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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The year 2009 has been a dynamic period for professional development in the BC Public Service in many ways. April 2009 saw significant performance management policy changes. There were also changes that occurred with employees’ opinions on the subject. Of the drivers in the BC Public Service Engagement Model, Professional Development had the largest drop in scores since the previous survey cycle. Thus the objective of this report is to isolate the sources of this change and determine ways to maximize professional development experiences in the future.

Based on those who have participated in the past three survey cycles, the progress made on Professional Development from 2007 to 2008 was reversed by 2009.

Based on respondent feedback from the past three survey cycles, Professional Development improved one point from 65 points (out of 100 points) in 2007 to 66 points in 2008 and then declined 3 points to 63 points in 2009. In 2009, employee views were less positive about organizational support for learning and development, the quality of training they receive, and their opportunities for developing skills. Of these topics making up the Professional Development driver, scores declined the most on organizational support for work-related learning and development, dropping five points from 70 points in 2008 to 65 points in 2009.

Improving scores mean providing employees with relevant opportunities to develop their skills, particularly among those who are in the middle of their career.

Having adequate opportunities to develop skills was found to be the most challenging of employees’ professional development experiences overall. Scores declined from 63 points in 2008 to 60 points in 2009. In 2009, challenges were the most prominent for respondents between six to twelve years of service with the BC Public Service, with scores averaging at 55 points. Alternatively, those who were at the earliest (less than six months) or latest (more than 25 years) phases of their career were the most positive on this topic, with scores averaging nine points higher at 64 points.

Increasing scores involve investigating what is happening in five other drivers in the Employee Engagement Model.

Given its multi-faceted and central role in the BC Public Service Employee Engagement Model, challenges with Professional Development should always be investigated in the context of the work environment. Professional Development is shaped by what employees are experiencing from five other model drivers. The drivers impacting Professional Development include Executive- and Supervisory-level Management actions, Staffing Practices, Respectful Environment and Pay & Benefits. When respondents’ scores were 75 points or more points on all five of these drivers, Professional Development scores were high, registering at 87 points. Conversely, low scores on these same five drivers resulted in substantially less positive impressions of
their professional development, with scores averaging at 39 points. The results demonstrate the value of understanding and examining employees' professional development experiences in the context of these five drivers; challenges in Professional Development could be a symptom of issues that emerged with one of these drivers in employees' work environments.

Feedback about performance matters.

Challenges in professional development may not necessarily be a symptom of some other issue in the work environment. It could also mean issues stemming from employees' learning or career development needs not being met. For example, respondents who regularly receive feedback about their performance reported significantly higher Professional Development scores compared to those who did not regularly receive feedback about their performance (76 points versus 44 points). Analysis found that 34% of the differences in Professional Development scores could be explained by their beliefs about the feedback they receive. Thus the more employees believe they receive regular feedback, the more positive they are about their professional development experiences because the feedback they receive can be channelled into opportunities for developing their work-related skills.

Maximizing professional development experiences require performance reviews that help employees achieve their performance goals.

Employees who had a performance review in the past 12 months reported significantly higher scores in Professional Development than those who did not have a performance review (65 points versus 52 points). Analysis found even larger differences in Professional Development scores depending on whether respondents believed their performance review helped them to achieve their goals. Respondents who found the review helpful reported Professional Development scores averaging at 77 points, while those who did not find their review helpful reported scores 28 points lower at 48 points.

The trends observed among continuing responders who answered the survey in both 2008 and 2009 are even more compelling. Continuing responders who completed a performance review and found it helpful reported not only the most positive scores (77 points), but also scores that were the most stable over time (i.e., they had no change in perceptions). Continuing responders who completed a performance review and did not find it helpful reported scores that were lower than those who did not complete a performance review at all (49 points versus 51 points). Furthermore this group who did not find their review helpful had the most negative change in perceptions. Their scores decreased 8 points since the 2008 survey cycle. Additional analysis found 24% of the variation in Professional Development scores could be explained by the degree employees believed their review helped them to achieve their goals. Therefore, the results demonstrate that making performance reviews mandatory is not enough. Maximizing professional development experiences rests in the perceived value or relevance of performance reviews for all employees with varying professional development goals and needs at different stages of their career.
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1. Introduction

