Environment and
Climate Change Canada

Environnement et
Changement climatique Canada

Management Practices Review of the Public Affairs and Communications Branch

April 2023

Canada

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Executive summary

Background

The Public Affairs and Communications Branch (PACB) at Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) provides professional support services and expertise in parliamentary and cabinet affairs, communications, ministerial services, experimentation on departmental processes, youth engagement and innovation-based solutions to address departmental needs, challenges and priorities. The branch supports a broad range of stakeholders across the department and externally, including the Privy Council Office and the Minister's office.

Objective and scope

The review objective was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of the management framework in place to enable PACB to achieve its objectives and mandate in a manner that is compliant with applicable policies, procedures and regulations. It focused on:

- strategic and operational planning and organizational structure

- human resources management

- business processes, tools, information systems and change management

- engagement and communications with stakeholders

Why it is important

PACB plays a key role in supporting the Minister, Deputy Ministers and Departmental Senior Officials. Branch officials provide communications support, corporate secretariat services such as parliamentary, Cabinet, ministerial briefing and correspondence, as well as, access to information and privacy (ATIP) services. Moreover, PACB lead the departmental agenda on innovation, experimentation and youth engagement. As a strategic partner, PACB has to plan effectively to ensure that its services enable key stakeholders to meet the department's mandate and priorities.

ECCC expanding mandate has led to an increased demand for PACB products and services to support programs delivery and the Minister's office. PACB is in the process of developing and implementing organizational changes to address the increased demand its directorates are facing. Some of these changes are already underway, while others are still in the planning stages. In this evolving context, there is a risk that PACB's existing management framework may not adequately enable the branch to effectively adapt and achieve its objectives and mandate. The review provides timely insight and opportunities for consideration to support continuous improvement of PACB's management practices.

What we found

Overall, PACB has developed some strategic, operational and human resources plans to support the achievement of the branch and departmental objectives. In addition, a number of organizational changes have occurred over the past few years to enhance support to service delivery. Furthermore, PACB has written procedures, tools and templates and the branch is using these in delivering services, products and activities to internal and external stakeholders.

There are opportunities for the branch to update its planning, monitoring and reporting processes to support decision making and the alignment of resources to priorities. This includes enhancing internal and external stakeholder engagement during departmental planning processes, strengthening human resources planning and ensuring organizational charts are up to date. Furthermore, there is an opportunity to review and update tools, templates and procedures to reflect current practices. Monitoring and reporting mechanisms could be developed to support senior management decision making. While certain service standards exist, they are not consistently communicated to stakeholders. In addition, there are opportunities to develop service standards for activities that do not currently have them. Mechanisms for sharing information on services with key stakeholders could be strengthened to improve client understanding and expectations. There are 5 recommendations in the report.

Recommendation 1

The Assistant Deputy Minister, Public Affairs and Communications Branch, should review and update (if required) branch strategic, operational and HR planning, monitoring and reporting processes to better support resource allocation decision making.

Recommendation 2

The Assistant Deputy Minister, Public Affairs and Communications Branch, should review all organizational charts to ensure that they are up to date and reflect funded positions and reporting relationships.

Recommendation 3

The Assistant Deputy Minister, Public Affairs and Communications Branch, should develop a streamlined performance measurement strategy that includes key performance indicators and a monitoring and reporting strategy that supports decision making.

Recommendation 4

The Assistant Deputy Minister, Public Affairs and Communications Branch, should develop, implement, communicate and report on the responsibilities and service standards for Public Affairs and Communication Branch activities that support branches.

Recommendation 5

The Assistant Deputy Minister, Public Affairs and Communications Branch, should update the branch Intranet and ECollab sites to support a consistent understanding of products, services and activities. The updates should be shared with PACB employees for private sites accessible only to PACB employees, as well as with all ECCC employees for public sites.

1.   Background

The Public Affairs and Communications Branch (PACB) at Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) provides professional support services and expertise in parliamentary and cabinet affairs, communications, ministerial services, experimentation on departmental processes and youth engagement and innovation-based solutions to address departmental needs, challenges and priorities. The branch supports a broad range of internal and external stakeholders, including the Minister's office and the Privy Council Office.

The Assistant Deputy Minister (ADM), PACB, as designated by the Deputy Minister to manage departmental communications and corporate identity, is responsible for supporting the provision of information to the public on policies, regulations, programs, services and initiatives. ECCC communications activities are subject to the TB Policy on Communications and Federal Identity and the TB Directive on the Management of Communications. As such, departmental communications should be designed to meet the diverse information needs of Canadians and be coordinated within and across the department and with key stakeholders. Communications products must be timely, accurate, clear, objective, non-partisan, provided in both official languages and comply with Government of Canada guidance.

In fiscal year 2021 to 2022, PACB had approximately 277 full time equivalents, with actual expenditures of $27,123,923 in A-based funding and $5,486,512 in B-based funding. At the time this report was written, the branch's main operational units were as follows.

