement and the goals the government is trying to achieve. When the government reaches out to engage stakeholders, stakeholders can expect to be involved at different levels from being kept informed, to providing feedback, to being involved, to collaborating to being empowered to make decisions about what the government implements.

Though the Ministry has many stakeholders including clients, other levels of government, the public and two external advisory committees, for the purpose of the scope of this project, this definition refers to ministry contractors and staff.

The table below provides an overview of the participation goal at each level of participation along with what stakeholders can expect from each level.

Table 2: Public Participation Spectrum

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Participation Goal	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives and/or solutions	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decision	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public issues and concerns are consistently understood and considered	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution	To place final decision –making in the hands of the public
Promise to the public/ Stakeholder	We will keep you informed	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and issues are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision	We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible	We will implement what you decide
Example of Tools	Fact Sheets Websites Open houses	Public Comment Focus Groups Surveys Public Meetings	Workshops Deliberate Polling	Citizen Advisory committee Consensus Building Participatory Decision Making	Citizen Juries Ballots Delegated Decisions

Adapted from the IAP² Public Participation Spectrum www.iap2.org.au

The remainder of this section of the literature review will explore the elements necessary to encourage strong collaborative relationships and areas of risk to be cognizant of.

3.2.2 COLLABORATION

3.2.2.1 COLLABORATION THEORY

Collaboration theory defines collaboration as the “interaction of stakeholders with shared language and values, taking action toward collective goals,” (Fauske, 2006, p. 166). Organizations are encouraged to collaborate when they cannot achieve what they are trying to achieve alone (multifaceted social issues fall into this category), there is no other way to achieve the outcome, or the organization will gain an adaptive advantage by collaborating (Savage, 2010).

Once collaboration has been entered into, conditions that an organization can put in place to support collaboration include formal acknowledgement of the effort through dedication of resources to ensure the collaboration is supported; a shared vision and goal; and, structures put in place to facilitate an ongoing dialogue such as formal committees (Fauske, 2006 p.167).

3.2.2 SOCIAL CAPITAL

Social Capital refers to the “norms and networks that enable people to act collectively” (Woolcock, 2000, p. 226) and more specifically it provides a way to think about the potential of social structure for acquiring resources (Moolenaar, 2012). For example, an individual will have family, friends, colleagues, and other assets in their social network. The more access to the network they have, the more potential support or resources they can access.

The individual access to resources can positively benefit organizational outcomes. For example, teachers gaining access to resources through their relationships has been found to indirectly benefit student achievement (Moolenaar, 2012, p. 24) and frequent social interactions among educators are believed to facilitate implementation of reform, since the interactions facilitate the knowledge exchange required for mutual sense making (Coburn, 2005). Putting conditions in place to encourage interactions and knowledge exchange has also been found to support the adaption of new policies in schools. (Coburn, 2005)

With respect to the EPBC, it is important to recognize that stakeholders are important assets and nurturing the norms and networks that allow people to act collectively can be expected to potentially benefit the program.

Providing opportunities for dialogue and mutual sense making of policy and promising practices would therefore be desirable.

3.2.3 SOCIAL NETWORK THEORY

While social capital provides a way to think about the potential of social structure for acquiring resources, social network theory offers a way to understand the patterns in social structures and

seeks to identify mechanisms that are responsible for social capital outcomes (Moolenaar, 2012); (Burt, 2000).

A literature review of Social Network research, as it pertains to teacher collaboration in schools, found Social Network research to be characterized by three key assumptions about the relationship between individuals and their social structure:

- 1) That resources such as information and knowledge are exchanged in relationships among individuals;
- 2) Individuals are seen as “interdependent because they are embedded in a social structure”; and,
- 3) Social networks may provide opportunities for, but also constrain, the actions of individuals and organizations. This means that while individuals may benefit from tangible and intangible resources that flow from a network, “they may only benefit from these resources if they have access to them through their social relationships.” (Moolenaar, 2012, p. 11)

What this means for the EPBC is that in order to ensure consistent information is available, particularly in the idea diffusion phase of innovation, members of the network must have similar access to that information.

There are two further functions of social networking that are of note when discussing innovation. The first is that social interaction allows goods and resources to be shared, and that as the labor is further divided the amount of interaction required for the project increases. The second is that conflicts will arise through ongoing interaction and “the degree of interaction required increases with the conflict potential of the projects. “ (Fichter, 2012, p. 6)

Therefore, the more controversial or risky an innovation is, the more important it is to increase interaction to ensure shared meaning and understanding. Providing information from a central location without benefit of discussion is not expected to illicit the same opportunity to make sense of the information as ongoing dialogue in small groups.

3.3 STAGE 3

3.3.1 METHODS OF COLLABORATION

As discussed above, collaboration can be used at different times in the innovation cycle. Tools can support these efforts, with some being more effective at different stages of the innovation cycle than are others.

The following tools and methods were examined to determine what elements were required from each to support transformation of the organization (especially including the contractors delivering the program) into a learning organization that would support sustainable innovation of the program.

The tools and methods that were examined are the use of technology, particularly as it pertains to virtual groups; communities of practice; innovation communities and clinical networks.

3.3.1.1 TECHNOLOGY

The EPBC is a decentralized model and one of the constraints of the work is that, to involve contractors and staff from all areas of the province, the work to improve the program must be supported through this decentralized model, and often will include technological tools.