Professional development within the BC Public Service had a dynamic year in 2009. According to feedback from 23,574 employees who participated in the BC Public Service Work Environment Survey (WES), the Professional Development driver in the Engagement Model had the largest drop in scores since 2008. Changes occurred in a broader context as well with the policy shift to mandatory annual performance plans in the spring and the launching of the Learning Centre later in the fall. What hasn’t changed, however, is the focus on investing in employees and building capacities as per the goals outlined in the corporate HR plan. The objective of this report is to unearth some of the challenges rooted in employees’ professional development experiences. The findings emerging from this in-depth look at Professional Development provide insight on how such challenges can be mitigated in the future.

1.1 Key Research Questions

1. How have perceptions of Professional Development varied over time?

2. How are impressions of Professional Development shaped by other aspects in the work environment (i.e., other drivers in the engagement model)?

3. What kind of impact does the regular delivery of performance feedback have on perceptions of Professional Development?

4. What kind of impact do performance reviews have on perceptions of Professional Development?

1.2 Measuring Professional Development

The three WES question topics that make up the Professional Development driver are pictured in the figure below.

Figure 1: Professional Development is an average of three WES question topics.

In this report, these three topics are averaged together to produce the Professional Development driver score. Where analytically relevant, scores for each of these topics are also presented.

1 Available online at: http://employment.gov.bc.ca/documents/HRPlan_2008.pdf
2. Key Findings

2.1 How have perceptions of Professional Development varied over time?

This question is addressed in two ways. The first part of this section examines scores among respondents who have participated in every WES survey since 2007, while the remainder of this section compares whether differences exist between respondents at varying points of their career.

2.1.1. Examining changes over time

The improvement observed in 2008 was reversed by 2009.

The best indication for determining whether or not improvement has occurred over time rests with feedback from continuing responders. Continuing responders are employees who have answered WES questions for more than one cycle of the survey. These employees allow us to track how their perceptions have changed since the previous survey cycles. Figure 2 below illustrates how perceptions have shifted over the past three years.

Figure 2: Professional Development scores over three survey years

In general, the changes in perceptions among continuing responders mirror the overall respondent population trends. The Professional Development
driver score slightly improved from 65 points (out of 100 points) in 2007 to 66 points in 2008. By 2009, scores declined 3 points averaging at 63 points.²

Of the question topics that make up the Professional Development driver, the largest decline in scores occurred with organizational support for work-related learning and development. The score for this topic fell 5 points from 70 points in 2008 to 65 points in 2009.

Scores deteriorated three points on the other two Professional Development topics. Respondents’ scores on the quality of the training they received slipped from 66 points in 2008 to 63 points in 2009, while the generally more challenging topic about having adequate opportunities to develop skills, dropped from 63 points in 2008 to 60 points in 2009. Trends clearly demonstrate that among continuing responders, the improvement seen in Professional Development from 2007 to 2008 was reverted by 2009.

2.1.2. Comparing differences between employees at different points in their career

In 2009, Professional Development scores fluctuated 13 points for employees with over 35 years of service. Respondents with 12 years of service reported the lowest score, while respondents with 33 years of service reported the highest score (56 points versus 69 points, respectively). For ease of interpretation, respondents were grouped into seven distinct service year groups based on the clustering of their Professional Development scores.³

In 2009, those who are in the middle of their career reported more challenges in Professional Development than those early or later in their career.

The nine-point spread in scores across service year cohorts reveals that statistically significant group differences do exist, particularly for those who are in the middle of their career with the BC Public Service (Figure 3).⁴ The greatest challenges with Professional Development were reported by those between six-to-twelve years of service. Alternatively, those who are early or later in their career expressed more positive views about their professional development experiences.

² Multivariate analysis found the changes in scores to be statistically significant for all years, \( p < 0.001 \).

³ With the exception of new hires (i.e., first two years) and the most senior groups (more than 25 years), the boundaries separating employees into different service year cohorts were based on how the scores clustered across service years. Employees were grouped into a separate cohort if the average score for their service year was three points or more than the average score from the previous service year.