The Corporate Secretariat is responsible for:

- departmental, ministerial and parliamentary support such as advice on how best to manage the legislative process when dealing with government and private members' bills; preparing the Minister and senior portfolio officials for standing committee appearances; producing parliamentary strategies in support of Memoranda to Cabinet

- coordination and editing services for correspondence and briefing materials for the Minister and Deputy Minister as well as secretariat services to the Executive Management Committee

- coordination of formal requests under the *Access to Information Act* and the *Privacy Act,* the conduct of privacy risk reviews, ATIP training activities, ATIP reporting and proactive publication under Part II of the *Access to Information Act*

- Centre of expertise on Cabinet business and supports the department and Minister by managing and advising on ECCC's Cabinet business; liaising with the Privy Council Office on strategy and timing of Cabinet document; and preparing briefing packages to support the Minister's participation at Cabinet meetings

- acting in an advisory capacity for Governor in Council and Ministerial appointments and provides a single point of contact for departmental officials, Privy Council Office and the Minister's office for appointments to external advisory bodies

The Communications Directorate is responsible for planning, coordinating and providing advice on communications projects and initiatives such as ministerial events, announcements, translation, public enquiries, social media posts, web publishing, corporate communications, digital communication services and media services.

The Innovation and Youth Engagement Division is responsible for advancing ECCC's Beyond2020 commitments, leading the ECCC Mentorship Program and micro-assignment initiative, capacity building in the areas of experimentations, innovation and behavioural science, including departmental reporting under the TBS Management Accountability Framework for these items, engaging with youth and serving as the Secretariat for the ECCC Youth Council.

The Administrative Services Central Hub is responsible for supporting PACB's directorates with financial, human resources, workplace accommodations, contracting and procurement activities.

The Corporate Strategies Unit is responsible for increasing the branch's strategic and operational integrated planning capacity, fostering greater horizontality and cross-collaboration among PACB directorates and delivering on key branch and departmental corporate priorities in the areas of workplace mental health wellness, staffing and retention, diversity, inclusion and accessibility.

Appendix A provides a complete list of PACB's core responsibilities.

During the conduct of the review, PACB was implementing organizational changes. The first change was to combine the Corporate Strategies unit with the Communications Directorate to ensure the organization had appropriate reporting structures. The second planned change involved the creation of a new directorate, the Innovation, Research and Public and Stakeholder Engagement. The new directorate integrates the existing Innovation and Youth Engagement Division under its structure, to provide effective oversight and create synergies with related areas of work (public research, public and stakeholder engagement).

2.   Objective, scope and methodology

Objective

The review objective was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of the management framework in place to enable PACB to achieve its objectives and mandate in a manner that is compliant with applicable policies, procedures and regulations.

Scope

The review covered the period from 2017-2018 to October 2022. The review aimed to provide a horizontal lens into branch management controls and activities and to identify opportunities for improvement to enable the achievement of planned goals. It focused on the following internal control areas:

- strategic and operational planning and organizational structure

- human resources management

- business processes, tools and information systems

- engagement and communications with stakeholders

The Public Inquiries Centre, which is a service within PACB, was excluded from this review since a separate audit of that service was conducted at the same time of this review. The ongoing branch classification review and the creation of the Innovation, Research and Public and Stakeholder Engagement Directorate were also excluded from the scope.

The lines of enquiry and criteria are provided in [Appendix B](#).

Methodology

The review work included the following:

- reviewing relevant program documentation, including policies, guidelines, procedures

- analyzing financial and non-financial data

- performing walk-throughs of PACB processes with key personnel

- conducting interviews with 33 PACB staff (9 directors and 24 managers)

- facilitating 2 focus group sessions (1 in English and 1 in French) with 36 PACB employees (junior level to team lead level)

- administering a questionnaire to 422 employees from other ECCC branches (at the director general level and below), from a list of contacts who interact with PACB on a regular basis. The questionnaire was completed by 58 respondents (13.7% participation rate)

3.   Findings, recommendations and management responses

3.1   Planning and structure

Findings: PACB has developed some strategic, operational and human resources plans to support the achievement of the branch and departmental objectives. In addition, a number of organizational changes have occurred in the past few years to enhance support to service delivery.

There are opportunities for the branch to strengthen planning, monitoring and reporting processes to support decision making and the alignment of resources to priorities. This includes enhancing internal and external stakeholder engagement during departmental planning processes, strengthening human resources planning and ensuring that organizational charts are up to date.

There are 2 recommendations in this section.

Strategic and operational planning

PACB plays a key role in supporting the Minister, the Deputy Ministers and senior management. Branch officials provide communications support, corporate secretariat services such as parliamentary, Cabinet, ministerial briefing and correspondence, as well as access to information and privacy (ATIP) services. Moreover, PACB also leads the departmental agenda on innovation, experimentation and youth engagement. As a strategic partner, PACB has to plan effectively to ensure that its services enable key stakeholders to meet the department's mandate and priorities.

