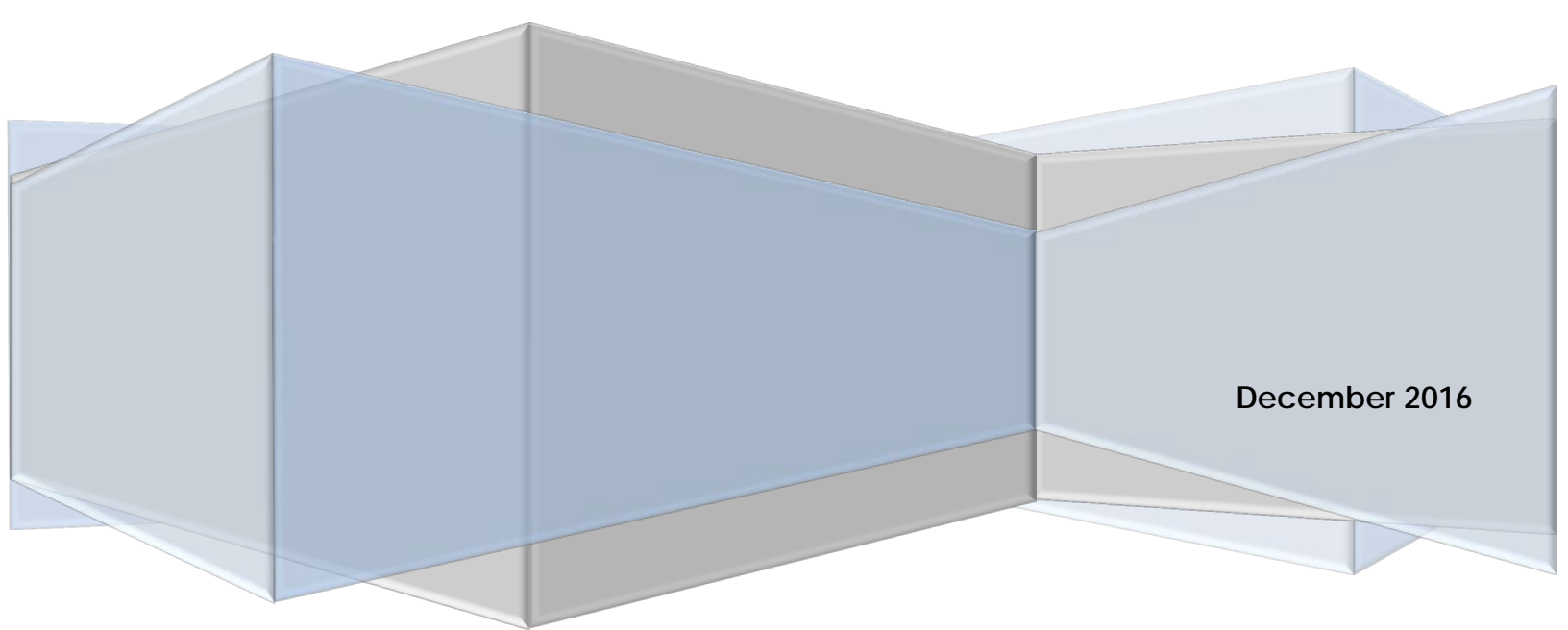




# WE DRIVE CHANGE

Western Economic Diversification Canada

**Blueprint 2020 Progress Report**



December 2016



Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD) is dedicated to living the Blueprint 2020 vision and recognizes the importance of making engagement part of our culture. Whether that means creating a sustained and transparent dialogue among staff and senior management or better serving Canadians through more openness and collaboration.

As we move into the second half of Blueprint 2020, WD is committed to continuing to develop and deliver concrete actions that will better serve Canadians now and into the future.

## Our Story

WD promotes the development and diversification of the Western Canadian economy and advances the interests of the West in national economic policy, program, and project development and implementation.

WD's economic development mandate allows it to deliver diverse programs across the West to support communities, business, and not-for-profit organizations. Additionally, WD is responsible for developing policies to support economic development and diversification in Western Canada – such as clean technologies – and helping business grow, innovate, and export.