⁴ A one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) found differences to be statistically significant at the \( p < 0.001 \).
The cohort with less than six months of services reported a score of 67 points. For those with one to two years of service, scores were three points lower, averaging at 64 points. At the three-to-five year mark, scores took another dip averaging at 63 points. Scores dropped another five points averaging at 58 points among the six-to-twelve-year group and then climbed to 62 points for cohorts between 13 and 25 years of service. Scores shifted to 61 points for the next senior group (21-to-25 years of service) and then increased to 66 points among those with more than 25 years of service.

Having adequate opportunities to develop skills is the biggest challenge facing respondents, especially those with six-to-twelve years of service.

When question topics making up the Professional Development driver were examined, similar trends to those above emerged. For the most part, scores were the lowest for those between six-to-twelve years of service and highest among those either earlier or later in their career. Organizational support for work-related learning and development received the most positive score from all cohorts, although the differences continued to vary up to 10 points between those in the middle of their career and those earlier or later in their career (60 points versus 67 points and 70 points, respectively).

The Professional Development topic that involves the most challenge is having adequate opportunities to develop skills. Respondents with less than six months of service and more than 25 years of service were more positive about
their opportunities for developing their skills than respondents with six-to-twelve years of service (64 points versus 55 points, respectively).\(^5\)

### Table 1: Scores for Professional Development topics across service year groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional Development Driver Topics</th>
<th>(Score out of 100 points)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organizational Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than six months</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One to two years</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three to five years</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six to twelve years</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thirteen to twenty years</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twenty-one to twenty-five years</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 25 years</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents who have been in the BC Public Service longer tend to have more uniform views about organizational support for work-related learning and development, the quality of training and development, and their opportunities for skills development. For example, scores on these three topics for respondents with less than six months of service differed by six points. Scores for these same topics among those later in their career (21 years or more) differed by only three points.

### 2.1.3. Exploring changes across cohorts since 2008

*Perceptions became less positive for those earlier in their employment with the BC Public Service.*

An analysis of Professional Development scores for continuing responders revealed that perceptions of professional development became less positive over time, regardless of service year group (Figure 4). Since the 2008 survey cycle, those later in their career reported a smaller change in views compared to those earlier in their career.\(^6\) For example, scores from 7% of the respondent population who were within six months of entering into their career as a regular employee fell almost 11 points, from 74 points in 2008 to 63 points in 2009. Scores from 10% of the respondent population who have more than 25 service years, decreased 2 points, from 69 points in 2008 to 66 points...

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5 A one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) found differences to be statistically significant at the \(p < 0.001\).

6 Paired t-tests found year to year differences for each cohort to be statistically significant at the \(p < 0.001\).
The results on all Professional Development topics for continuing responders across cohorts are listed on Tables 3 to 6 (pages 23 and 24 in the Appendix).

Figure 4: The largest drop in Professional Development scores were reported by those earlier in their employment than those later in their career.

The results in general suggest that Professional Development needs change over time and vary depending where one is in their career. The next sections of this report explore what could be influencing these trends. First, the work environment drivers that impact perceptions of Professional Development, as per the BC Public Service Employee Engagement Model, are reviewed. Second, perceptions of Professional Development in the context of three other WES topics measuring experiences with performance feedback and performance reviews are examined.

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7 The continuing respondents with less than 6 months of service were auxiliary employees during the 2008 survey cycle who became permanent employees before the 2009 survey cycle.
2.2 How are impressions of Professional Development shaped by other aspects of the work environment (i.e., other drivers in the engagement model)?

The BC Public Service Employee Engagement Model, which is based on responses to the 2009 Work Environment Survey (WES), illustrates the linkages between aspects of the work environment and how these aspects interact to produce higher or lower levels of employee engagement.

How people answer the questions that make up the engagement model predicts how they will answer the questions for the characteristics of engagement. For example, when people agree with most of the driver questions, they tend to be more satisfied with their job, more satisfied with their organization and more committed to the BC Public Service – in other words, they tend to be more engaged. Therefore, the engagement model tells us what parts of the work environment we need to improve to increase employee engagement.