The review found that the branch has created some strategic and operational planning documents such as a branch plan and an integrated plan. Various directorate-level and subject-specific planning documents exist. These include a 2022-2023 Q3 communications plan, roadmap for modernizing internal communications, public environment monitoring new approach (Project Sherlock), an experimentation plan, the Beyond2020 action plan, as well as various planning tools and trackers. In addition, officials make presentations at a number of forums at various levels to discuss daily priorities, issues management, weekly planning and upcoming events.

While a number of planning documents exist, the branch does not have a comprehensive overall strategic plan that outlines its longer-term direction and articulates the various initiatives currently undertaken and how they support the achievement of departmental priorities. Importantly, there does not appear to be a clear mechanism in current branch planning processes for engaging with key internal and external stakeholders to solicit their needs and priorities, to discuss their target audiences, their communications goals and other relevant areas where PACB support would be required. By understanding key stakeholders' needs, it would allow PACB the opportunity to better plan the use of its resources to undertake its important role within the Department.

We met with 36 PACB employees as part of 2 facilitated focus groups we held during the conduct of this review. When asked whether strategic plans are developed at the branch level, the majority neither agreed nor disagreed (65%). The remaining 19% disagreed and 15% agreed. 43% of focus group participants also indicated that they do not think they are sufficiently involved in planning activities at their management / unit level.

We identified opportunities for improvement related to activity monitoring and results reporting. Most directorates in PACB such as the Corporate Secretariat Directorate, the Communication Directorate and the Innovation and Youth Engagement Division have data on the volume of services delivered, however there was limited evidence that this information was being used to inform planning and allocation of resources over time, nor that services are monitored against service standards. A few areas in the branch do not track the number of services and products offered over time and the level of effort devoted, which may differ from one service to another. Having common key performance indicators and undertaking monitoring activities could provide senior management with data and information regarding whether the branch is achieving its goals and whether opportunities to strengthen administrative practices exist in certain areas. The information captured could support improved management, decision making and use of branch resources.

A robust planning process involving more branch staff, specifically Corporate Strategies, might help in direction setting and having all employees informed of the branch's common goals they are working

towards as a key strategic partner. From an outreach perspective, the resulting planning document could also include a branch "brand" that communicates to partners and stakeholders what they can expect in terms of products, services and advice.

Human resource planning

The review found that PACB has recently created some human resource (HR) plans, including the following:

- 2022-2023 HR Plan: a 1-page spreadsheet prepared in response to an annual departmental request that includes columns on HR management themes identified by the department, suggested actions / HR strategies, priorities and status

- 2022 Integrated People Management Plan and Roadmap for the Future: a 2-page document that outlines the context regarding Government of Canada and ECCC HR priorities, PACB's vision, organizational culture and values, operating principles and some bullets on recommended approaches/strategies relating to the future of work, leadership, coaching, wellness and mental health

- There are a number of other documents related to HR planning (for example, zero-based budgeting exercise, proposals for the creation of units or for additional staff, mental health action plan, future of the workplace discussions)

A review of these documents demonstrates that consideration of departmental priorities occurs when developing human resources plans. For instance, the Integrated People Management Plan identifies Government of Canada and departmental people management priorities. There was an opportunity identified to better align the approaches described in the plans with departmental and branch priorities.

The documents reviewed also included certain elements to address human resources areas related to organizational structure, succession planning and learning/career development. The Branch conducted a zero-based budget exercise that included descriptions of each division and an analysis of required resources (full-time equivalents - FTEs and funding). We found the plans lacked important information on capacity, key positions, future needs and gaps. Furthermore, the plans reviewed did not identify divisions responsible for various activities nor did they include key performance metrics. Although, the 1-page HR plan included a column on status of activities (all identified were marked as ongoing), there was insufficient information related to progress monitoring and reporting.

We found little evidence that the branch human resources plan documents were used to manage PACB service delivery. Some managers interviewed reported not being involved in human resources planning activities. Furthermore, interviewees note that human resources activities tended to be reactive and that human resources plan documents were not specific enough to help directors and managers address human resources concerns. Those interviewed described a variety of human resources issues that they believed needed to be addressed (for example, lack of staff, employee burnout, retention issues and loss of corporate knowledge, a need for specific expertise and for onboarding documents, lack of learning plans and training opportunities). They also identified a

number of gaps related to having up-to-date organizational charts and specific strategies for recruitment, retention and learning and development.

Based on interviews with managers and staff, turnover is a systemic issue for the branch. Human resources data obtained from Human Resource Branch noted that PACB's attrition rate is relatively higher than the departmental average, with the Communications Directorate being the most impacted by staff turnover. In order to address certain staffing issues, the Communications Directorate created 3 inventories of IS-3, 4 and 5 pre-qualified candidates. Of the 357 applications, 53 qualified candidates were identified and 9 nominations were completed. The review team was informed that several candidates declined due to the inability to offer 100% virtual work at the time the offers were made. In the future, there may be an opportunity for the branch to undertake a more robust, horizontal process to address staff vacancies across all directorates.

