



Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion  
Centre canadien pour la diversité et l'inclusion

# Success stories

Insurance Corporation of British Columbia (ICBC)

A case study in diversity and inclusion

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## ICBC: A Canadian success story in diversity and inclusion

By Gavin Pollard & Karn Singh, policy studies students, Mount Royal University. Thank you to Magda Trespalacios Rubio, BC, Organizational Development Consultant at ICBC, for talking with us. You have been instrumental in helping to create the content for this success story. We would also like to extend our gratitude to Coordinator, Program Delivery Dennis Chang, for providing additional content, peer review, and connected us with IEC-BC's Senior Leadership Team whom also provided exceptional comments/feedback. Last but certainly not least, we would like to express thanks to mentor/mentee pair Elisa and Keira for providing personal feedback on their experiences with the MentorConnect program.

### Introduction to ICBC and the insurance industry

The Insurance Corporation of British Columbia (ICBC) is a crown corporation which was founded in 1973. It is based in Vancouver, British Columbia. ICBC provides vehicle and driver licensing services, vehicle registration services and fines collection on behalf of the provincial government. ICBC invests in fraud prevention and road safety initiatives to promote a safer driving environment throughout British Columbia. ICBC today has over 5,000 employees.

### Why diversity and inclusion is important to ICBC

The organization is composed of a diverse population, therefore diverse representation is key. ICBC believes that feeling included is important to promoting and preserving creativity, productivity, and physical and mental wellness.

As BC becomes increasingly diverse, ICBC continues to see the opportunity and responsibility to understand and better respond to changing needs of their workforce and customers.

ICBC is committed to promoting values such as integrity, dedication to customers, and accountability (to themselves and each other, by extension, the actions and successes of their business). They also pride themselves in a workplace culture which fosters care, respect, and dignity. Furthermore, inclusivity is not merely an ideal, it is expected. This is why ICBC was successful in promoting a mentorship initiative, called MentorConnect, alongside both the employees of ICBC and 7 ERGs.



## ICBC partnership & IEC-BC's MentorConnect initiative

ICBC is directly partnered with the Immigrant Employment Council of BC (IECBC). This is a partnership which is devoted to connecting employees of ICBC with new comers to Canada who have a similar educational and work experience background than the employee; by doing so, employees can share their experience and network as well as learn about the barriers faced by new comers. This objective is achieved through emphasis of a mentoring relationship (e.g., building human capital) to integrate new comers into the Canadian workplace.

It is important to note that while the initiative is supported by ICBC, it was actually initiated and promoted by the Ethnicity Employee Resource Group. However, the goal of the program is not restricted to the Employee Resource Groups.

## MentorConnect Program Benefits & Goals

There are three distinct stakeholder groups that are essential to MentorConnect program successes: employers, mentors, and mentees. Below are the benefits and corresponding goals for each.

### Employers

- » Demonstrate sector leadership by building a more culturally competent aware staff;
- » Advance staff professional development by increasing access to a diverse and skilled talent pool;
- » Increase local and global connections by reaching out to appropriate prospective organizations; to create a program that is 12 hours over a two-month period with referrals to two or more professionals (from the mentor's network) to help build the newcomers local network.

### Mentors

- » Increase coaching and leadership skills by contributing to a workplace culture where diversity is celebrated at a professional level; and
- » Enhance cross-cultural coaching skills by garnering insights into global perspectives from around the world.

### Mentees

- » Increase the understanding of BC labor market by making professional networks and networking strategies more accessible; and
- » Benefit from guidance, encouragement, and support in pursuing career goals through receiving industry-specific advice on professional licensing requirements and regulations.



## IEC-BC partnership & mentorship initiative challenges/barriers

Regarding the partnership with IEC-BC itself: it was fairly straightforward according to Magda Trespacios Rubio, Organizational Development Consultant at ICBC. She said that it was primarily a matter of:

- » Reaching out to the many members of their organization all across BC in an effort to promote the initiative; and
- » Ensuring alignment of external partnerships with the mandate of the Ethnicity ERG to celebrate ethnic and cultural diversity to create a workplace where everyone feels included.
- » Rubio also identified believing in having something to offer as being an important philosophy for a successful partnership.

When it comes to the mentorship initiative – It was sometimes difficult to help newcomers with integration into Canada, because of:

- » Finding an appropriate occupational match for the mentee who is seeking guidance. There are people willing to be mentored, but the program goes further than merely matching any mentor to any mentee. Matches are based primarily on Statistics Canada's National Occupational Classification Codes (NOCs) and North American Industry Codes (NAICs). Likewise, background, education, and/or number of years of experience are also important considerations for the match. These considerations are vital for helping mentees better understand the Canadian workplace in the context of their profession. The challenge here is, finding a match between the skills and experience of the mentor with those of the mentee; and
- » Time constraints of mentoring each individual (e.g., managing time commitments to personal lives).