A Finish study that worked to discover how virtual teams can contribute to building knowledge, used an “open to all” virtual environment for knowledge sharing using collaboration software tools which consisted of a portal with a discussion space where people can exchange knowledge and an area to ask questions and post answers and comments. (Olli-Pekka Kauppila, 2011)

The use of this process was found to “create competency-based trust among team members as other members could ‘virtually’ observe the contributions being made.” (Ibid, p. 407) However, using this method was found to be more successful for more objective situations such as discussion about products and less useful for discussion of customer service information, because “at times the openness also interfered with explicit knowledge sharing, because not all employees were willing to reveal that they did not know something.” (Ibid. p. 409)

The study went on to discover that bringing together individuals using virtual tools can increase trust: The study found that “in general, cross functional and cross-cultural virtual team compositions foster knowledge sharing across different borders and boundaries” (Ibid, p. 410) “As the virtual teams brought together individuals from various backgrounds, cohesion increased throughout the organization, and thereby facilitated trust and knowledge sharing across organizational groups and functions.” (ibid, p. 410)

This is further evidence to support the need to explore the idea of increasing the use of collaborative software and opening ideas and practices to the network for comment.

This technology could benefit each stage of the innovation cycle.

Idea Generation: At the idea generation phase, honouring the horizontal nature of social innovation would mean accessing as many ideas as possible. Using a collaboration site such as that described above, could encourage ideas to be posted and would allow all contributors to see the posts and ask questions to better understand them. This could encourage networking as well as sense making of ideas and information.

Idea Selection: Similarly, at this phase, technology can be used to post a selection of ideas to be commented on in an open forum. This means that the wisdom of the crowd could be tapped into to provide comments, make suggestions for improvement and vote on which of the ideas has the most merit against specific criteria.

The ideas put forth could be pre-determined based on available resources and program priorities.

Idea Implementation: Technology can be utilized to support group processes while the group is analyzing the idea and determining an appropriate response, and developing that response.

Effective use of technology also supports group members to build relationships, and shared trust and understanding of information.

Idea Diffusion: Technology has a place in idea diffusion as well, particularly if a tool such as a collaboration site had strong uptake by a critical mass of contractors so that information was shared consistently with all. Posting information in one place gives access to the same information but in order to ensure sense making of this information it may be necessary to augment this relatively static process through use of smaller group discussions. (See findings from phase 2).

One of the challenges with technology as a method of working with ideas is that it is not clear if contractors in the employment services industry have used this type of technology or if they would feel comfortable doing so. In a recent study of career practitioners in BC it was found that a “definite skill gap amongst most study participants involves use of technology.” (Life Strategies Ltd., 2012, p. 30) Though the main focus of this skill gap seems to be in the use of the new Integrated Case Management system which supports the EPBC, it is thought to pertain to other types of technology as well.

3.3.1.2 COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

One well known model that capitalizes on social networks is known as “Communities of Practice” (CoPs). Communities of Practice are groups of people ‘informally bound together by shared expertise and passion for a joint enterprise’. (Wenger, 2000, p. 139) The benefits of the communities of practice are that they can ‘drive strategy...solve problems, promote the spread of best practices... [and] develop people’s professional skills’ (Wenger, 2000, p. 140). However, ‘communities of practice are not stable or static entities’ (Roberts, 2006, p. 625). Communities of practice take time to develop and they cannot be established by an outside source, such as government or management, but they can be facilitated and supported once they do develop (Roberts, 2006).

Aspects of Communities of Practice to be aware of are power, trust and predispositions.

CoPs will include members “of varying standing in terms of experience, expertise, age, personality, authority...,and so on” (Roberts, 2006, p. 627) These characteristics as well as factors such as some members having more full participation, will influence how meaning is determined in the CoP. In that way “meanings may be merely a reflection of the dominant source of power.” (Roberts, 2006, p. 627)

Similarly predispositions to information and direction by members could influence what is examined and what is learned. In this way, “communities of practice may become static in terms of their knowledge base and resistant to change.” (Roberts, 2006, p. 629)

Trust is required in a community of practice or members of the community may be reluctant to share knowledge. Competition is “likely to discourage the collaborative efforts required in the

establishment and maintenance of successful communities of practice.” (Roberts, 2006, p. 629) The contractors delivering the EPBC received contracts after participating in a competitive process. Because moving this group to a more collaborative process using the CoP model, and developing a community relationship could conceivably take time, impeding the progress of transforming those delivering the program to a learning community, other models were also reviewed.

3.3.1.3 INNOVATION COMMUNITIES:

The InnoCo project was created to examine and track the success of innovation communities over a period of four years. (Fichter and Beuker, 2012) This project used the term ‘innovation communities’ to refer to an “informal group of like-minded individuals (often from various different companies and organizations) that team up in a project like fashion and commonly promote a specific innovation” (pg. vi).

These communities are similar to communities of practice in that they come together for a specific purpose and learn from each other, but may be more formalized as they have specific projects they work on. The concept of ‘innovation communities’ better reflects the way the EPBC is using working groups to inform change in the program. The results of this study are therefore of particular interest when considering recommendations for supporting sustainable innovation practices.

What this study found was that there are certain qualities that lead to success in innovation communities. These are in three different areas: composition of the groups, group identity, and group interactions.