Although the Branch has developed some human resources planning documents, the review did not find a formal HR planning process in place within the branch that includes consultations with and gathering of information from managers across the branch. In the focus group sessions, 87% of participants indicated that they are not aware of a human resources management plan for the branch and 55% felt that the information and materials related to new employee onboarding and career development needed to be improved. Moreover, there is an opportunity for PACB to reinforce their HR plan, which includes a description of the current HR capacity and future requirements, activities to achieve the objectives, expected outcomes, responsibility centres and performance metrics (for example, recruitment, learning and development, wellness, etc.). The HR planning process could also include communication of the plan to staff and regular monitoring and reporting on progress.

Organizational structure

Established in 2017 through a realignment of several ECCC functions, the ADM, PACB is responsible for 5 organizational units: Administrative Services, Corporate Strategies, the Corporate Secretariat, Communications, Innovation, Research and Public and Stakeholder Engagement. Corporate Strategies was previously a Directorate, which is now part of the ADM's office.

The PACB organizational structure has been evolving for some time. An analysis of various organizational charts and documents created during 2021 and 2022 show different structures and FTEs. For instance, a Corporate Strategies Directorate was created and was then moved under the ADMO, the Administrative Services Directorate was created with positions taken from other directorates and an Innovation, Research and Public and Stakeholder Engagement Directorate has been created and integrate the Innovation and Youth Engagement Division.

The most recent organizational charts provided (October 2022) identified 437 positions, including 274 indeterminate, 126 determinate (that is, term, assignment, interchange, casual, student) and 37 newly created or planned positions. The positions are located as follows: 8 in the ADMO, 18 in Administrative Services, 99 in the Corporate Secretariat, 286 in the Communications Directorate and 26 in the Innovation, Research and Public and Stakeholder Engagement Directorate. Almost one quarter (24%) of the positions were vacant as of October 2022 and it was unclear how many of these were unfunded positions that could be removed from the organizational chart.

To fully staff this October 2022 organizational structure, a PACB-led cost analysis showed that the PACB would require approximately $37.8 million in salary to fund all positions. This is a shortfall of $15.6 million from the 2022 to 2023 PACB salary budget. This is higher than the amount identified in the zero-based budget exercise ($34.3 million in salary for 383 positions). The zero-based budget exercise also indicated that a significant portion of the PACB's budget is B-base funding and at risk of sun setting, so the requirement may be higher to ensure stability. Given assumptions should be made about the probability of receiving additional funding, it makes better HR and operational planning essential in order to identify priorities and align resources within the branch to meet those priorities.

Due to the many realignments and different versions of organizational charts, it was difficult for the review team to determine the effectiveness of the PACB organizational structure. Based on the October 2022 organizational charts, the organizational structure appears to cover all of the functions the Branch is responsible for, as well as Branch HR / financial support.

Based on what the review team heard, the PACB supervision and management structure might not effectively and efficiently support the achievement of organizational objectives and the departmental mandate. Most managers interviewed mentioned they do not have access to organizational charts and some were not aware of their allotted FTE complement. Furthermore, they felt that the organizational structure does not effectively support branch activities because of insufficient FTEs to perform the required work.

Similarly, only one third of staff who participated in focus groups agreed that the organizational structure of their directorate / division / unit was optimal for achieving work objectives. Focus group participants also identified a need for more horizontal communication across the branch.

Furthermore, the zero-based budgeting exercise identified the need for over 100 additional FTEs, particularly for Communications, ATIP and to further develop the Innovation, Research and Public and Stakeholder Engagement Directorate. In order to better understand PACB's growing mandate, the review team requested additional data from the Corporate Services and Financial Branch. The data demonstrated that ECCC has been attributed 40 new initiatives and 12 renewed initiatives with new funding totalling $7.5 billion, spanning from 2017-2018 to 2025-2026. Of this amount, PACB received $19.7 million. Various programs lead these initiatives across the Department; however, the demand for PACB services such as communications plans, news releases, statements, questions and answers, digital products, events and social media outreach have all increased during that time. However, PACB is not performing trends analysis of the volume and intensity/complexity of its activities. As a result, no data were available to support managers and staff concerns regarding the adequacy of resources to meet increasing priorities.

In addition, as mentioned above, managers raised concerns about staff turnover and the large number of vacancies. Based on the most recent organizational charts, about one quarter (24%) of the positions were vacant and another 29% were occupied by determinate appointments (for example, term, assignment, casual, students), which creates instability within an organization, puts additional burden on staff in place and makes it difficult to effectively accomplish the mandate. However, these organizational charts include unfunded positions, which influences the actual number of vacant positions.

The review team was also informed that internal PACB analysis suggests that the Corporate Strategies team may not have the capacity required to support effective planning, monitoring and reporting. This may put the Branch at risk in terms of knowing whether it is meeting its mandate effectively and whether resource allocations support the work that is required of the branch. In addition, the Administrative Services Directorate is composed of positions funded by other directorates, which may create further instability. As the branch evolves with the creation of the Innovation, Research and Public and Stakeholder Engagement Directorate, there is likely going to be a need for more horizontal coordination, planning, monitoring and reporting.