## Mentorship initiative process

The process of the initiative has much to do with:

- » Aligning partnership goals with internal mandate to build a communication plan (e.g., lunch and learns with representatives of IEC-BC which were conducted both face-to-face but were also streamed online). This process, in turn, helped to create an engaging and accessible platform to discuss goals and requirements for the initiative;
- » Making intranet stories and articles on the content of the initiative as accessible as possible;
- » Prospective mentors being in direct contact with IEC-BC when it came to mentorship applications, rather than involving administrators, to increase efficiency of operations;
- » Mentors may not be immediately connected to a mentee, the time it takes for this process to unfold depends entirely upon the needs of the mentee; and
- » Providing continuous sources of information (e.g., brochure pamphlets) for ongoing support to newcomers.

The MentorConnect Program matches job ready mentees with occupation-specific mentors in the same occupation (e.g., IT, Human Resources, Accounting) in order to provide a better experience – mentoring through the lens of what it is actually like to work in the profession in Canada.

ICBC also makes sure that each mentor connects their mentee with at least two other people as part of the MentorConnect networking referral process. This practice helps to promote a diverse education of experience and grow a newcomer's professional network.

## Defining success & weakness, and initiative results

While there is currently not enough data to identify concrete results, ICBC's Ethnicity Employee Resource Group constitutes success as having active participation and constantly developing awareness surrounding the realities of adjusting as a newcomer to Canada.

A challenge that ICBC's Ethnicity Employee Resource Group has identified, is only being able to reach out to a small portion of the population – currently 10 employees as of March 31, 2019 to be mentors. Ideally, this number will grow over time.



## Impacts of best practices on supporting mentorship initiative

The Ethnicity Employee Resource Group attributes the following factors to success in supporting the mentorship initiative:

- » Executive sponsorship involvement – through encouragement and clear communication from them;
- » Ensuring aims of sustainability – by connecting with initiatives which are like-minded; and
- » Pursuing a culture of personability – by ensuring benefits and goals are clearly identified through stories and personal experiences rather than theoretical data.

## Personal Experiences

Mentor/mentee pair Elisa and Keira shared some of their thoughts and experiences on what the MentorConnect program was like.

In response to their general impressions of the MentorConnect program, Elisa thought it was good way for people to know more about the workplace in Canada, and Keira saw it as an opportunity for new comers to connect with professionals – making an easier transition in to the Canadian labour market.

As far as the most successful aspect(s) of the program, Elisa described the most two prominent ones as: helping people connect with one another and receiving information and advice from the mentor. From Keira's perspective, the most successful part of the program was that two connections to the mentees were provided by the mentors – which allowed for additional ways for mentees to search for jobs and build a professional network.

In regard to challenges faced by the mentor/mentee pair, Elisa thought the most difficult challenge was finding a good time for them to connect with one another – as a crucial way to understand one another. Keira responded saying, “that [she] did not have the exact same background as Elisa” (having a bachelor's degree and Elisa having a PHD), so she spent time communicating with Elisa to make sure there was no gap in understanding the type of jobs available to her.

When it came to the matching process, Elisa commented on her registration of the program website, then receiving an email from one of the coordinators to begin directly talking to Keira.

Through participation in the MentorConnect program, Keira expressed understanding in the existence of a lot of 'hidden' jobs which are only available through referrals. This has caused her to actively take part in networking.



When asked what recommendations they had to improve the program, Elisa highlighted the checking points of the program as being pretty standard so recommended sending out a Yes/No checklist and one open question to evaluate the program. Keira, on the other hand, recommended that there be a pool of mentors and mentees to have 'multiple-to-multiple professional network meetings' as opposed to just having one-on-one meetings.

## Next steps

ICBC is currently waiting to obtain more results from support of the mentorship initiative. Thus while they do not have any specific future initiatives planned, they continue to have multiple priorities which are a focus. Such priorities include: Creating a workplace where employees feel valued and have opportunities to grow and develop; and supporting the communities they serve.

## Recommendations

ICBC provides the following recommendations for others who wish to support various initiatives:

- » Ensure alignment of intentions and goals between partners;
- » Have a strong reason as to why the partnership exists and what the expected outcomes are; and
- » Make clear connections to inclusion and workplace culture.

## Performance indicators

ICBC points to two metrics which may help others replicate the success of their results:

Number of employees registered – a higher number indicates that mentorship is widely needed, through the initiatives, this demand can not only be met but can also lead to societal prosperity. So far, ICBC mentors have created 4 established connections with newcomers to Canada.

Number of connections made – a higher number indicates a greater ability to collaborate knowledge, methods, and actions; to smooth the process of newcomers integrating into Canada.

Note: Incoming results will undoubtedly highlight additional impacts and performance indicators.

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