3.3.1.3.1 COMPOSITION AND GROUP SIZE:

Fichter, 2012 reviewed the literature and identified key roles in successful communities. The author puts forth the idea that, to be successful an innovation must have a key person, an individual “within a focal innovation or diffusion process who is observed to have a significantly higher influence on the creating and diffusion of novel processes and innovative solutions than other participants.” (Fichter, 2012, p. 8) Key persons, or champions, can impact the course of an innovation by either supporting the development and implementation of the innovation or by preventing or inhibiting it. Fichter goes on to explain that in addition to champions, promoters who play four other key roles are required to support innovation communities.

Promoter theory “is based on the notion that the success of innovation processes depends on overcoming certain barriers and, in addition to champions, it requires promoters (sic) who commit enthusiastically to specific innovation projects and help overcome those barriers.”

There are four different types of key promotor roles: power promoters who contribute through hierarchical power; expert promoters who contribute through expert knowledge; process promoters who bring organizational knowledge to the community; and, relationship promoters who actively encourage an innovation by means of related business relationships both within and outside the innovation community. (Fichter, 2012, p. 10)

Fichter (2012) found that the presence of even one champion who occupied all four of the promotor roles had a positive influence on project performance but that larger numbers of champions improved performance. They also found that not all promotors were required to be part of the innovation community. Some communities were assisted from those outside the community by technical support, and other means such as process information.

Like champions, promotors can also hinder a group's performance if they have that on their agenda. It is hoped that the power of the group will help to mitigate against that outcome.

Fichter (2012) also found that the size of successful innovation communities was between four and seven members. This was assumed to be because "innovation communities are informal promotor networks that require personal contacts, team spirit, and a certain degree of trust between community members, all of which can generally be ensured by a smaller group size." (pg. 329). Prior studies have shown that a smaller group size is preferable, because as the size of a group increases the liking for the group and performance of the group tends to decrease. (Mullens, 1994)

Fichter (2012) found that this was the case with the innovation communities they studied. Innovation communities were successful as long as they had core promotors who stayed with the project. As the project progressed people with different expertise came and went but as long as there was a core group committed to the project the community remained viable (p. 330).

One further note that this study found was that the performance of an innovation community depended largely on social capital, on the relationships that each promotor brought to the network and their willingness to share the information with the rest of the group to support the project.

3.3.1.3.2 GROUP IDENTITY AND INTERACTIONS

The importance of group identity and how innovation communities interacted was the subject of study by Rese and Baier (2012). They found that, functional identity," the ability to develop common targets, goals and language and basic understanding of the project goals and future options," improved the outcomes of the project (p. 222). Therefore, in instituting an innovation community the initial phase of forming the group and ensuring a common understanding of the goals is important to project success.

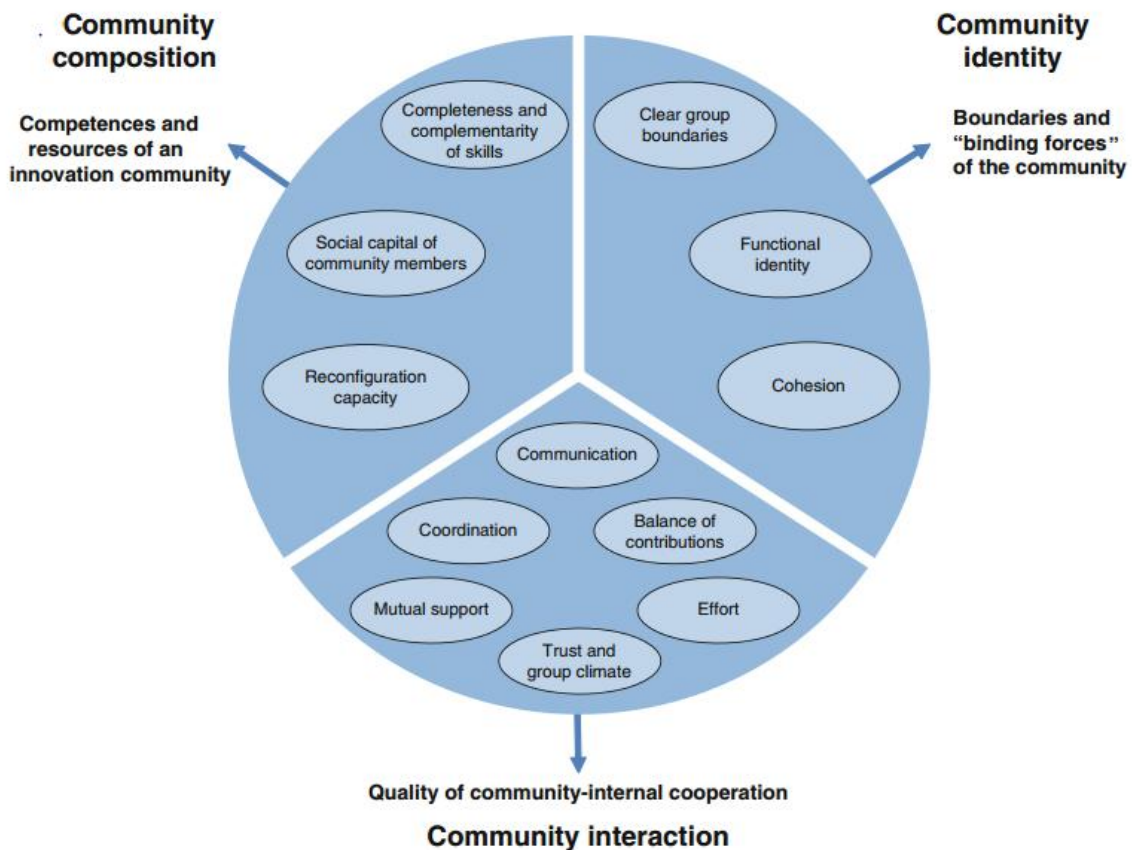
Interactions within an innovation community were found to be more effective when the group had cohesion or a sense of belonging. Cohesion can be made of three types: interpersonal attraction of individual team members, commitment to a common task and team spirit. (Mullens, 1994) Increasing these factors therefore is expected to lead to better productivity.