**Professional Development is impacted by five other drivers in the Engagement Model.**

Employees’ impressions about the quality, availability and support of their professional development experiences are shaped by what they are primarily experiencing from five other model drivers, including Executive- and Supervisory-Level Management, Staffing Practices, Respectful Environment and Pay & Benefits. Figure 5 displays how the Professional Development driver is connected to these five drivers. The arrow depicts the causal relationship and the colour of the arrows represents the strength of the relationships.

**Figure 5: Drivers of Professional Development**

8 This is based on the standardized path coefficients when structural equation modelling analysis was performed on all variables in the engagement model.
**Professional Development rests on both levels of management.**

Employees’ views about their work-related learning and development opportunities are dependent on the clarity, timeliness and kind of communication they receive from both levels of management, especially Executive-level Management. The relationship with Executive- and Supervisory-level Management (i.e., Management) means that both levels have a significant and combined effect on views pertaining to Professional Development. The ways in which executives and supervisors integrate professional development opportunities into day-to-day work offers a good indication of how the employees’ career trajectory fits within the organization’s future direction.

In 2009, employees reported mixed views towards their Executive- and Supervisory-level Management. Thirty-eight percent reported satisfaction (i.e., high scores averaging 75 points or more) on one of the two levels of management, while 28% reported satisfaction on both levels of management. The remaining 34% reported satisfaction on neither level. When we linked these different views to their perspectives about professional development, the impact Management has on Professional Development became apparent (Figure 6). In actuality, there was a 35 point difference in Professional Development scores between the most extreme views. When respondents were satisfied with both levels of management, their views about their Professional Development were extremely positive, with scores averaging at 81 points. Conversely, when respondents were not satisfied with both levels of management, Professional Development scores were substantially less positive, averaging at 46 points.

*Figure 6: Professional Development scores according to how many Management drivers respondents reported to be satisfied with.*
The results further demonstrate that positive experiences from at least one management level may not be enough to improve professional development experiences for respondents. Professional Development scores for those who reported satisfaction on just one level of management averaged at 63 points.

Clearly employees need communication and support from both levels of management when it comes to their work-related learning and development experiences and opportunities. It is up to Supervisor-level Management to keep employees informed and consult them on key areas of their professional development, while it is up to Executive-level Management to articulate a clear, timely and consistent picture of how they will build internal capacity to ensure long-term success of the organization.

**Employee impressions of Staffing Practices, Respectful Environment and Pay & Benefits also make a difference in their views about Professional Development.**

Besides the management-employee relationship, there are three additional drivers in the work environment that influence employees’ opinions about their professional development: Respectful Environment, Staffing Practices and Pay & Benefits. These three drivers are considered to be *cornerstone drivers* in the model because they affect employee engagement by primarily influencing other drivers in the model, like Professional Development. These drivers set the stage for rewarding Professional Development experiences and opportunities.

For example, staffing actions conducted through a fair and merit-based selection process can send a strong message about how executives and supervisors acknowledge professional growth. Thus an employees’ Professional Development driver score will erode if he or she perceives their organizations’ staffing practices are not fair or merit-based. The 46% of respondents who were satisfied with their work unit’s Staffing Practices (i.e., scored 75 points or above) also reported scores averaging at 74 points for Professional Development. For the remainder who were not satisfied with Staffing Practices (i.e., scored lower than 75 points), Professional Development scores were 22 points lower at 52 points.

Employees’ views on Pay & Benefits are also linked to Professional Development as pay is often a tangible way of recognizing professional growth and achievement due to work-related learning and training. If employees believe they are fairly paid for the work they do, they are more likely to believe their organization provides adequate opportunities for high quality work-related training opportunities. Survey results show that 37% of employees who were satisfied in the area of Pay & Benefits scored an average of 73 points on Professional Development, while those who were notably less satisfied with Pay & Benefits reported a score of 56 points on Professional Development.

The fifth and final driver directly impacting perceptions of Professional Development is Respectful Environment. Employees are more likely to view Professional Development opportunities as genuine, fair and equitable for all if
diversity is valued, work units are free from discrimination and harassment, and work units have a healthy atmosphere where mutual trust and respect exists. The 59% of employees who believed this to be the case reported scores averaging at 71 points on Professional Development, while employees who did not believe this to be the case reported lower scores averaging at 49 points.