The Department is headquartered in Edmonton and has an office in the National Capital Region. There are also five regional offices located in Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Edmonton, Calgary, and Vancouver. WD capitalizes on the talents of its staff, with approximately 300 employees in Western Canada and Ottawa, to seize economic development opportunities throughout the West.

## Transition

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WD experienced a transitional period this year as the department became part of the Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED) portfolio.

This new working environment has positioned WD to better serve Canadians by taking advantage of its collaborative structure. This includes seizing opportunities to share tools and resources with other Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) under the ISED portfolio.

WD's shift in focus to support an innovation agenda, and the investment in and support of clean technology, are priorities that we continue to integrate into our programs, initiatives, and services.

Other highlights of WD's mandate priorities include:

- Supporting business to increase exports, grow trading relationships, and take advantage of new trade agreements;
- Promoting economic development and creating jobs for Indigenous Peoples;
- Identifying Industrial and Technological Benefits for Canadian firms, including the National Shipbuilding Procurement Strategy;
- Supporting small- and medium-sized enterprises in taking advantage of government financing and export-oriented supports; and
- Reducing administrative burdens on small businesses.



In order to support WD staff through this transition period, a learning event was provided to all staff to discuss highlights from transition documents and the work involved in preparing for the transition. An open floor discussion was held to provide employees with the opportunity to share experiences with regard to process and policy changes.

## Respectful Workplaces

WD's positive workplace can be attributed to several factors, not the least of which is a culture of leadership at every level. WD employees understand that public service values and professionalism call on us all to help create and nurture a respectful work environment.

WD's senior management takes a "people-first" approach to managerial decisions. This is evidenced by strong Public Service Employee Survey (PSES) results, low complaint rates, and one of the lowest reported harassment rates in the Federal Public Service. Throughout 2015/16, WD received no complaints related to harassment, staffing, discrimination, or human rights and received a very low number of grievances.

Part of the pride of working at WD can be shown by the results of [Alberta's Top 70 Employers Award](#). In recognition of WD's positive work environment, such as providing an opportunity for employees to balance work and their personal lives, WD was awarded this distinction in 2016.

WD has often gone above and beyond expectations in sustaining its healthy workplaces. Examples include:

- Moving to **Office Modernization ("Workplace 2.0")** accommodations in several of our offices over the course of 2015/16. Employee committees were established to work on this project to ensure the voices of all would be heard, and management transparency was ensured through the use of step-by-step updates to all staff and repeated invitations to raise concerns through local working groups. To date, WD has modernized the Saskatoon, Ottawa, and Edmonton offices. Project kick-off meetings and planning have begun for the Winnipeg and Calgary offices, while the Vancouver modernization project will begin in the coming months.

Changes to the workplace can be stressful and disruptive to employees. Therefore, the National Occupational Health and Safety (NOHS) and Regional Occupational Health and Safety Committees play a key role in mitigating health and safety issues by supporting staff during workplace changes and making recommendations to senior management. The committees' involvement and participation in all areas of the office modernization initiative ensure optimum employee health and safety, and allows for lessons learned to be applied to any future workplace change.

- **Regional action plans developed and implemented in response to PSES results.** Despite very positive results in the 2014 PSES, WD continues to collaborate with employees in addressing areas of concern. A specific example of this is the coordination of a regional presentation by the Office of the Public Sector Integrity Commissioner on disclosure and recourse methods, which was designed to ease reported fear of reprisal for initiating formal recourse processes.
- Encouraging the **resolution of workplace conflict or any kind of interpersonal concerns through the least formal methods.** Our experience with the use of proactive Informal Conflict



Management Services has demonstrated that face-to-face discussions and a frank discussion of issues leads to the most lasting and satisfying resolutions for all parties.

