

At a Glance



Management Practices Review of the Public Affairs and Communications Branch

The Public Affairs and Communications Branch 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.

ECCC's expanding mandate has led to an increased demand for Public Affairs and Communications Branch products and services to support program delivery and the Minister's office. During the conduct of the review, the branch was in the process of developing and implementing organizational changes to address the increased demand its directorates were facing, such as 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).

What the review found

Overall, the Public Affairs and Communications Branch 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, the branch has written procedures, tools and templates and 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.

Recommendations and management response

The following 5 recommendations are directed to Assistant Deputy Minister, Public Affairs and Communication Branch.

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 with quarterly financial planning.

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.

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 Communications Branch activities 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.

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 the Public Affairs and Communications Branch employees for private sites accessible only to Public Affairs and Communications Branch employees, and 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.

About the review

The review was conducted between March 2022 and January 2023. The objective of this review was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of the management framework in place to enable the Public Affairs and Communications Branch to achieve its objectives and mandate in a manner that is compliant with applicable policies, procedures and regulations. The review covered the period from fiscal year 2017 to 2018 to October 2022 and 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