The most positive professional development experiences occur when respondents’ needs are met on all five drivers.

All five of these drivers can play a role in improving Professional Development scores both collectively and individually. Professional Development scores become more positive as the number of drivers that respondents were satisfied with increases. For example, when respondents’ reported satisfaction (i.e., scores were 75 points or more) on all five drivers, their views about the availability and quality of, and support for, Professional Development were very positive at 87 points (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Professional Development scores according to the number of drivers that respondents reported to be satisfied with overall.

On the other hand, respondents’ lack of satisfaction on all five drivers (i.e., scores less than 75 points) resulted in substantially less positive impressions of Professional Development with scores averaging at 39 points, reflecting a 48-point spread. The average Professional Development score for the group who reported satisfaction on three drivers is 69 out of 100 (third bar from the right in Figure 7); while the average Professional Development score for those who reported needs met on two drivers is nine points lower (60 out of 100;
fourth bar from the right in Figure 7). Overall, as the average of one or more drivers dropped below the satisfaction threshold level of 75 points, the Professional Development score fell consecutively by 8 to 11 points.

Professional Development’s multi-faceted, central position in the model makes the interpretation of its scores challenging. When it comes to understanding findings for any given work unit or organization, one should not examine Professional Development scores in isolation. Professional development experiences may be better understood by connecting and comparing scores to the results on the five other drivers that are impacting experiences. In doing so, one could deduce whether Professional Development challenges are a symptom of some other aspect in the work environment that needs improvement.

2.3 What kind of impact does the regular delivery of performance feedback have on Professional Development?

Work-related learning and goal-setting cannot exist without feedback. Ideally, feedback sets the standards of performance by alerting employees to performance areas that need improvement while also reinforcing their areas of strength. In WES, one question topic touches on employees’ experiences with feedback, specifically measuring whether employees regularly receive feedback about their performance. BC Stats decided to explore this topic with Professional Development to determine whether or not regularly receiving feedback makes a difference to respondents’ experiences with Professional Development.

Less than half of employees regularly received feedback about their performance.

Of the 23,524 employees who answered this question, 44% reported they regularly received feedback about their performance (Figure 8).9 Just over one in four did not believe they regularly received feedback. Slightly more (28%) had mixed views about receiving feedback. However, overall the present rate of those regularly receiving feedback is up three percentage points since last year when 42% believed this to be the case.10

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9 Yes = response option “Strongly Agree 5” + “4”; Partly? = response option “3”; and No = “Strongly Disagree 1” + “2”.
10 Previous 2009 reports are different because results were based on weighted data and excluded “Not Applicable” or “Don’t Know” responses.
Employees who received feedback on a regular basis have more positive views about their Professional Development.

Analysis found substantial differences when comparing Professional Development scores between respondents with varying opinions about regularly receiving feedback.\textsuperscript{11} Respondents who regularly received feedback were the most positive about their Professional Development, with scores averaging at 76 points. Those who did not regularly receive feedback were the least positive, with scores averaging 32 points lower, at 44 points. Those who had mixed views about regularly receiving feedback scored in between the others with scores averaging at 59 points. To see the results for the Professional Development driver and its topics, please refer to Figure 9 below.

Figure 9: Professional Development driver and topic scores based on the degree respondents regularly received feedback about their performance.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Figure9.png}
\caption{Professional Development driver and topic scores based on the degree respondents regularly received feedback about their performance.}
\end{figure}

Generally across topics, employee perceptions about organizational support were the most positive, while their views on the adequacy of opportunities for developing skills were the least positive. The difference between groups who did or did not receive feedback regularly was the largest on the topic pertaining to having adequate opportunities to develop skills. Those who did

\textsuperscript{11} A one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) multiple/post hoc group test (Bonferroni) found differences to be statistically significant, \( p < 0.001 \).
not believe they regularly received feedback scored 40 points on this topic, while those who had the opposite view scored 34 points higher at 74 points.

These results show that when it comes to Professional Development, feedback matters. Additional analysis found 34% of the variation in Professional Development scores could be explained by perceptions of feedback. For every one point increase in scores on regularly receiving feedback, Professional Development scores likewise improved by 0.58 points. Thus, the more regularly employees receive feedback about their performance, the more positive they will be about their professional development experiences because the feedback they receive can be channelled into instructive opportunities for developing and/or refining their work-related learning skills and needs.