- Fostering a healthy work environment by management through understanding of and adherence to the rights of employees that are enshrined in legislation, collective agreements, and employer policies. **WD managers respect the value of transparency** in their staffing decisions by making appointment announcements that describe the choice of process used, the candidate's background, whether a Public Service Commission priority appointment was being made, and more.
- **Deputy Minister's "Let's Talk" sessions.** In the spring of 2015, WD's Deputy Minister travelled to each of WD's offices and met with all employees in small groups for open-ended discussions regarding the organization's accomplishments, continuing challenges, and opportunities for business process improvements.

An action plan was developed following these meetings that grouped the nearly 40 ideas and concerns. WD's Executive Committee and associated work units have already committed time and effort to address more than half of the actionable items raised. For example, language training – interest in a departmental approach and access at all levels – was an action item raised by staff. In response, WD's Key Learning Priorities now address language maintenance and development. In addition, WD's Guidelines for Learning and Professional Development outline a phased approach for support in language learning. Lastly, WD also supports its bilingual employees to maintain their language proficiency by providing the opportunity for staff to join the *Official Languages Twinning Program* developed in partnership with other RDAs.

The remaining ideas/issues are ongoing and continue to be acted upon. These longer term action items have been broken down thematically into the following sections: Learning; Professional Development and Career Progression; Systems, Practices and Procedures; and Health and Wellness. WD believes that it is through our collective efforts and engagement that issues will be addressed and ideas will generate innovative and lasting change.

## Mental Health

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WD is committed to providing a safe, healthy, and respectful working environment for its employees. Through our work on Occupational and Health Committees, Workplace Renewal Local Working Committees, information sessions, and our ongoing day-to-day interactions with one another, we are striving to create a workplace where employees are respected and encouraged to reach their full potential.

WD has pursued a robust workplace wellness and mental health program inspired by the National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace and has made significant progress in complying with the requirements of this voluntary standard.

WD's actions to date are aligned with the Federal Public Service Workplace Mental Health Strategy. The National Occupational Health and Safety Policy Committee (NOHS) has made mental wellness a pillar equal to physical well-being in its WD Wellness Activity Plan. WD's 2016-2017 Wellness Activity Plan encourages both physical well-being and mental wellness of its employees through nutrition, physical



fitness, work-life balance, stress management, and other activities which support personal wellness. Most of the activities that comprised the 2015-2016 Wellness Activity Plan have been completed.

- **Appointment of a champion for mental health**

Because the mental wellness file falls within the NOHS portfolio at WD, our champion for mental health is also the NOHS National Management Co-Chair and Occupational Health and Safety Champion. Bram Strain, Assistant Deputy Minister for Manitoba and Saskatchewan Regions, occupied this role until his departure from the organization in the spring of 2016. In his absence, the roles of Occupational Health and Safety Champion, and Mental Health Champion have been filled by Martin Sutherland, Director, Policy, Planning and External Relations, and senior Executive on the NOHS committee.

*“ I have been hearing this mantra for years that we need to destigmatize mental illness and it finally seems as though our culture is really changing to make that possible. I have been astonished by the courage that people have shown in our workplace, during town halls and mental health training sessions, in speaking up about their own experiences dealing with a mental health issue. As an employer and as a workplace we are finally realizing that protecting the wellbeing of employees means treating mental health as equally important as physical health. Raising awareness, combating stigma, and continuing to support our colleagues not only makes good management and business sense, it’s fundamentally the right thing to do. ”*

*Martin Sutherland (Occupational Health and Safety Champion, Mental Health Champion)*

- **Employee learning sessions**

Contracts were arranged with the National Speaker’s Bureau and the Speaker’s Bureau of Alberta to provide a series of Resiliency workshops to all staff. The Canadian Mental Health Association was also engaged to provide *Mental Health @ Work* training to all WD staff. Employee Assistance Services (EAS) continues to provide presentations to employees on the counselling services available to them via EAS.

