PROFESSIONAL LEARNING IN THE EARLY YEARS SECTOR

An Analysis of Business Models Used by Professional Development Training Providers in 2015

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Introduction

This report is an analysis of business practices by training providers in the early years sector in British Columbia. It forms the second part of an environmental scan entitled *Professional Learning in the Early Years Sector: An Environmental Scan of Early Years Sector Professional Development Opportunities in 2015.* This report describes business practices of key informants who plan and deliver training to early years sector professionals. Information from this report will be used to inform the design of a professional development web solution. This analysis addresses structures and processes based on data obtained through the petition of four questions:

TIMING
What time of the year do you typically complete the planning for professional development opportunities?

FUNDING
What is your funding source?

EXTERNAL FACTORS
What external factors influence the provisioning of professional development opportunities?

RECRUITMENT
How do you recruit participants to your professional development opportunities?

Figure 1: The planning cycle

Methodology

Interviews were conducted with 50 key informants representing agencies, associations, and education institutions in British Columbia. Forty-eight interviews were completed over the phone and two were conducted in-person.

It was determined early in the data collection phase that many training events are coordinated and delivered through the Child Care Resource & Referral (CCRR) programs. Evidence of this was depicted in the environmental scan, which identified a total of 524 face-to-face workshops offered by the CCRR programs throughout the province in 2015. Because of their prominent role in professional development delivery, a goal of this scan was to interview as many CCRR program coordinators as possible. As a result, 31 out of the 50 interviews were conducted with CCRR program coordinators throughout B.C. These interviews inform the interpretation of emerging themes and trends identified from responses to the four business model questions.

Limitations

This report provides an overview of business models used by B.C. organizations that deliver training to early years professionals. The scope of this analysis is restrained by the sample size of 50 key informants, many of whom work in the early care and education system.

Findings

The Planning Cycle

Timing
What time of the year do you typically complete the planning for professional development opportunities?

The timeframe for planning professional development was influenced by the scale and structure of the training experience. Conferences were planned six months to a year in advance in order to retain eminent speakers and secure suitable venues. For smaller events, planning was completed three to six months ahead of time. CCRR program coordinators suggested that planning for workshops took place three to four months in advance in order to publish and distribute information through various communication channels. The time between April and August was cited as the most common period during which planning occurred. Many key informants mentioned that planning was also emergent and responded to ongoing needs of professionals as they materialized.

External Factors
What external factors influence the provisioning of professional development opportunities?

Client feedback, professional networks, funding, and time were prevailing factors that influenced the provisioning of professional development in 2015. Most key informants described professional development as practitioner-driven: training design and focus is guided by the needs and interests of early sector professionals. These needs were verified informally through conversations and phone calls and more formally through surveys distributed at the end of professional development events or on an annual or biannual basis to intended beneficiaries.

Networking played a significant role in the planning and coordination of professional development. Meetings between agencies, service providers, and specialists afforded opportunities to determine

learning needs, identify optimal resources, and reduce scheduling conflicts or redundancies. Networking happened in a variety of ways. Leaders of regional jurisdictions arranged monthly teleconferences to share needs and ideas. Training advisory committees comprised of early years sector stakeholders met to exchange information, coordinate funds, and recommend plans to support professional learning at the community level. Licensing officers from health authorities networked with CCRR program coordinators to identify needs among child care providers and propose training that would be most relevant. Training providers working in multi-service agencies relied on interactions with their colleagues to explore and determine professional development needs and offer training. These regional, community, and agency collaborations shaped the delivery of professional development for those in the early years sector.

Key informants suggested that funding was a major influence on how and when professional development was delivered. Funding affected the selection of trainers and venue, as well as the coordination of transportation for both speakers and attendees. CCRR program coordinators suggested that community partnerships played a critical role in supplementing their yearly professional development budgets. This level of funding, in and of itself, was insufficient to cover expenses like speaker's fees or costs associated with the logistics of delivering a regional conference. Many CCRR program coordinators collaborated with representatives from other agencies such as Success By 6 and Children First to consolidate funds and broaden the scope of professional development opportunities for their community.