The 2 recommendations that follow are important because in the current environment, the allocation of resources to priorities and mandate requirements has become key. Given the potential risks of not having robust branch plans that support effective internal administration and the achievement of the department's priorities, it is important for PACB to work with partners to identify needs and ensure that resources allocations are as efficient as possible.

Recommendation 1

The Assistant Deputy Minister, Public Affairs and Communications Branch, should review and update (if required) branch strategic, operational and HR planning, monitoring and reporting processes to better support resource allocation decision making.

Management response

The Assistant Deputy Minister, Public Affairs and Communications Branch, agrees with this recommendation. Recognizing the importance of effective planning, monitoring and reporting, the Corporate Strategies team will work with the Public Affairs and Communications Branch management team to develop and activate a consolidated strategic plan with a clear vision, unique value propositions, clear priorities and actionable items that incorporates operational and HR plans. The consolidated branch strategic plan will be aligned with the ECCC integrated planning cycle.

Recommendation 2

The Assistant Deputy Minister, Public Affairs and Communications Branch, should review all organizational charts to ensure that they are up to date and reflect funded positions and reporting relationships.

Management response

The Assistant Deputy Minister, Public Affairs and Communications Branch, agrees with this recommendation. Each Director General in the Public Affairs and Communications Branch will work with the Administrative Services team to assess the current state of their organizational charts and present to the Assistant Deputy Minister for approval. The branch-wide organizational chart will be reviewed quarterly in line These recommendations are important because in the current environment, the allocation of resources to priorities and mandate requirements has become key. Given the

potential risks of not having robust branch plans that support effective internal administration and the achievement of the department's priorities, it is important for PACB to work with partners to identify needs and ensure that resources allocations are as efficient as possible.

3.2   Service delivery and performance measurement

Findings: PACB has written procedures, tools and templates and the branch is using these in delivering services, products and activities to internal and external stakeholders.

There is an opportunity to review and update tools, templates and procedures to reflect current practices. Monitoring and reporting mechanisms could be developed to support senior management decision making. While certain service standards exist, they are not consistently communicated to stakeholders. In addition, there are opportunities to develop service standards for activities that do not currently have them. Mechanisms for sharing information on services with key stakeholders could be strengthened to improve client understanding and expectations.

There are 3 recommendations in this section.

Stakeholder collaboration

Given the nature of PACB's services and mandate, collaboration with internal and external stakeholders is an important element of their service delivery model. As such, it is important that PACB have effective mechanisms in place that supports communication with service users.

PACB has officers and advisors across the branch who liaise with stakeholders/branch officials. However, this review found that the branch does not have an overall collaboration strategy or plan. Multiple respondents noted that collaboration varies by activity and relies on the relationship that individual advisors have with branch officials.

Information on PACB's suite of services is available on PACB's Intranet site. During interviews with PACB managers, 64% mentioned they share the suite of services and processes with stakeholders in ad hoc or recurring meetings. This includes meetings between strategic communications and branch officials to establish working relationships, provide expertise or advice, or to clarify roles and responsibilities related to a service or activity.

32% of PACB managers interviewed believe that improvements could be made to existing communication mechanisms to enhance collaboration with branch officials. They shared that collaboration could be affected by the nature of the working relationships with each branch official, individual advisor knowledge, staff turnover and tight deadlines. Focus group participants identified similar issues. Moreover, 55% of PACB managers indicated that they had been in their role for less than 6 months or had been acting for a certain period. These constant changes influence relationships with partners and stakeholders. Having a single liaison within the branches to work closely with PACB advisors is a potential solution to strengthen coordination between PACB and its stakeholders.

Roles and responsibilities

Clear and defined roles and responsibilities support timely and consistent service. PACB managers informed us that the roles and responsibilities for most communications and public affairs products involve the branches owning the solicited content and integrating that information into a PACB product, service or activity.

Questionnaire results and focus group discussions indicated that a majority of branch respondents and PACB employees agreed or answered neutrally regarding whether the roles and responsibilities of branches and PACB employees were clearly defined, understood and communicated. However, 21% of respondents disagreed that the PACB processes and ownership over content was unclear. Focus group participants also shared that information on roles and responsibilities is not always communicated in a timely manner. Furthermore, the review team did not find any departmental guidance documents that outline PACB and branches roles and responsibilities. This is an area identified for improvement.

Communication of PACB's suite of services

The PACB intranet and ECollab sites are the 2 main mechanisms for sharing information on the suite of services available to branches. We examined 20 intranet pages and 10 ECollab pages in total that belonged to PACB's directorates and divisions. The layout of the Intranet sites was better compared to the ECollab sites, which were not consistent across each directorate and division. The subsequent review of the ECollab and Intranet sites determined that 80% display well the division role, mandate, services and information on how and whom to contact for information. The remaining 20% of site pages were not as robust and had conflicting information on their roles and the list of services when comparing their Intranet page to their ECollab page.