- **“Not Myself Today” (NMT) campaign**

WD’s current Corporate Wellness Activity includes participating in the Partners for Mental Health organization’s “Not Myself Today” (NMT) campaign, which is led by the department’s national and regional occupational safety and health committees. Launched by WD’s Deputy Minister during Mental Health Week, the goal of the NMT campaign is to raise awareness and to combat stigma by demystifying mental illness, debunking myths associated with mental health, and encouraging dialogue around various mental health themes. The campaign includes promotional material, regional awareness-building activities, considerable online resources for employees, and weekly infographics on mental health displayed on the WD intranet (*WDnet*) to keep the dialogue open. These efforts have led to ongoing discussions about the effects of mental health issues in the workplace and the role various departmental staff should play in identifying and addressing warning signs. These discussions have led to increased awareness and dialogue on the subject. A great number of employees have signed and displayed their pledge to support a workplace focused on mental health.



- **Flexible working arrangements**

WD has made efforts to increase awareness of flexible working arrangements that may be requested by employees and has outlined principles and considerations for managers who are tasked with approving these arrangements. By supporting an increased utilization of flex-time, compressed workweeks, part-time schedules, telework, leave with income averaging, and pre-retirement transition, WD aims to reduce employee stress, while supporting family and personal health and wellness.

Ongoing activities throughout the year include: brown bag lunches with speakers, posters displayed in offices, regional fitness challenges, and the sharing of information to staff pertaining to Body Bulletins and several major national health campaigns (e.g, Diabetes Month, Movember).

## Official Languages

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WD fosters employee understanding of their Official Language (OL) obligations and promotes tools that are available to help staff learn and maintain OL skills by having a clear framework to manage and implement OL policies and strategies. Activities include:

- Establishment of an OL Team that spans across the Department and is guided by Terms of Reference and Roles and Responsibilities;
- Development of a departmental OL Policy;
- Creation of a multi-year departmental OL Action Plan that is monitored and the results of which are reported to WD's Executive Committee (EXCOMM). The 2016-19 WD OL Action Plan focuses on Diversity and Inclusion: Canada's Linguistic Duality;
- Staffing practice that results in staff who are appropriately assigned to positions and are able to communicate in both official languages to effectively serve the public in the language of their choice; and
- Participation in federal strategies for Official Languages, including the Roadmap for Canada's Official Languages 2013-18: Education, Immigration, and Communities. Incremental to WD's own investments for Official Language Minority Communities (OLMCs) and official languages, the Roadmap provided WD with \$3.2 million under the Economic Development Initiative (EDI) to be delivered in Western Canada.

During the month of November, WD sent out a staff survey regarding the *Language of Work in the Federal Government*. The results will assist WD in determining if the Department is on the right path to reach our objective of a bilingual workplace. Other activities that help support Official Languages within WD include:

- OL Champion messages, *WDnet* Bulletins, HR or OL coordinator messages, OL Champion and OLA coordinators communications;
- Promotion of OL awareness and learning to staff;
- *WDnet* OL tools and resources (i.e. learning a second official language, use of official languages in the workplace and serving the public, links to the OL Action Plan);
- Promotion and celebration of OL events for the public service such as Linguistic Duality Day and Rendez Vous de la francophonie; and
- Formal and informal bilingual learning events and social events that encourage maintenance of official language skills.



## Recruitment and Onboarding

### Recruiting New and Diverse Employees

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In 2015, WD developed a **Recruitment and Retention Strategy** in order to attract and retain qualified professionals. The strategy aims to raise the department's profile in order to reach a larger pool of potential external candidates.

One component of the strategy is the use of social media to promote job advertisements and to inform the public of the type of work in which WD engages. WD's Policy and Strategic Direction unit tweets out all external advertisements with a national area of selection (jobs open to all Canadians) through the [@jobs\\_gc](#) Twitter handle. In some instances, it will also be posted to our [WD LinkedIn account](#).

**Student recruiting** plays a key role in WD's recruitment action plan. Over the past twelve months, WD has made significant strides in the recruitment of students to assist with new projects and initiatives. Opportunities for career and skills development, as well as mentorship opportunities, have been provided to new staff. As a result, 25% of students hired in the past year have been bridged into the organization following graduation.