Elements that increase interpersonal attraction include communication between group members both planned and spontaneous, group trust, and a balance of contributions. Trust and the feeling of mutual support stems from intensive and respectful cooperation and an expectation that other group members would have an interest in the project and are motivated to be part of the project. (Fichter and Beuker, 2012)

Finally, cohesive groups were able to manage conflict effectively. There was also benefit found to having a neutral party act as an innovation coach and to support the innovation community to resolve its difficulties. (Fichter and Beuker, 2012)

Other influencing factors on the performance of innovation communities are as outlined in the figure 4.

Figure 2: Influencing Factors on the Performance of Innovation Communities



Source: (Fichter and Beuker, 2012, p. 288)

3.3.1.4 CLINICAL NETWORKS

Clinical networks, a controlled community of practice, have emerged over the last ten years as an important “clinician-driven innovation for attaining system-wide improvements in health-care delivery and patient outcomes.”(McInnes E. M., 2012, p. 1) Outcomes of successful clinical networks were the ability to connect and engage with consumers; improving services, care and patient outcomes, and implementing evidence based practice.

Research into the conditions that foster successful clinic network outcomes is new, but one study in Australia found that relationships, effective leadership, evidence based work plans and adequate resources were critical elements to these groups.

The most successful networks were found to have a commitment to engagement, networking and partnerships that involved building a critical mass of clinician, consumers and stakeholders. Less successful networks were seen to be “focused on objectives of individual interest rather than of broader relevance to the health system” (McInnes E. M., 2012, p. 4). This reinforces the need to set up the joint objectives of the working group and the outset.

Reaching out to non-networked clinicians and consumer groups was also considered important in order to maximize the impact of networks, as was rotating chairs as this was seen as signaling that the network ‘values the contribution of all disciplines’. (Ibid.p.4)

The study found that a strong network manager to direct the process, implement work plans and run networked operations, as well as project management support contributed to the success of the clinical networks. Leaders needed to have the ability to keep others engaged and interested and to take issues up the chain for decision or review. Evidence based work plans kept the networks on track.

Finally, the study showed that members of the clinical networks found follow-up was less satisfying than the creation of solutions if the resources to implement the ideas were inadequate including the ability to evaluate the changes to determine whether the outcomes were successful.

4.0 THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: STRUCTURING THE DISCUSSION

The Ministry has been developing collaborative practices with stakeholders since prior to program launch. This report will now discuss the processes that the ministry has utilized in contrast to the findings in each of the three stages of the literature review to identify gaps and promising practices the ministry could utilize in future.

The next section of this report is presented in three sections. It begins with a review of the paradigm shift that the ministry undertook when launching the EPBC, to identify areas for future consideration in managing the program. This includes an outline of an innovation cycle and how the ministry has collaborated to date at each of the four stages. This section concludes by stating the importance of collaboration to the success of the program.

The discussion then focusses on what collaboration means, identifies areas the ministry should consider in entering into collaborative processes, and how collaboration can be strengthened. The final section reviews the ministry’s collaboration practices against promising practices in the literature in the following areas: technological tools, Communities of Practice, Clinical Networks and Innovation Communities. Recommendations to fill these gaps are then put forth for consideration.

5.0 FILLING THE GAPS: STRENGTHENING SOCIAL INNOVATION THROUGH COLLABORATION

5.1 FINDINGS FROM STAGE ONE:

Findings from the stage one literature review provide the evidence to support the conclusion that the Employment Program of BC has the characteristics of a large scale social innovation project, which has caused a paradigm shift away from how traditional employment programs were designed and managed in British Columbia.

The implications of this shift are that the program must be managed in a way that supports a horizontal social innovation project. To achieve this end, it is necessary to understand the nature of social innovation projects and what they require for long term success.

The first idea to be aware of is that the strength of a social innovation project is in its relationships with its stakeholders. Stakeholder relationships (in the case of the EPBC this includes contractors and staff), are the backbone of a successful social innovation project and must be continually nurtured and strengthened in order to ensure a healthy program.

The ministry has designed and introduced a governance structure that has formally acknowledged the importance of stakeholder input into the program. However, the governance system was implemented after program launch, and has grown and adapted over the first two years of the program with the addition of CPAC working groups. It is therefore not clear how well the nature of the program is understood by contractors and staff, nor is it explicitly understood why collaboration is important to implementing, managing and ensuring continuous program improvement. Many staff and contractors, for example, may still be operating under the paradigm that was more appropriate to legacy programming.

The second idea to be aware of when managing a social innovation project is that the goal of the program should be to achieve equilibrium and not to achieve a static state. This is because, without continuous input into the program from many sources, a social innovation program risks losing its resilience and becoming more rigid and thus vulnerable to failure. The strength of a social innovation program is in its ability to continually adapt, continually bring new ideas and processes into the system, and to continually improve over time.