Similar issues were noted by ECCC employees from the questionnaire results in which 57% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed that information on PACB's services is easy to find and accessible. 16% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that information on PACB's services is easy to find and accessible. Those who disagreed said they have trouble finding accurate information on the intranet. There is room to improve the ECollab and intranet sites to accurately reflect the list of services, specifically strategic advice that could be provided around the execution of communication activities and links to related tools, templates and processes. The questionnaire results also indicated that Innovation and Youth Engagement division services would benefit from more awareness across the Department, including the type of services or programming offered, as well as what the divisions' objectives and expected outcomes are.

Processes and tools

Tools, templates, processes and systems are also important to support effective and consistent delivery of services, activities and products and provide guidance to employees. In addition, these promote standardized approaches and facilitate new employee onboarding.

The review team examined a sample of 176 tools and templates and 47 processes and procedures across 11 PACB divisions in 3 directorates. While most tools and templates provided adequate

information and were useful, we identified issues with 24 of them. Issues included templates that were in draft form and some that had outdated information and used unclear language (that is, abbreviations for describing different documents). It was also noted that 2 divisions appeared to have fewer tools and templates than expected based on the breadth of services and activities they provide. These were Public Affairs and Ministerial Services and the Youth Engagement Division.

The review team was informed that 59% of managers had access to tools and templates. 32% felt that their existing tools and templates supported effective and efficient service delivery, while 27% felt that they did support timely and consistent service delivery. We also heard during interviews that 50% of managers would need to create more tools and templates or update their existing ones to support their service delivery.

During focus groups, participants reported that tools exist to support their work. Furthermore, employees reported that PACB retreats and Communications resets were good forums to discuss processes, tools and updates. However, participant answers varied whether existing processes, tools and systems were adequate and effective in achieving their work objectives. Participants noted that tools and processes are not always available in the same place nor used consistently.

The review team found similar issues related to processes and procedures. It was observed that only 4 of the reviewed divisions had more than 3 written procedures for their services and of the 47 total written processes that were reviewed, 15 of them contained issues. The issues that were noted were similar to those in the tool and templates, which included being outdated, in draft form and use of informal language such as the first name of individuals responsible for certain parts of the process.

This is similar to what we heard from managers during interviews as 68% of them said they were unsure if written processes and procedures exist. When asked what they would like to improve, 50% of managers identified the need to create or rewrite existing written processes and procedures to specify their procedures and potentially look at streamlining approval processes.

The review also noted that an updated guidance on communication accessibility and federal identity should be communicated to partners and stakeholders.

Systems

The review team noted that PACB divisions and directorates use various systems such as ECollab, shared drives and other software as their main tools for information management. Based on the review team's analysis, ECollab is used to store tools and templates, while working files are saved in shared drives; however, this is not documented in written processes or procedures.

Although information management was not included in the scope, the review team noted there is room to improve the ECollab site. It was noted that the ECollab site is not well structured nor easy to find documentation. This can cause issues for anyone not familiar with the layout of their ECollab site including new employees and PACB clients and could mean that tools and +templates are not always used. This was confirmed during the interviews with PACB managers, as the review team heard from the 13 managers who said that tools and templates are not easy to find on their ECollab page and the templates are not well known among PACB employees. This is especially important given the

employee turnover within the branch and that employees could be using outdated or incorrect templates if they do not know where to find the latest templates and tools.

Service standards

Service standards are an important element of service delivery. They foster reasonable client expectations, allow for proactive management of employee workloads, support performance measurement and promote client satisfaction. The review found that 15 divisions out of 23 have defined service standards. However, service standards are not consistently shared and communicated to branches and stakeholders. Additionally, service standards are not found in a central location and were found in places such as Intranet pages, ECollab documents and calendars. During interviews, it was noted that some service standards in place are not reflective of current processes, leading to missed or late deadlines. It was noted from interviewees that deadlines are not always communicated to or followed by clients.

While service standards are generally defined in various internal documents on the PACB Intranet and ECollab sites, the review found most are not monitored. Of the 15 divisions that have defined service standards, only 5 have systemic monitoring exercises in place. 4 of these units do their own internal monitoring, while the other is required to provide reports to Parliament based on established legislation.

During focus groups, PACB employees confirmed that service standards exist (71% of participants), however, 46% said that they are unrealistic and do not reflect their operating environment. In addition, 71% of ECCC employees that answered the review questionnaire indicated that service standards were not shared with them or that they were unaware that service standards exist. There is room to improve the knowledge of service standards and how they apply to PACB's services.

PACB can improve service standards including levels of approval to ensure they reflect the current operating environment so that branches can better understand how they apply and what to expect when requesting or providing information on PACB service, activity or product.

Performance measurement

Performance measurement is an important element in monitoring service delivery. It provides senior management with important metrics, data and information to inform strategic, operational and administrative decision making. The review found that 14 divisions in PACB directorates develop various statistics about their activities. Examples include:

- ATIP develops an annual report to Parliament on the *Access to Information Act* which includes statistics on the number of requests received and completed, timeliness, number of consultations and fees.

- Cabinet affairs has monthly dashboards measuring timeliness of document submission by Department as well as other information such as Cabinet presentations, meetings, agendas and memos.

- Departmental correspondence unit develops statistics such as the number of incoming correspondence and forms received and number of dockets assigned to MINO.