Time was an emerging theme that influenced planning and delivery of professional development. Delayed confirmation of yearly funding contracts affected the content and scheduling of training events.

> *"Planning will happen for training once the funds for the training grant are guaranteed. This confirmation of funds usually happens in April, but sometimes it has been delayed and I don't find out until September. Because of the timing of the funding, we plan free or very low cost events from April to September and events that incur a cost are planned for September to the end of March.*
>
> CCRR Coordinator, Vancouver Island

The time of year also influenced the coordination of speakers and scheduling of training events. In rural and remote communities it can be challenging to convince speakers and trainers to travel during the winter season; consequently, professional development was planned for the spring and fall.

> *"We usually plan events for early fall and late spring… A lot of the professional development facilitators live down on the Coast so to get them to come up here to do training… they refuse to come up here past the end of October."*
>
> CCRR Program Coordinator, Northern Region

Key informants also suggested that fewer professional development opportunities are planned in the summer because potential participants have other scheduling priorities.

> *"In the summer a lot of our child care providers don't work or work more."*
>
> CCRR Coordinator, Interior Region

> *"We don't host anything over the summer because a lot of our care providers take time off over the summer."*
>
> CCRR Coordinator, Fraser Valley Region

These communication, planning, and time-related processes were significant factors that influenced the delivery of professional development in British Columbia.

Recruitment Efforts
How do you recruit participants to your professional development opportunities?

Figure 2 indicates tools and practices for recruiting participants, listed in order of prominence. Email was cited as the most common way to promote training events. Key informants said they rely on their email networks and their partner email networks to "cross-pollinate" professional development opportunities to a broad audience. Although email was a favoured tool, key informants also described some of its disadvantages related to access and redundancy.

1.	Emails
2.	Newsletters (attached to emails or posted on a website)
3.	Website posts
4.	Facebook
5.	Phone calls
6.	Printed newsletters
7.	Posters
8.	Newspaper ads (for larger events)
9.	Radio ads (for larger events)
10.	Site visits
11.	Faxes

Figure 2: Marketing tools in order of prominence

> *"Now you have to Google what you are looking for or hope that you are on someone's email list that is going to send you the information. Once you're in the role for a while you're in the email list."*
>
> Early Years Centre Coordinator, Northern Region

> *"What we have found is that we send out materials about upcoming workshops, but the owners/directors don't pass it on to their staff. We got feedback from some people last year saying that they weren't aware that they put on any training because their director didn't pass it on. But now I am developing a list of individual emails, and I'm hoping that will alleviate the issue."*
>
> Program manager, Okanagan Region

Newsletters, many of which include a calendar of training events, were also used to advertise professional development opportunities. CCRR programs publish newsletters between two and four times a year. In addition to these circulations, some CCRR programs send out weekly or biweekly email bulletins to announce upcoming training and networking events. Newsletters were also printed for members without Internet access or posted on bulletin boards in multi-service agencies that receive a lot of foot traffic.

Websites were also used to attract participants to training events. Events were posted on agency websites, community websites, the Early Childhood Educators of BC website, and the CCRR BC online calendar.

Facebook was an emerging tool for recruitment. Many agencies used Facebook to communicate resources, tips, and professional development opportunities sponsored by various local, regional, and provincial agencies. Key informants described the effectiveness of Facebook and other social media tools to reduce costs and engage younger generations of people.

> *"We don't do any paid ads anymore. Those days are gone. We used to advertise something on the radio, local cable TV, and newspaper. Everything we do [now] is free except for a little colour printing. The EYC (Early Years Table) is now using Twitter and Instagram. That's what the parents are using, so we're using what the parents and the care providers are using."*
>
> CCRR Coordinator, Interior Region

> *"Last year we ran three different sessions, and I marketed it only on Facebook and it filled every time. The nice thing about social media is that it is free. A radio ad is super-expensive and even a coloured ad in the newspaper is so expensive and our younger families aren't reading it anyway."*
>
> CCRR Coordinator, Northern Region

Despite the prominence of these online communication tools, several key informants discussed the effectiveness of face-to-face communication to engage participants in professional development opportunities. For some communities, traditional forms of communication were more effective.