2.4 What kind of impact do performance reviews have on perceptions of Professional Development?

In the WES questionnaire, performance reviews were defined as a formal appraisal and/or an informal conversation with employees’ supervisors about their performance. In April 2009, a new performance management policy was approved making more formal appraisals a mandatory requirement for all employees. This appraisal, otherwise known as the Employee Performance and Development Plan (EPDP), is a government-wide evaluation process, which aims to provide a transparent and structured way of reviewing employees’ contribution to organizational success. It also serves as a tool to identify learning and development activities that employees are expected to fully engage with in order to enhance their skills and abilities in their current job or to prepare them for future career opportunities.

BC Stats examined whether performance reviews, such as the EPDP, make a difference to experiences with professional development. The first part of this section explores Professional Development with the WES question topic assessing whether they had a performance review in the past 12 months. The second part of this section studies Professional Development alongside a second WES question topic measuring the degree in which respondents found their performance review helpful.

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12 A linear regression analysis found this to be statistically significant, $p < 0.001$. 
2.4.1. Completion of Performance Reviews

The majority of respondents had a performance review in the past 12 months.

Of the 23,574 employees who completed the survey, roughly three in four had a performance review in 2009, while 18% did not have a performance review (Figure 10). The remaining five percent reported ‘don’t know’ or ‘not applicable’ to the question (3% and 2%, respectively). In comparison to last year, more respondents had performance reviews in 2009. The overall completion rate is up four percentage points from 73% in 2008.

Respondents who had a performance review also reported more positive views about their professional development experiences.

Respondents’ Professional Development scores were compared based on whether or not they had a performance review (Figure 11). Results revealed that those who completed a performance review had Professional Development scores that were 13 points higher than those who did not (65 points versus 52 points, respectively).

13 The rates are different from what was previously reported in 2009 because calculations were based on weighted data and “Not Applicable” and “Don’t Know” responses were removed from the previous results. For more details, please refer to BC Stats (2009) Exploring employee engagement in the BC Public Service. Report prepared for the BC Government.

14 A one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) multiple/post hoc group test (Bonferroni) found differences to be statistically significant, \( p < 0.001 \)
Respondents, who did not know whether they had a performance review, reported slightly better scores (55 points) than those who did not have a review. Those who indicated that the performance review was not applicable for them reported the highest score at 66 points. Additional analysis of this group found the majority (81%) of respondents who reported not-applicable responses were employees with two or less years of employment with the BC Public Service, with more than half (57%) having less than six months of employment at the time of the survey.

Respondents who had a performance review had higher scores on all Professional Development topics than those who did not have a performance review. Figure 12 displays the scores for all topics based on their participation in performance reviews.
The largest difference in scores across topics rested with perceptions of organizational support towards work-related learning and development. Scores for this topic were 14 points higher for those who had a review compared to those who did not have a review (67 points versus 53 points, respectively). Respondents who indicated that the performance review did not apply to them also had more positive perceptions as well, particularly on their views about organizational support for work-related learning and development.

### 2.4.2. Helpfulness of Performance Reviews

The next analysis concentrates specifically on respondents who had performance reviews over the past 12 months. The first part of this section reviews the extent to which respondents found their performance reviews helpful in achieving their performance goals, while the second half examines how the perceived helpfulness of their performance review made a difference to their views on Professional Development.15

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15 Yes = response option “Strongly Agree 5” + “4”; Maybe = response option “3”; and No = “Strongly Disagree 1” + “2”.

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Less than half of employees believed their performance review helped them to achieve their performance goals.

Figure 13: The extent to which respondents believed their performance review helped them to achieve their performance goals.

Of the 18,022 respondents who had performance reviews, less than half (44%) believed their review helped them achieve their goals. Conversely, one in four believed their performance review did not help them achieve their goals. Another 31% reported mixed views about their review. Overall fewer respondents in 2009 found their performance review helpful compared to the previous survey cycle. The overall rate is down two percentage points from 46% in 2008.

Respondents who had helpful performance reviews also reported significantly more positive professional development experiences.