Other forms of recruitment include participation at job fairs. WD's presence at a recent job fair held at the University of Alberta allowed WD staff to engage with over 500 students and other job-seekers. The Department's involvement at the fair was tweeted out through the WD corporate accounts ([@WD\\_Canada](#) and [@DEO\\_Canada](#)), which received 424 impressions. Following the career fair, WD gained 22 new followers on LinkedIn (10% gain). WD also made use of the University of Alberta's online recruitment system to advertise the job fair.

Additionally, in order to address a shortage in the Finance Officer (FI) group, WD is participating in a **Tri-Level Pre-professional Finance Officer Program (TPFOP)** pilot program in conjunction with the Government of Alberta, the City of Edmonton, and the University of Alberta. This pilot program will provide CO-OP students with the opportunity to gain valuable knowledge and first-hand work experience through placements in three different public sector environments. The pilot project will be deemed successful once students are permanently placed in positions within one of the levels of government.

### Welcoming and Integrating New Employees

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WD's **Onboarding Program** was launched in 2015 in order to assist managers and supervisors in welcoming new employees to WD. An instructional video, guides, and checklists are accessible on the Department's Intranet (*WDNet*). The program ensures that managers are well-equipped to bring new employees onboard and help them effectively integrate into the organization.

Of particular note are WD's efforts to provide future public servants with a rich work experience. For instance, Saskatchewan region arranged for two FSWEF students and one intern to take part in tours and "shadowing" opportunities. The first tour was a walking tour of downtown Saskatoon's revitalized area. This tour provided an opportunity to speak about the history and mandate of WD, and to see the physical results of the Department's funding efforts on behalf of the Government of Canada since its establishment in 1987. The second tour was a driving tour of innovation projects located at the



University of Saskatchewan and Innovation Place, a world renowned Technology Park. To round out their exposure to the life of a public servant, WD invited the students to shadow officers and officials at a news announcement, as well as attend *The World Indigenous Business Forum* held in Saskatoon where the newly appointed WD Deputy Minister delivered a speech. WD provided funding for the event and the students were involved in the preparation of background material. Lastly, given that Indigenous Economic Growth is a priority for WD and the Government of Canada, the students were invited to witness the Grand Entry and singing competition at Wanuskewin's Heritage Park, a non-profit cultural and historical centre of the First Nations, to see a cultural celebration pow wow.

## Best Use of Available Talent

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WD makes use of available talent within the organization by **providing employees with acting or assignment opportunities** within the department. Employees are often provided with a developmental opportunity in other regions or units and different projects and initiatives (i.e. Canada 150). In 2016/17, 27% of employees were granted the opportunity to gain valuable work experience in a job other than their own.

## Knowledge Transfer

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WD has identified a senior executive to serve as a Learning Champion to strengthen the culture of continuous learning and to benefit from other departmental innovations within the Public Service. This role has been held by James Meddings, Assistant Deputy Minister of Policy and Strategic Direction (ADM PSD), for several years and will be carried over to Jim Saunderson in his capacity as Acting ADM PSD.

**WD learning events** are led by experienced staff members to assist in the transfer of knowledge. Throughout 2016, over 275 participants have attended various learning sessions, such as:

- **WD History:** Events that allow long-time WD staff members to join a panel discussion showcasing the history of the Department and its key programs and initiatives. For example, earlier this year the Ottawa region gave a presentation to staff regarding Defence Procurement. This learning event was well attended and opened a discussion on the evolution of WD's defence procurement and Industrial and Technological Benefits. Staff members gained knowledge of WD's role in the procurement process, recent accomplishments, and learned how WD will continue to engage and inform western Canadian stakeholders of federal defence procurement opportunities.
- **Open Forums:** Sessions that provide staff the opportunity to engage in an open and informal discussion about a given topic (e.g. WD programs and initiatives, the use of Official Languages, etc.), and are led by WD employees with expertise in the subject of the discussion.
- **Follow the Note:** Learning opportunities for employees who contributed to the development of a WD document requiring senior management approval. This initiative allows staff to observe the progress of the document through every stage of approval.