- Parliamentary Affairs keeps track of all responses to the House of Commons and Senate written questions, standing committee appearances, speeches, tabling of statutory reports and questions raised in Parliament during Question Period that are related to ECCC's portfolio.

- Ministerial Events, visits and outreach team track the number of events they support.

- Speechwriting team tracks the number of speeches they produce for the Minister of ECCC.

- Media Relations tracks the number of published communications products on Canada.ca and on Canadian Newswire.

- Issues Management tracks the number of communications risk assessment made on OPQs ATIPs reviews.

- Strategic Communications tracks information such as communication plans and News@ECCC articles.

- Marketing and Public Opinion Research Team keeps statistics on ongoing projects including contracted and non-contracted public opinion research projects and marketing campaigns.

- Media Monitoring team tracks statistics on digital communications to Executive Management Committee and MINO through weekly media analysis reports, issues management, media monitoring, media relations, web analytics, social media listening and public inquiry activities.

- Creative Services, Publishing, Multimedia and Video Services team track various statistics such as electronic publishing, fact sheets, infographics and live events.

- Horizontal and corporate communication advisory services team tracks statistics related to all-staff messaging and their topics, town halls and ECCC Live events.

- Digital Communications track information related to social media rollouts, posts and new web page creations.

- Translation Service Team tracks statistics related to their word count per fiscal year.

- The Innovation and Youth Engagement Division tracks information related to participants of ECCC 101 orientation, the ECCC Youth Council, Beyond 2020 initiatives and the behavioural science program.

There was limited evidence that the information collected is being used to in decision making processes throughout the year within PACB and across ECCC branches and to measure and monitor performance. We found there is no performance measurement strategy in place at the branch level.

Interviews with PACB managers confirmed the documentation review results. Overall, 86% of the managers interviewed observed that there is no performance measurement strategy in place nor any performance indicators that are tracked. Additionally, 32% of managers said that some statistics have been developed and 18% indicated that they were considering developing a performance measurement strategy for their unit. 6 managers said that they use MS Teams or Trello to gather

statistics and metrics on their products / services and 2 managers said that they report on their activities verbally in meetings or by email.

During focus group interviews with PACB employees, 91% said they were unaware of performance indicators or did not have performance indicators for their activities. Participants expressed concerns whether they could develop appropriate indicators that could capture the level of work required (intensity or complexity) during the processing of a request and / or the development of a service, activity or product.

As mentioned in the section about planning, PACB as a branch and its various units could benefit from the development of performance measurement strategy with associated indicators and a monitoring and reporting strategy that could better support data and information-driven decision making. Finally, 1 item for consideration that came up in our review was the potential for PACB to send out an annual comprehensive satisfaction survey to partners and stakeholders to obtain feedback that could help them identify areas for improvement to inform activity planning.

Having a performance measurement strategy that supports data and information-based decisions making will help PACB senior management better understand the volume of work that is being undertaken and how effective its allocation of resources is to achieve results. It will also support a more systematic view of how PACB could achieve its mandate, objectives and priorities.

Recommendation 3

The Assistant Deputy Minister, Public Affairs and Communications Branch, should develop a streamlined performance measurement strategy that includes key performance indicators and a monitoring and reporting strategy that supports decision making.

Management response

The Assistant Deputy Minister, Public Affairs and Communications Branch, agrees with this recommendation. The corporate strategies team will work with the members of the branch management committee to develop a branch logic model with key performance indicators for key priorities of the branch and develop a tool for reporting on PACB outcomes and outputs. Once these have been established, PACB will be able to finalize a streamlined performance management strategy that will be well communicated to all staff.

Service standards

While certain service standards exist, they are not consistently communicated to stakeholders. In addition, there are opportunities to develop service standards for activities that do not currently have them. This is important because PACB is a strategic partner that provides professional support services across the Department. Service standards foster reasonable client expectations, allowing for proactive management of employee workloads, supporting performance measurement and promoting client satisfaction.

Recommendation 4

The Assistant Deputy Minister, Public Affairs and Communications Branch, should develop, implement, communicate, monitor and report on the responsibilities and service standards for PACB that support branches.

Management response

The Assistant Deputy Minister, Public Affairs and Communications Branch, agrees with this recommendation. PACB will develop key service standards for the activities and services offered to branches along with an information sheet on how PACB activities are prioritized based on departmental priorities, ministerial requests, mandated reporting, etc. The team will develop and implement a communications plan to identify the most effective way to communicate this information with staff.

Information sharing

Mechanisms for sharing information on services with key stakeholders could be strengthened to improve client understanding and expectations. This is important because the Intranet and ECollab pages are the main sources that employees have to obtain information. As part of the updating of these pages, it would also be beneficial for PACB to review and update (as required) roles and responsibilities for their various business lines to provide clarity to all employees on what to expect when working with PACB on products.

Recommendation 5

The Assistant Deputy Minister, Public Affairs and Communications Branch, should update the branch Intranet and ECollab sites to support a consistent understanding of products, services and activities. The updates should be shared with PACB employees for private sites accessible to PACB employees only, as well as with all ECCC employees for public sites.