The goal of continuous improvement has been acknowledged by the ministry, as has the desire to achieve a 'steady state'. Because most contractors and staff have operated from different paradigms in the past, they may not understand the paradoxical nature of these seemingly opposing goals and so the nature of the program as well as the idea that achieving equilibrium is more likely than achieving a continuous static or "steady" state, may need to be clarified to ensure a common understanding.

A third idea that is important to understand, is that social innovation projects operate best without silos so that the ideas and solutions can be freely shared across the program (and the organization that is operating the program). The EPBC design integrated ten legacy programs into one program. This act of integration effectively broke down the silos that existed between legacy programs making it possible to provide a client-centred service. To effectively manage the program, it is therefore necessary to ensure that management practices adapt so that the silos are not rebuilt. This means that management of the EPBC may benefit from considering ways to share decision making at different levels of the organization, and determining ways to better manage the program collaboratively.

The research also identified potential barriers to the success of social innovation projects, specifically risk aversion and protectionism; problem complexity; and networks and collaboration.

The ministry has successfully navigated the initial barrier of risk aversion when it created an integrated employment program that spanned the province. However, protectionism in the form of resistance to change was perhaps where the ministry faced the most initial challenge with its contractors. Program launch invoked a significant change that touched every aspect of contractors' former business and therefore it has taken considerable time, effort and dialogue to gain the support of all the contractors who deliver the services.

The ministry has mitigated against the complexity of managing the program by designating significant resources to coordinating governance bodies and project managing the working groups used to collaborate on solutions to the issues that arose in the first two years of program launch.

The ministry continues to implement changes intended to improve program design and function. Now that the program is going into its third year, there is now more opportunity for the ministry to take the time to focus more strategically on specific priorities. This is because the issues that arose in the eighteen months of implementation have largely been resolved, contractors and staff are more familiar with their roles within the new program design, and there is now two years of results upon which to determine areas in need of improvement upon which to focus.

The complexity of the program requires coordination of collaborative efforts and of the different delivery agents of the program. The ministry has applied significant resources to support coordination and project management of the work of governance bodies, and has contributed to capacity building of contractors and staff by providing training about the program. The ministry continues to apply resources to support the coordination of the governance bodies so this second barrier to success has been mitigated against.

The use of appropriate networks and collaboration, particularly ensuring the right people are at the table to address issues, is an area the ministry has worked to cultivate. An example is of this action is that the ministry actively seeks volunteers from the contractor community to participate on working groups to solve program issues that arise and has ensured that all 47 organizations have had opportunities to do so. However, the program is relatively new and seeking out and tapping into new networks that can support improvement to different aspects of the program should be considered on an ongoing basis.

A final finding in the initial stage of the research was that collaboration can be achieved at each of four phases of the innovation cycle and each phase of the innovation cycle can be strengthened by understanding and deliberately influencing the nature and purpose of collaborations.

At the idea generation phase of the innovation cycle, the ministry has the ability to exert some measure of control over the process by determining priority areas to be addressed and ensuring all stakeholders are aware of those priorities. Choosing the priorities could be the sole domain of the ministry with input from staff or it could involve stakeholders through a priority setting exercise either at a CPAC meeting (or through a collaboration site). Planning of priorities could be done annually and be well understood by staff and contractors so that the focus continues to be on those priorities in all related interactions.

The idea selection phase offers opportunities for the ministry to influence the direction of the innovation if the ministry first narrows down the options it is willing to consider and then puts the options forward to stakeholders for comment or vote so stakeholders have the opportunity to dialogue about the ideas and put forth information to strengthen the options. This process of discussion provides opportunity for all to understand the issues against priorities set by the ministry and to begin a change management process so adopting a selected idea will be familiar when it comes to implementation.

The ministry already has established processes to support collaborative working groups. Further details about how to strengthen and improve the operation of those groups was the subject of stage three of the research.

The ministry also has the opportunity to influence the process at the diffusion phase, particularly in situations where sense making is required. There is a recent move toward decentralizing communication at the ministry to set up contract managers as the primary source of information for contractors. Provided the contract managers are supported to uniformly understand the ideas being diffused, this is a positive move as it provides the opportunity for mutual sense making of new ideas. (see phase 2 research)

5.2: FINDINGS FROM STAGE TWO.

Following the findings from stage one that success of the EPBC in achieving sustainable innovation rests largely upon its collaborative relationships with stakeholders, this section of the research focused on what collaboration means and how collaboration can be strengthened.

To ensure shared understanding of what is meant by collaboration, the term should be defined and explained to stakeholders who are engaged in collaboration.

The term “collaboration” can be found on the frequently cited Public Participation Spectrum (see table 1) and use of the term under that definition implies that the intent of government is to partner with stakeholders in each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives and identification of the preferred solution, and that advice and recommendations from stakeholders will be incorporated into decisions to the maximum extent possible.

To date, with respect to the Corporate Program Advisory Committee (CPAC) in particular, the ministry has formally supported collaboration through dedication of resources, including project management support, and has ensured a shared vision and goal through development of clear terms of reference for a total of 21 working groups. The ministry has also provided funds to ensure all groups could participate in at least one face-to-face committee meeting to provide the time to develop the teams and support dialogue.

In setting up these CPAC working groups, the ministry has invited contractors to have a significant role in the decision making process for making changes. CPAC members have had a role in bringing issues forward to be discussed, have been invited to work collaboratively on working groups to put forth potential solutions to issues, and have had a role in presenting these solutions to the ministry steering committee.