Future learning events are in development and include the integration of TED Talks to encourage innovative thinking and discussion.

Furthermore, WD offers an **informal mentoring program** where experienced employees are paired with new employees and/or students to provide advice and guidance on new projects and initiatives.





Employees are also encouraged to participate in job shadowing for career development if a particular field is of interest to them. These opportunities are identified through the employees Performance Management or Talent Management plan, although other opportunities may exist within the organization.

## Ongoing Actions to Renew the Public Service

In 2013, WD launched an internal engagement initiative (WD2015) that used sustained dialogue, and collective problem solving, to determine how best to strengthen WD programs and services for western Canadian stakeholders. WD2015 helped identify the necessary support required for a high performing workplace and enhanced employee development. The vision and initiatives set out by WD2015 have carried over into the Department's Blueprint 2020 engagement efforts.

WD is committed to maintaining momentum for an open dialogue with staff on the future of both the Department and the Public Service. Throughout the past three years, WD has engaged staff on developing and delivering concrete actions, in order to achieve the vision of the future as outlined by both WD2015 and Blueprint 2020.

Below are some key actions that highlight how WD continues to help renew the Public Service.

- **Results and monitoring products**  
Within WD, providing scope and flexibility to staff to develop results monitoring and reporting products has resulted in the development and internal dissemination of new useful tools that leverage existing technologies (e.g. sector dashboard, performance dashboard). By providing easy access to timely information on projects, officers are able to undertake ongoing monitoring and pursue discussions or corrective measures with clients during the year rather than waiting to year's end. Improved results management tools serves Canadians by making available results information that is more accurate, timely, accessible, and supports better management of government funding by results, rather than activities.
- **Call for Proposals**  
The introduction of the Call for Proposal (CFP) process is providing improved service delivery to Canadians by providing clients with clear direction and guidance on WD's funding parameters and priorities. This in turn allows clients to prepare more targeted proposals that are better aligned with WD's priorities with stronger scope for funding consideration. Consultation with selected groups in advance of the launch of program intakes serves to inform the development of WD's application parameters, and ensures that WD's funding programs better reflect client needs.
  - The **Western Diversification Program (WDP)** is one of the programs through which WD makes strategic investments in initiatives that enhance and strengthen the economy of Western Canada. The WDP Call for Proposals (WDP-CFP) process is a widely accepted business process whereby interested parties develop project proposals and apply for funding. The WDP-CFP process allows for a comparative analysis of projects against clear criteria; strengthens the Department's responsiveness to economic trends and industry needs; and ensures alignment to the Government of Canada plans and priorities.



- The **Western Innovation Initiative (WINN)** offers repayable contributions for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), with operations in Western Canada, to help move new and innovative technologies from the later stages of research and development to the marketplace. As an example of employee engagement and collaboration, WD program officers took the initiative to develop an analysis piece around buyouts and project benefits. As part of this outreach strategy with external stakeholders, WD officers invited private enterprises to share information with the team about private investment options and to explain their due diligence process. WD also held a session with two clients to obtain input and feedback on the Department's processes and the elements being assessed. Afterwards, staff held a team think-tank and developed a document with their ideas and recommendations which was presented to WINN management to help in the project assessment process.
- **Western Canada Business Service Network (WCBSN)**  
In 2015/16, WD accomplished significant systems development with the creation and roll-out of the WD Web portal, and the enhancements made to WD's Client Relationship Management system. These systems support the capture of targets and results data, and allow for the electronic submission of target and reporting data directly from Community Futures organizations, Women's Enterprise Initiative organizations, and Francophone Economic Development Organizations. The new online reporting system provides a more streamlined reporting process for WCBSN partners.
- **New intranet site launched (WDnet)**  
WD has worked to bring a new, responsive, and modern intranet website to the Department. The new *WDnet*, launched in September 2016, uses Sharepoint and allows authorized users to add and edit a web page with little training required. It is a place to connect with fellow colleagues and be informed of what's new at WD. To foster this, the site contains integrated social media features such as a live Twitter feed and buttons to connect via LinkedIn, GConnex, GCFORUMS, GCPedia, and blogs. The new homepage displays trending information in WD with image slideshows, news bulletins, featured content icons, and a list of *WDnet*'s top 5 most visited pages. The *WDnet* platform can also adapt to multiple devices, allowing for easy accessibility through the use of a Surface Pro tablet, laptop, or desktop computer.
- **2016/17 Corporate Business Plan and Service Management Strategy**  
Making these two essential documents available to employees through *WDnet*, as well as hosting a learning session to discuss and respond to questions has fostered an environment of openness and accountability.
- **GCDOCS training videos**  
GCDOCS has been implemented across the Department and is fully operational. It has helped WD better manage and share information. To support this initiative, IMT has developed training videos to help employees learn and refresh their understanding of the GCDOCS system.
- **Social media**  
Maintaining communication with communities of interest is an important aspect of any successful initiative. By increasing departmental social media use, WD has made it easier to