> *"Our personal connection is what engages them to come out. Getting to know them and knowing what their challenges are."*
>
> CCRR Coordinator, Northern Region

Online communication through email, websites, and social media channels were the most prominent ways agencies and associations promoted their events in order to recruit as many participants as possible. Face-to-face communication was also valued as a way to develop rapport with potential participants and cultivate interest with professional learning events sponsored by community agencies.

Funding Source
What is your funding source?

Most key informants interviewed in this scan represented provincial agencies that relied on funding from the Ministry of Children and Families. CCRR program coordinators consolidated their funds with other agencies such as Success By 6 and Children First in order to expand the reach and scale of professional development events. Other sources of funding that were cited included contributions or in-kind support from regional trusts (Columbia Basin Trust), post-secondary institutions, provincial associations, literacy organizations, health authorities, rotary clubs, school boards, and municipalities.

Conclusion

The report aimed to document prominent business practices used by professional development training providers throughout British Columbia in 2015. Interviews with 50 key respondents provided information about the planning cycle, external factors, recruitment efforts, and funding sources that influenced the planning and delivery of professional development opportunities. The analysis of these business practices will help to inform the design of a professional development web solution to support those who coordinate or seek professional learning opportunities in the early years sector.

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Appendices

Appendix A – List of Interviewees

Name	Position	Organization	Location	Interview Date
Kim Chernenkoff	Director	Early Childhood Services	Prince George, B.C.	Aug. 18, 2015
Diana Elliott	Provincial Advisor	Aboriginal Infant Development Programs (AIDP)	Victoria, B.C.	Aug. 18, 2015
Catherin Bunce	Program Coordinator	Sunshine Coast Child Care Resource & Referral (CCRR)	Sechelt and Gibsons, B.C.	Aug. 19, 2015
Susan Forest	Program Manager	Justice Institute of British Columbia Centre for Counselling & Community Safety	New Westminster, BC	Aug. 24, 2015
CC Duncan	Owner	4children.ca	Powell River, B.C.	Aug. 25, 2015
Crystal Janes	Director of Programs	Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre	Vancouver, B.C.	Aug. 27, 2015
Beulah Munson	Manager of Children Services	Williams Lake CCRR	Williams Lake, B.C.	Sept. 2, 2015
Emily Mlieczko	Executive Director	Early Childhood Educators of BC	Vancouver, B.C.	Sept. 2, 2015
Nadine Gagné-L'Hirondelle	Provincial Advisor	Aboriginal Supported Child Development (ASCD)	Victoria, B.C.	Sept. 2, 2015
Katherine Charbonneau	Program Coordinator	CCRR South Peace Region	Dawson Creek, B.C.	Sept. 3, 2015
Judy Riddell	Coordinator	Berry Patch CCRR	Prince Rupert, B.C.	Sept. 3, 2015
Cari Charron	Program Coordinator	Quesnel CCRR	Quesnel, B.C.	Sept. 4, 2015
Joseph Dunn	Provincial Director	Success By 6	Burnaby, B.C.	Sept. 5, 2015
Sue McIntosh	Program Coordinator	Trail and Castlegar CCRR	Trail, B.C.	Sept. 8, 2015
Tyler Summer	Chair	School Age Child care Association of B.C.	Vancouver, B.C.	Sept. 8, 2015
Heather McBryan	Coordinator	CCRR North Peace Region; Success by 6; Children First	Fort St. John, B.C.	Sept. 9, 2015
Coco Schau Skeena	Program Consultant	Skeena CCRR	Terrace, B.C.	Sept. 11, 2015
Lisa Vienneau	Advisor	AIDP Northern Region	Prince George, B.C.	Sept. 11, 2015
Alicia Embree	Program Coordinator	Haida Gwaii CCRR	Queen Charlotte, B.C.	Sept. 11, 2015
April Macri	Regional Coordinator	ASCD Vancouver Island	Victoria, B.C.	Sept. 15, 2015