Where the larger CPAC group has not been engaged is in having opportunities to comment on the pros and cons of the solutions put forward, in having input into which of the solutions that are presented are strongest, or in reviewing or determining the criteria for successful selection.

Diffusion of the ideas has been comprehensive in many cases, particularly those changes that required significant discussion to understand. However, opportunities for sense making of those ideas could be improved, particularly if staff at the Contract Management Committee level were well versed in the subject matter and could support the discussions. Research shows that in order to ensure consistent information is available, particularly in the idea diffusion phase of innovation, members of a network must have similar access to information to ensure uniform understanding of changes being made.

In this area, the ministry has recognized that improvement is needed as it has not been completely successful in involving staff at all levels of the organization in idea generation, selection and diffusion. Some parts of the ministry have been very involved in creating solutions but other parts of the ministry, those not involved in the working groups, are not aware of the changes, why they are taking place and what the impacts of those changes will be.

This has been particularly difficult for those who manage the contracts as often their contractors who are members of CPAC are often aware of program changes before staff are aware.

5.3 FINDINGS FROM STAGE THREE:

The third stage of research involved a review of tools and processes used for collaboration to better understand what types of measures the ministry could put into place in order to support collaboration.

5.3.1 TECHNOLOGICAL TOOLS

Technological tools were reviewed against each phase of the innovation cycle. The use of technological tools at each stage of the innovation cycle is possible and could support the movement toward a learning organization. However, further research is required with both staff and contractors to determine their level of comfort with collaborative technology.

Understanding the extent to which collaboration tools could be utilized is particularly important in a decentralized delivery model such as the EPBC. The use of collaborative discussion boards is particularly promising as, if used effectively to share information at the idea generation and idea selection phase in particular, they could help both staff and CPAC members to be more included in the process. This in turn would, provide more opportunities for all to understand the issues being addressed, the importance of the work, and be able to anticipate impacts of change ahead of time.

5.3.2 COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

Though Communities of Practice (CoPs) are a well-known mechanism for sharing knowledge, they have three significant drawbacks in promoting innovation. First, they are often closed systems (i.e. little change in membership or direction) and are therefore at risk of becoming static in terms of their knowledge base and of becoming resistant to change. Secondly, they are ad-hoc groups that grow organically and therefore the processes are difficult to control and take time to develop. Finally, the direction of a CoP is at risk of being overtaken by the most influential member(s) of the group which is not in line with a social innovation paradigm which draws its strength from collaboration, incorporating ideas from many sources and gathering information from the crowd.

5.3.3 INNOVATION COMMUNITIES

Innovation Communities provide more of a measure of control over the direction of the work being addressed than do CoPs, as they are brought together to work on a specific project. In this respect the innovation communities are more akin to the CPAC working groups which are also brought together for a specific purpose.

CPAC working groups are managed using project management tools which are also utilized by innovation communities.

Some aspects of the innovation communities that could support improvement of CPAC working groups is a clear understanding of the promotor roles found in the research and how each of these roles can enhance the success of the group. Understanding the roles, particularly where the ministry is directly involved in the process, will enable the ministry to ensure staff skills match the group need.

Successful Innovation communities have members who fill five key roles (though some roles may be filled by the same person). The following chart illustrates how well the roles in CPAC working groups align with the research on promotor roles.

Promotor Role	Ministry counterpart in CPAC working groups
A champion who promotes the project	Co-leads (one ministry and one contractor)
Power promoters who contribute through hierarchical power	Working group sponsors (members of the director or executive groups)
Expert promoters who contribute through their knowledge and expertise	Subject Matter experts from both the ministry and contractor group
Process promoters who bring organizational knowledge	Two levels of process promotor: Ministry and contractors who understand the processes in respective organizations Project managers who ensure the working groups are on track and documenting progress
Relationship promoters who actively encourage an innovation by means of related business relationships both within and outside the innovation community.	Members of the working groups bring their relationships to other contractors and other ministry staff to the working groups

The size of an innovation community is relatively small, with 4 to 7 core members though other members may join and leave during the life of the project. Core promoters are required to maintain the project until the end. The CPAC working groups are able to capitalize on this practice through the use of ministry staff who maintain continuity and are able to orient new members to the group as necessary. The working groups used by the Ministry are slightly larger, ranging from seven to twelve members. They also evolve over time as members leave and others join but a core group has remained intact in ongoing working groups to aid in continuity.

Other findings in the literature as it relates to innovation communities reinforce the practice of ensuring the work groups have the time to form a productive work environment. Innovation communities benefited from time spent at the beginning of the project to ensure the group agreed on the goals of the project. In a similar manner, CPAC working groups form terms of reference at the outset so all members of the group understand the goals of the project.

Performance of an innovation community depends largely on social capital, on the relationships that each promotor brings to the network and their willingness to share the information with the rest of the group to support the project. Performance also depends upon group cohesion. Three types of group cohesion increased productivity: interpersonal attraction of individual team members which was increased through communication between group members both planned and spontaneous, group trust, and a balance of contributions, commitment to a common task and team spirit.

These elements can be encouraged through effective group processes such as initial group agreements (as in the CPAC Working group terms of reference) and effective teambuilding practices, such as encouragement of dialogue, and ensuring equitable work assignments.

Finally, external support in the form of a neutral ‘innovation coach’ supported the communities to resolve areas of conflict during the project. The ministry has implemented a role of a similar nature in a project manager who ensures the work of all working groups remains on track, discusses issues with working group leads and ensures issues are escalated to executive when necessary.