promote programs and highlight project successes. Twitter has become a primary channel to reach audiences and WD's use of this social media platform is growing. LinkedIn has also become an important tool for WD's recruitment, and has been used to communicate and exchange information with stakeholders.

- **National and international tradeshows**

WD participated in a number of national and international tradeshows this year, including Farnborough, CANSEC, Eurosatory, Western Innovation Forum (WIF), and WestDef. This allowed senior delegations the opportunity to:

- Engage prime contractors that have current and potential supplier and investment opportunities in Western Canada;
- Meet with leading western Canadian aerospace companies and other key Canadian stakeholders regarding opportunities and challenges facing the western Canadian aerospace/marine/defence and security industries; and
- Represent Western Canada at official Canadian networking events and provide remarks at regional collaboration events to reinforce the importance of Western Canada's aerospace/marine/defence and security sectors.

A notable success at WD is the hosting of WIF 2015, where WD's influential social media presence assisted in making the conference hashtag (#WIF2015) among the top hashtags trending in Canada at the time of the Forum. For this year's WIF, WD continued to show support with our new DM leading a panel discussion on the Government of Canada's Innovation Agenda.

## Moving Forward

With so many great initiatives under our belt – initiatives that make WD proud of the work we do and proud of the people behind the work – it would be easy to sit back and take a more passive role. But living the Blueprint 2020 vision isn't an afterthought. WD takes ownership of the work that still needs to be done. Here's a glimpse of what to expect from WD in the months ahead as the Department continues to embrace Blueprint 2020:

- Enhance WD's engagement and strategic investments in the clean technology sector.
- Serve as a convener of key stakeholders and advocate for western interests in national decision-making with regard to economic policy, program and project development, and implementation.
- Continue to work with other federal organizations to deliver the Economic Development Initiative as part of the *Roadmap for Canada's Official Languages 2013–2018*.
- Build relationships with key stakeholders, and with other federal organizations, by proactively engaging potential partners, sharing information, and collaborating on economic development initiatives of interest to Western Canada.
- Work with Indigenous Peoples across the West to partner with industry, other government departments, post-secondary institutions, and other organizations in support of business and economic development for Indigenous Peoples and communities.
- Continue to address actionable items from the PSES results and DM Let's Talk Sessions.
- Engage with employees through WD Town Hall meetings and learning sessions, both department-wide and regionally, on priorities and topics of interest to WD staff.



- Continue to improve internal business processes and leverage technology to ensure WD remains a high performing organization.
- Continue to collaborate with other RDAs in exploring opportunities for improvement toward the efficient delivery of their programs and services to Canadians.
- Support talent management through recruitment and retention strategies, including training and employee development, to maintain consistent program delivery, policy implementation, and client service.
- Continued participation in the Government of Canada's office modernization initiative.
- Participate in the migration of departmental website content to the one-stop [Canada.ca](https://Canada.ca) website to ensure government programs and services are accessible to the public.