Erica Henderson	Coordinator	Cariboo Family Enrichment Centre Program; 100 Mile House CCRR; Early Years Centre	100 Mile House, B.C.	Sept. 18, 2015
Kathy Petursson	Coordinator	Early Childhood Development; MOST for Children; Smithers CCRR	Smithers, B.C.	Sept. 21, 2015
Maria Gargnelli	Program Supervisor	Abbotsford CCRR	Abbotsford, B.C.	Sept. 21, 2015
Rita Romeo	Program Coordinator	East Kootenay CCRR	Cranbrook, B.C.	Sept. 23, 2015
Vanessa Morley	Coordinator	Child Obesity Foundation	Vancouver, B.C.	Sept. 23, 2015
Linda Chell	Program Coordinator	Revelstoke CCRR	Revelstoke, B.C.	Sept. 23, 2015
Jodie Tucker	Founder and CEO	Kids Matter	Abbotsford, B.C.	Sept. 23, 2015
Jenn Keilty	Program Coordinator	Golden CCRR	Golden, B.C.	Sept. 24, 2015
Carrie Reiter	Program Coordinator	Penticton CCRR	Penticton, B.C.	Sept. 24, 2015
Trina Devine	Program Coordinator	Vernon CCRR	Vernon, B.C.	Sept. 24, 2015
Dave Somerville		The Early Years Professional Development Centre	Nanaimo, B.C.	Sept. 25, 2015
Heidi van den Berg	Development Clinical Leader	Supported Child Development (SCD) Program, Queen Alexandra Centre	Victoria, B.C.	Oct. 1, 2015
Diane Lee	Program Manager	Tri-Cities YMCA CCRR	Coquitlam, B.C.	Oct. 5, 2015
Pippa Rowcliffe	Deputy Director	HELP UBC	Vancouver, B.C.	Oct. 5, 2015
Valerie Irvine	Training Coordinator	Family Support Institute	Vancouver, B.C.	Oct. 5, 2015
June Maynard	Manager	Parent and Child Resource Programs North Shore	North Vancouver, B.C.	Oct. 5, 2015
Sue Khazaie	Executive Director	B.C. Association of Family Resource Programs	Surrey, B.C.	Oct. 6, 2015
Heather Todd	Manager	SCD Program, North Okanagan Neurological Association	Vernon, B.C.	Oct. 7, 2015
Belinda Macey	Program Coordinator	Victoria CCRR	Victoria, B.C.	Oct. 8, 2015
Daphne Raymond	Program Coordinator	Sooke/Westshore CCRR	Sooke, B.C.	Oct. 8, 2015
Laura McInnes	Program Coordinator	Langley CCRR	Langley, B.C.	Oct. 8, 2015
Joanne Schroeder	Executive Director	Comox Valley Child Development Centre	Courtenay, B.C.	Oct. 9, 2015

Janis Arner	Program Coordinator	Kamloops CCRR	Kamloops, B.C.	Oct. 13, 2015
Sue McIntosh	Program Coordinator	Sea to Sky CCRR	Squamish, B.C.	Oct. 13, 2015
Sharlene Wedel	Program Coordinator	Child Care Options CCRR	Surrey, B.C.	Oct. 13, 2015
Jo-Anne Mackenzie	Program Coordinator	Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows CCRR	Maple Ridge, B.C.	Oct. 14, 2015
Sue Warren	Child Care Consultant	Pacific CARE CCRR	Courtenay, B.C.	Oct. 15, 2015
Joel Kaplan	Executive Director	B.C. Council For Families	Vancouver, B.C.	Oct. 28, 2015
Alicia Larson	Program Coordinator	Kelowna CCRR	Kelowna, B.C.	Oct., 29, 2015
Kim Atkinson	Pedagogical Facilitator	University of Victoria	Victoria, B.C.	Nov. 4, 2015

Appendix B – Interview Questions

1. What time of year do you typically plan professional development opportunities?
2. What external factors influence the provisioning of professional development opportunities?
3. How do you market the professional development opportunity? Or how do you recruit participants?
4. What is your funding source?
5. Any other comments you wish to make?
6. Do you have any questions?