When comparing scores across Professional Development driver topics, the overall trends are generally similar to those found in earlier sections. The analysis however, encountered fairly large differences between respondents who had helpful performance reviews and those who did not.

Respondents who indicated their performance review helped them achieve their performance goals had the most positive impressions about their professional development. Scores for this group averaged at 77 points (Figure 14). Alternatively, those who did not find that their performance review helped them achieve their goals scored significantly lower on Professional Development, with scores averaging at 48 points. Those who expressed mixed views about their performance review scored in between the other two groups with Professional Development scores averaging at 60 points.

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16 The rates are different from what was previously reported in 2009 because calculations were based on weighted data and “not applicable” and “don’t know” responses were removed from the previous results. For more details, please refer to BC Stats (2009) Exploring employee engagement in the BC Public Service. Report prepared for the BC Government.

17 A one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) multiple/post hoc group test (Bonferroni) found differences to be statistically significant, p < 0.001
As seen in previous sections, the most challenging topic for all groups was perceptions about having adequate opportunities for developing skills. The between-group differences were the largest on this topic as well. Those who did not find their performance review helpful reported scores averaging at 45 points, while those who found their performance review helpful reported scores averaging 30 points higher at 75 points.

*When it comes to professional development experiences, it is just as problematic, if not more so, to have an unhelpful performance review as to not have one at all.*

The results reveal that respondents who completed performance reviews reported higher Professional Development scores than those who did not. However, the results also show that respondents who completed performance reviews in 2009, and consequently did not find the review helpful, reported Professional Development scores that were lower than those who did not complete a performance review at all.

Take for example continuing responders who completed the survey in both the 2008 and 2009 survey cycles (Table 2). Continuing responders, who completed a performance review and subsequently found it helpful, not only reported the
highest Professional Development score (77 points), but also reported scores that remained unchanged since 2008. Alternatively, continuing responders who completed a performance review and did not find it helpful, not only reported the lowest Professional Development score but also the largest decline since 2008, with scores averaging at levels slightly lower than those who did not complete a performance review at all (49 points and 51 points, respectively).

Table 2: Professional Development driver scores for continuing responders based on their completion of a performance review in 2009 and the degree they found their performance review helpful.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Continuing Responders who ...</th>
<th>Professional Development Driver Score (Out of 100 points)</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>Change</th>
<th>Total Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Had a performance review and ...</td>
<td></td>
<td>68</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>13,529</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>found it helpful</td>
<td></td>
<td>77</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5,939</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>found it partly helpful</td>
<td></td>
<td>66</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>-5</td>
<td>4,166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>did not find it helpful</td>
<td></td>
<td>57</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>-8</td>
<td>3,270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not have a performance review</td>
<td></td>
<td>58</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>-7</td>
<td>2,659</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional analysis investigated how much respondents' opinions about the helpfulness of their performance review influenced their perceptions about their professional development overall. Regression analysis found that such opinions explained 25% of the variation in Professional Development scores. For every one point improvement pertaining to the helpfulness of the performance review, Professional Development scores likewise increased by 0.5 points.\(^{18}\)

Using the performance review process to maximize employee success in achieving performance goals does make a positive impact on perceptions about professional development experiences. However, the reverse is also true. If employees believed their review did not help them achieve their performance goals, then the review actually did more harm than good in regards to their overall opinions about professional development.

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\(^{18}\) A linear regression analysis found this to be statistically significant, \(p < 0.001\).
3. Conclusions and Recommendations

Professional Development became more challenging for employees in 2009, especially those who are in the middle of their career (i.e., 6 to 12 years). The challenges seen in 2009 may be due to issues with professional development experiences per se or a symptom of some other issue(s) in the work environment. As per the Engagement Model, employees’ impressions about their professional development are shaped by what they are experiencing from five other drivers, which include Executive- and Supervisory-level Management actions, Staffing Practices, Respectful Environment and Pay & Benefits. When employees’ experiences on all five of these drivers are satisfactory, their Professional Development scores are also very high. Thus, a key step to improvement requires studying results from these five other drivers to determine if scores are triggered by challenges with another driver it is connected to.

