



PROJECT BACKGROUNDER

BC Chamber Network Playbook Project Small Business Resiliency, Restart and Transition to Recovery Playbook Project



BUSINESS READINESS

WHAT SHOULD YOUR BUSINESS DO NOW?

Where is your business on the COVID-19 workforce recovery continuum?

Purpose and Key Features

The purpose of the project is to develop and distribute regionally customized “Small Business Resiliency, Restart and Transition to Recovery Playbooks” to provide small businesses across the province with strategies to effectively respond and adapt to COVID-19 workforce challenges during and after the pandemic. It is funded by the B.C. Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training through its Sector Labour Market Partnerships (SLMP) Program. Key features are:

- November 2020 through December 2021
- Project guidance by a Governance Committee of regional small business representatives
- Engagement with regional stakeholder panels
- 7 regionally customized Playbooks distributed through the BC Chamber network and informed by:
 - Extensive research, data-gathering and best practices
 - Business and local Chamber of Commerce/Board of Trade expertise
 - Responses to the BC Chamber’s BC *MindReader* pulse check surveys
- Instructional (“how-to”) and capacity-building webinars for local businesses
- Playbook updates to adapt to changing conditions
- Direct local Chamber of Commerce input in Playbook development, distribution and updating

The BC Chamber of Commerce (BC Chamber) is the largest and most broadly-based business association in British Columbia—representing more than 120 chambers of commerce and boards of trade, and 36,000 businesses of every size, from every sector and region of the Province. As such, it is uniquely positioned to support BC’s business recovery from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Background and Context

BC’s businesses have been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. As the province moves through a phased restart and towards an economic recovery, business and organizations are facing many challenges including extra safety precautions and disruption to traditional business models.

Many businesses across BC, particularly those in rural and remote areas and those not solidly connected to a business association, lack tailored and practical tools and clear, concise information to remain resilient and re-open/recover their business during and after the pandemic. COVID-19’s impact and governments’ and businesses’ responses represents the biggest economic, labour market, social and public health upheaval in our lifetimes. According to a BC Chamber July 2020 BC *MindReader* pulse check survey of over 1,400 BC businesses, two-thirds (65%) of businesses surveyed were using some form of government support:

- Businesses expected substantial negative impacts should these programs expire too quickly and only about 28% expected to return to normal once the programs end. Of the remainder, 32%, 27% and 24%,





BC Chamber of Commerce

Know what's on BC's mind.

respectively, expected to reduce employee hours, lay-off or terminate employees and anticipate taking on debt. One-in-ten will have to close either temporarily or permanently.

- Key barriers to getting employees back to the office or workplace were social distancing requirements (38%), employees' reluctance to return to the workplace due to safety concerns at the workplace (35%) and getting to/from work (22%).
- In its October 2020 *MindReader* survey, the BC Chamber found top issues where business feel the need for support were jobs and employment, health and safety, and support for small business (each with 44%). The survey showed that 53% identified the "cost of doing business" as the biggest factor impacting business; and "skill of available labour pool" and "availability of workers" were the next biggest factors (30%).

Regional Playbooks

During the COVID-19 pandemic, small businesses throughout BC have needed and will continue to need help to respond to workforce adjustments precipitated by the pandemic. Rapid responses will be needed to help businesses and workers during workforce, workplace and operational upheaval. The Playbooks are about planning and preparing but is also very tactical and about taking action now on workforce and operational challenges, needs, risks and opportunities precipitated and/or exacerbated by the pandemic.

1. *Strategies and tactics to protect the health and safety work workers, for example:*
 - Helping businesses navigate essential information from WorkSafeBC, industry safety associations and other authoritative sources of information
 - Helping businesses navigate business and workforce supports from governments
 - Building on real-time WorkSafeBC, Government of Canada, BC Government, Small Business BC and several industry sector association information, tools and resources
2. *Planning to review workforce mobility and facilitate return to work and reskilling, for example:*
 - Determining mission-critical roles and plans for how work and workspace might be changed
 - Confirming current workforce impacts by sector, occupation, region and demographics
 - Projecting future changes in labour demand and supply and imbalances
 - Mapping of skills by sector as a tool for redeployment and return to work
 - Understanding the unique needs of various talent pools and their demographics
3. *Tactics to engage, retain and motivate staff during uncertain times including communication strategies for staff working remotely and building business resilience, for example:*
 - Defining a communication strategy to engage, retain and inform
 - Determining employee support and wellness mechanisms
 - Reviewing HR policies and procedures and developing new incentives and recognition programs
 - Managing and engaging a remote workforce while working from home
 - Developing new reskilling strategies to help workers pivot to new work and acquire new skillsets
 - Managing transitions during new testing, vaccination and other public health measures
 - Investing in digital technology to increase the speed of how businesses pivot to new opportunities

The Playbooks are toolkits of hands-on strategies to help businesses manage pandemic-produced workforce challenges. They will be online, desktop-published, user-friendly, easy-to-navigate with use of hyperlinks and templates for tools, etc.

This project will complement the work of others such as WorkSafeBC, Small Business BC, the BC Small Business Roundtable and individual industry sector associations and focus on niche market of small businesses throughout BC, particularly those in smaller and rural and remote communities.

The Project is led by a governance committee composed of representative individuals, project partners that will be responsible for providing guidance on the project's direction and reviewing and providing input on all project deliverables.

The BC Chamber respectfully acknowledges our place of work is within the ancestral, traditional and unceded territories of the X'məθk'əyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwəta?i/səliłwulh (Tsleil-Waututh) and that we serve the Peoples of the many Nations throughout British Columbia.



LOOKING FORWARD: 2021 + BEYOND
Business and Workforce Planning
During and After COVID



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