5.3.4 CLINICAL NETWORKS:

Clinical networks differ from innovation communities that were studied in that they were groups within a larger health system that sought improvements to specific practices or processes. Innovation communities were working on new projects that were incremental or separate from an existing system. Clinical networks were working on improving the existing system.

Critical elements to success for these networks were strong group relationships, effective leadership, evidence based work plans and adequate resources.

Successful clinical networks also expressed concern that those outside the clinical network be kept informed and involved in the work being done to improve processes. Keeping those who were outside the specific research project informed helped to diffuse information throughout the larger system.

Clinical networks benefited from a strong network manager to direct the process, implement work plans and run networked operations, as well as project management support. Similar to the champions in innovation communities, strong leadership was required to keep the network engaged and interested.

Networks were more satisfying if the solutions found by the network groups had the resources to implement and evaluate the group’s ideas to determine whether outcomes of the change were successful.

The concept of clinical networks has potential application for improving contractor capacity and shifting the culture toward a learning organization/network. The following are two examples of how this concept could be introduced into practice within the EPBC:

Research Networks

In this example, the Research and Innovation fund could be leveraged to provide leadership in the form of a research design coach to support contractors with limited research experience and expertise to engage in action research or demonstration projects intended to increase capacity to deliver more effective services. The following describes how this might work in practice.

Step 1: The Ministry, either in consultation with contractors, through ICM reports, or the use of specific information gathered through consultation processes (for example the disability white paper consultation or recommendations made by external advisory committees), determines priority areas that require capacity building by contractors.

Step 2: The Ministry engages expertise in research design to support groups of contractors to develop inquiry projects (projects that research specific practices to improve the delivery of services to clients)

Step 3: The Ministry encourages applications from contractors (requiring collaboration with at least one other agency) for inquiry projects to go to the design expert. The design expert ensures the inquiry project meets the criteria set out by the ministry and coaches the applicant to create a research design that can be effectively evaluated to ensure outcomes are improved. These proposals should include a diffusion plan to share the findings.

Step 4: The ministry receives these applications for funding and assesses them, works with the design expert and applicant to clarify questions and then writes contracts under Research and Innovation funding

Step 5: The applicant then executes the contract with support from the design/research expert throughout the process

Step 6: The findings of each research project are shared widely. Promising practices are published and, wherever possible, training is provided to the rest of the contractors.

Learning Networks

The learning network would capitalize on much of the information learned through the success of the CPAC working group collaboration to include practice enhancement. CPAC working groups are formed around program enhancement ideas. Learning Networks would specifically focus on improving the capacity of contractors to deliver services through information sharing between contractors.

The following steps outline how this could work:

Step 1: Determine areas that require capacity building (for example services to clients with mental health issues). This could be determined ideally through input from staff and contractors who could help to determine the priorities for learning. Establish a baseline of knowledge or establish a baseline of current service levels against which to measure future progress.

Step 2: Using a project management approach, put forth a concept document for consideration by contractors and request volunteers to assist in developing an approach to be shared with other contractors

Step 3: Ask for volunteers to be involved. Volunteerism will help to ensure the members of the group have an interest in the subject matter.

Step 4: Using existing practices, establish a terms of reference, timelines and work plan with deliverables and provide project management support to assist the network toward their goals.

Step 5: Initiate learning networks to establish what type of information needs to be shared with others in order to improve services to clients, establish content and process for sharing the information, share the plan through a collaborative share point site so progress can be monitored and learning can begin.

Step 6: Publicly recognize the efforts of learning networks at CPAC meetings, show how efforts have improved outcomes where possible, and highlight other positive initiatives to move the culture toward a learning organization that seeks continuous improvement.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS OR OPTIONS TO CONSIDER

The recommendations from this research fall in three themes: recommendations around ensuring common understanding of social innovation and collaboration; recommendations to increase collaboration at all levels of the organization; and, recommendations to build staff and contractor capacity to deliver and continually improve the EPBC.

RECOMMENDATION 1:

Ensure it is commonly understood by staff and contractors that the EPBC is a social innovation program that it is understood how social innovation differs from programs from previous paradigms.

Specific messages for stakeholders to understand are:

- The launch of the EPBC meant a launch of a social innovation project that must be managed horizontally to be most effective in adapting to change.
- Continual improvement is necessary for the program to remain resilient and adaptive to continual change in the labour market.
- Strong, collaborative relationships with stakeholders (contractors and staff at all levels) are the background to program success.
- A key role of ministry staff is to eliminate silos and to recognize that horizontal management requires accessing the strengths and skills of people at all level of the organization.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

Ensure a common vision and goals for the organization are articulated, shared and owned by all contractors and staff with a role in delivering the program.

- Indicate the importance of creating and sustaining a networked learning organization with the common goal of continuous improvement of client outcomes.
- Establish measurable annual priorities that stakeholders can work collectively to achieve.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

Clearly define the term *collaboration* to ensure a common understanding with contractors and staff.

- In addition to written clarity in either the form of a memorandum of understanding or embedded into the CPAC and Contract Management terms of reference, ensure staff is well aware of how the ministry defines collaboration, how information is gathered and used at each stage of the innovation cycle, and what stakeholders can expect as a result of their input.
- Ensure understanding at the CPAC level about what the ministry is willing to do with recommendations it receives, and how much input contractors will have into decisions.
- Provide written clarity in the terms of reference about how input from external panels will be utilized.