The challenges seen in 2009 may also be a reflection of specific learning or career development needs not being met, especially with having adequate opportunities to develop skills. However, improvements do not necessarily mean investing more time in training. According to the results, improving experiences means providing employees with adequate opportunities to develop and strengthen their skills.

The results also remind us to pay particular attention to three additional WES topics that are not in the Engagement Model. Professional Development challenges could be a function of the mechanisms used to support professional development such as feedback channels and performance reviews. If Professional Development challenges exist, it may be due to respondents not receiving enough feedback about their performance. Results demonstrate that respondents who regularly receive feedback reported significantly higher scores than those who did not. Results also illustrate that simply making performance reviews mandatory is not enough. According to the results, respondents who completed performance reviews that were not helpful actually reported lower scores than those who did not have a performance review at all. The government’s policy adjustments in response to the economic downturn may have also left more employees questioning the value of performance reviews at a time when there were restrictions placed on training expenditures. Therefore management facing these challenges should engage employees in a meaningful performance review that helps them to connect the dots between their professional goals and what it will take to achieve them. Future strategies should focus on maximizing the personal relevance of reviews for all employees with varying professional development needs at different stages of their career.

The findings in this report lead to more questions that are beyond the scope of this present analysis, primarily due to the lack of measures on the subject of performance reviews. For example, what is it about the performance management process that employees are not finding helpful? Is the root of the issue stemming from the e-performance tool or the nature of discussions with
supervisors? Are particular stages in the performance management process (i.e., plan, focus or review) more vulnerable to challenges than others? To better isolate the source of the issues, such topics could be measured formally in future WES cycles or discussed informally between management and their staff.

Other opportunities for deeper insights involve linking and analysing Professional Development scores with the data available from the e-performance tool such as the frequency employees are involved in training as well as supervisory performance ratings on work goals and performance. How do employees’ job performance match up to their views about professional development? What is the best way for the employee to gain the required competencies, knowledge, skills, or abilities, while nurturing their strengths and future aspirations?

Of note is the particular timing of the 2009 survey cycle. The collection of the 2009 survey data coincided with significant changes in performance management policy and preceded the fall launching the Learning Center. The differences that have occurred in Professional Development since 2008 therefore cannot be attributed to changes in the Performance management policy per se, but it does provide important baseline information that can be used to compare ratings in 2010. In doing so, we can learn the difference the Learning Centre may be having on employees’ professional development experiences in future years.
Table 3: Year-to-Year changes in the Professional Development driver overall for different cohorts of continuing responders.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employee Cohort</th>
<th>Professional Development Driver (Score out of 100 points)</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Survey Year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than six months</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>74</td>
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<tr>
<td>One to two years</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three to five years</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six to twelve years</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thirteen to twenty years</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twenty-one to twenty-five years</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 25 years</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Year-to-Year changes in Organizational support for different cohorts of continuing responders.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employee Cohort</th>
<th>Organizational Support Score (Score out of 100 points)</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Survey Year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than six months</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One to two years</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>74</td>
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<tr>
<td>Six to twelve years</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>66</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thirteen to twenty years</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twenty-one to twenty-five years</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>68</td>
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<tr>
<td>More than 25 years</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Table 5: Year-to-Year changes in Opportunities to Develop Skills for different cohorts of continuing responders.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employee Cohort</th>
<th>Opportunities to Develop Skills (Score out of 100 points)</th>
<th>Survey Year</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than six months</td>
<td></td>
<td>58</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One to two years</td>
<td></td>
<td>61</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
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<td>Three to five years</td>
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<tr>
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<td>56</td>
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<td>59</td>
<td>63</td>
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<td>Twenty-one to twenty-five years</td>
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<tr>
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<td>60</td>
<td>66</td>
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Table 6: Year-to-Year changes in Quality of Training for different cohorts of continuing responders.

<table>
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<th>Change</th>
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<tr>
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<td>65</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One to two years</td>
<td></td>
<td>64</td>
<td>68</td>
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<tr>
<td>Three to five years</td>
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<td>64</td>
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<tr>
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<td>62</td>
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<tr>
<td>More than 25 years</td>
<td></td>
<td>66</td>
<td>68</td>
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</tbody>
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If you have any questions about the information in this report, please contact BC Stats.
250-387-6744