Management response

The Assistant Deputy Minister, Public Affairs and Communications Branch, agrees with this recommendation. Updates to the intranet will help clarify PACB roles and responsibilities while updated collaboration sites will enable PACB employees to work more collaboratively as a team and reduce duplication. PACB will develop a departmental guide reflecting PACB's responsibilities and services. The guide will be posted on intranet where all ECCC employees will have access.

4.   Conclusion

Overall, PACB has developed some strategic, operational and human resources plans to support the achievement of the branch and departmental objectives. In addition, a number of organizational changes have occurred over the past few years to enhance support to service delivery. Furthermore,

PACB has written procedures, tools and templates and the branch is using these in delivering services, products and activities to internal and external stakeholders.

There are opportunities for the branch to strengthen planning, monitoring and reporting processes to support decision making and the alignment of resources to priorities. This includes enhancing internal and external stakeholder engagement during departmental planning processes, strengthening human resources planning and ensuring organizational charts are up to date. Furthermore, there is an opportunity to review and update tools, templates and procedures to reflect current practices. Monitoring and reporting mechanisms could be developed to support senior management decision making. While certain service standards exist, they are not consistently communicated to stakeholders. In addition, there are opportunities to develop service standards for activities that do not currently have them. Mechanisms for sharing information on services with key stakeholders could be strengthened to improve client understanding and expectations.

Appendix A: PACB core responsibilities

The following are the PACB core services by operational units:

Corporate Secretariat

- Provides ministerial support and services

- Manages ministerial and deputy ministerial correspondence

- Implements and administers the Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act and carries out all related activities within ECCC

- Provides analysis, advice and support on parliamentary matters

- Provides operational support and advice on Cabinet businesses and supports the Minister by preparing briefing packages for Cabinet meetings

Communications Directorate

- Ministerial events, domestic and international visits

- Products for Ministerial announcements and events such as news releases, backgrounders and speeches

- Translation of communications products

- Responses to media and public enquiries

- Media relations spokesperson training

- Development of media lines

- Media monitoring and environmental scans and analysis

- Social media posts through existing departmental channels

- Web publishing for mandatory/legislated documents on Canada.ca

- Updates to existing web content on Canada.ca

- Support for existing corporate internal communications tools, such as the intranet and News@ECCC

- Corporate messages to all staff

- Internal events for all staff

- Some graphic design and publication support

- Advertising

- Creative Services, Publishing, Multimedia and Video Services

- Digital Communications Services (web and social media)

- Horizontal and corporate communications advisory services

- Media relations and Issues Management Services

- Public Inquiries

- Public Opinion Research

- Strategic Communications Advisory Services

Corporate Strategies

- Responsible to increase strategic and operational integrated planning capacity and to foster greater cross-collaboration across PACB

- Deliver on corporate priorities, such as workplace mental health and wellness; staffing and retention; and diversity, inclusion and accessibility

Innovation and Youth Engagement Division (IYED)

- Advancing public service renewal through ECCC's Beyond2020 commitments

- Leading initiatives that advance the pillars of an agile, inclusive and equipped organization

- Leading the ECCC Mentorship Program

- Leading onboarding initiatives for new ECCC staff, including ECCC101, a week-long virtual orientation event held every term for new employees

- Leading a training program called ECCC Intrapreneurs that assembles employees to learn user design and experimentation concepts and propose innovative solutions

- Supporting innovation through prize-based challenges and by organizing events and learning opportunities with internal and external partners

- Leading ECCC's micro-assignments initiative, which provides opportunities for employees to develop new skills, gain experience and build networks, while providing managers the opportunity to obtain specific knowledge or skills required to support projects. Access the Micro-Assignment Virtual Task Board

- Building capacity and providing advice on experimentation, innovation, behavioural science and user-centred design

- Hosting research Fellows working on behavioural science projects as part of the program of research on climate action led by the Privy Council Office

- Engaging with youth as a centre of expertise on youth engagement, including serving as the Secretariat for the Environment and Climate Change Youth Council

Administrative Services Central Hub

- The central hub for PACB administrative services including finance, human resources, contracting and procurement and workplace accommodations

Appendix B: Lines of enquiry and criteria

The following criteria were developed to address the objective of the review.

Line of enquiry 1: Strategic planning, organizational structure and human resources management
1.1 PACB strategic and operational plans are in place and aligned with departmental priorities to guide branch activities
1.2 Human resource planning and allocation processes are in place, aligned with business planning and support the effective management and delivery of PACB services
1.3 The branch organizational structure is clear and effective to enable PACB to deliver on its objectives
Line of enquiry 2: Service delivery and stakeholders engagement
2.1 Business processes, tools and systems are in place, are adequate and effective to support PACB in prioritizing and delivering its services
2.2 Effective mechanisms are in place to facilitate engagement and collaboration with key partners and stakeholders
2.3 Service is focused on clients and promoted through the use and monitoring of service standards
2.4 A branch performance measurement strategy has been developed and implemented and performance information is reported and used in decision making