RECOMMENDATION 4:

Establish specific goals and a strategy for achieving the goals for each fiscal year, to guide program improvement.

- Recommend that Steering Committee provide guidance to the organization (including contractors) about specific goals for improvement
- Recommend that the basis for these goals be well articulated and understood and where possible a baseline be established against which to measure improvement.

RECOMMENDATION 5:

Practice intentional collaboration at each stage of the innovation cycle with staff and contractors:

At the idea generation phase:

- at the outset: clearly articulate the parameters of the involvement, encourage participation by as many people as possible, and explain what will happen to contributions
- actively engage contractors and staff and where appropriate, external panels, by asking specific questions that the ministry wishes to answer and ask for brainstorming of ideas
- Recommend utilizing a collaborative web tool so input can be sought from across the organization
- Provide a specific timeframe for ideas to be submitted so as many participants as possible can be involved.

At the idea selection phase:

- Prior to engaging stakeholders, establish the criteria upon which ideas will be selected (example: does the idea meet annual established goals, can it be accomplished in a predetermined timeframe, is there a cost benefit to implementing the idea, which tools and

resources are available and which are not (i.e. can the idea work without changing the computer system), does the idea honour program principles, etc.)

- Post a selection of ideas chosen by steering committee and based on the commonly understood criteria and ask staff and contractors for their feedback on each one (including which are priorities and why, risks, threats, opportunities and strengths).
- Once feedback is received, a focus group may be used to involve a smaller group of actively interested contractors and staff from diverse technical backgrounds, in discussions about which ideas are worth pursuing (based on commonly understood criteria)
- Use collaboration tools that are open to all staff, contractors and their service providers
- Ensure all service providers have access to the collaboration tools

At the idea implementation phase:

- Continue to capitalize on the strengths of the working group processes that the ministry has developed by:
 - Initiating a terms of reference at the outset so goals are clearly defined and understood
 - Ensuring leaders of the working groups have experience (or mentorship to support them) to lead the group in analyzing and developing ideas and are skilled at team building and leveraging relationships
 - Use a director or executive director as sponsors to build in a direct link to steering committee for each working group.
 - Utilize a contractor co-chair where possible. They bring their social capital to the group and are able to leverage their personal network to influence idea diffusion later in the process
 - Ensure project management support for the working groups including clear work plans, opportunities for support and, where necessary, support to solve group conflicts.
- Strengthen the project management capacity of all staff in the organization to ensure the language and culture of contract management is understood by all participants on working groups
 - Introductory on-line training is available through the PSA and it is recommended that all staff participating on working groups take that training.
 - Ensure division processes to support the project management culture are developed and made available to all staff participating on working groups and that the processes are easy to understand and utilize.

At the Idea Diffusion stage:

- Build opportunities to have dialogue and “sense making” for staff, particularly those staff who support the field and CAPAs who are responsible for direct contractor interaction

- Support CAPAs to build competencies in facilitating dialogue with contractors to support improved ‘sense making’ of the changes
- Engage contractors who were involved in idea implementation to support idea diffusion and actively engaging their colleagues. This will encourage consistency of understanding.

RECOMMENDATION 6:

Move toward a learning organization with leadership at all levels.

- Encourage ideas from all levels of the organization (ideas can be captured using the Issues Tracking Tool that is currently in development).
- Strengthen the capacity of staff and contractors to understand the program through opportunities to share information either through collaboration tools, or regular conference calls to discuss specific topics
- Provide acting opportunities to staff in different levels of the organization to work for different branches or work units.
- Encourage contractors to collaborate with each other on projects that will build capacity with or without direct ministry involvement (i.e. partnered research and innovation ‘inquiry’ projects or learning networks)
- Measure success where possible, particularly when efforts have a direct impact on program outcomes.
- Showcase successful and promising practices so others are aware of them. These can be posted regularly on the i-collaborate site.
- Encourage contractors to share promising practices on the site and acknowledge those who do to encourage further participation.

RECOMMENDATION 7:

Increase internal leadership capacity to operate in a distributed leadership model

- Recognized horizontal management relies upon different competencies than hierarchical management.
- Recommend leaders build capacity in relationship building, communications skills such as coaching conversations and conflict resolution skills, project management leadership and the ability to work well across business lines and with stakeholders
- Create a common project management approach that is recognized and utilized consistently across the organization. Create consistent tools and training expectations, and a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities and competencies required to play different roles on project groups.

7.0 CONCLUSION

The results of the research showed that using a systems approach to design and deliver employment programming in BC is a significant shift from traditional government program design and delivery approaches. The resulting Employment Program of BC is a large scale social innovation project.

Sustainable innovation of the EPBC relies on successfully leveraging the collaborative relationships between contractors and the ministry and on opportunities for collaboration within the contractor community.

The recommendations to ELMSD are the first step in supporting the program toward sustainable innovation. Further research would benefit the program in the following areas:

- Validating the ideas from this paper with contractors and staff.
- Learning from implementing practices, particularly those that support movement to a learning organization, to continuously improve and support staff and contractors to build capacity and improve client outcomes.
- More exploration about how to increase leadership capacity to ensure leadership at all levels of the organization.
- Follow emerging information about social innovation as the body of literature is new but growing quickly. In particular, the division could benefit from future longitudinal studies that follow public sector innovation projects and detail the skills and processes that make these projects successful.

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APPENDIX

EPBC GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

Figure3

