



MANAGING HUMAN RESOURCES AT THE B.C. SHERIFF SERVICE

An independent audit report

October 2019



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The Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia would like to acknowledge with respect that we conduct our work on Coast Salish territories. Primarily, this is on the Lkwungen-speaking people's (Esquimalt and Songhees) traditional lands, now known as Victoria, and the W̱SÁNEĆ people's (Pauquachin, Tsartlip, Tsawout, Tseycum) traditional lands, now known as Saanich.

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TRANSMITTAL LETTER

The Honourable Darryl Plecas
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
Province of British Columbia
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, British Columbia
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Dear Mr. Speaker:

I have the honour to transmit to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia the report, *Managing Human Resources at the B.C. Sheriff Service*.

We conducted this audit under the authority of section 11(8) of the *Auditor General Act* and in accordance with the standards for assurance engagements set out by the Chartered Professional Accountants of Canada (CPA) in the CPA Handbook – Canadian Standard on Assurance Engagements (CSAE) 3001 and Value-for-money Auditing in the Public Sector PS 5400.



Carol Bellringer, FCPA, FCA
Auditor General
Victoria, B.C.
October 2019



AUDITOR GENERAL'S COMMENTS

CAROL BELLRINGER, FCPA, FCA
Auditor General

In B.C., a sheriff's role is to provide for the safety and security of the courts, and the courts typically won't operate without sheriffs present.

A few years ago, we started looking at justice reform as an audit topic, because access to justice continues to be a challenge within the Province of B.C. An accessible justice system is one where the people of British Columbia can address their legal needs in a fair and timely manner.

We chose to focus our audit on the human resource practices of the B.C. Sheriff Service (BCSS) because we found that a lack of sheriffs in the courtrooms can delay and close courts. If cases are delayed too long they can be dismissed—as per the Supreme Court of Canada decision on *R.v. Jordan*. Specifically, our audit looked at how well the BCSS is recruiting, retaining and training its staff because having the right staff—both in terms of the number and the types of positions—helps ensure the BCSS meets its objective to provide for the safety and security of the courts and the participants in the judicial system.

Overall, we found that while the BCSS launched a plan in 2017 to overcome some of its human resources challenges, more needs to be done. As part of this plan, it implemented a strategy to increase the number of staff it recruits to fill its staffing shortage. But, we found that the BCSS doesn't know whether the staffing figure it's targeting is sufficient to meet its overall objective. This is because the BCSS doesn't have the data and tools to estimate this number.

In terms of keeping staff, we found that the BCSS has gathered some information on the reasons sheriffs leave for other jobs, but not enough information to determine the primary reasons, or how to retain staff. This is important, given the critical need for sheriffs and the time and cost to train them. We found that between 2012/13 and 2016/17, the BCSS lost more staff than it was able to recruit, leading to an overall reduction in staff.

The working environment for sheriffs can be unpredictable. Tensions in court can run high and sheriffs are in contact with the same population as police and correctional officers—a population that can be violent at times and have complex needs, such as substance use issues and mental health conditions.

We found that sheriff recruits receive considerable, high-quality training that prepares them for the job—such as legal studies, firearms and use of force training—but we couldn't see that ongoing training did the same for its in-service staff. The BCSS did not maintain an accurate and complete list of the courses it provided to its in-service staff, nor did it have an overarching training plan that outlined the courses these staff were expected to take to ensure they were prepared for the job.


Although the BCSS lacked an overarching training plan for its in-service staff, its training policy outlined mandatory training expectations for firearms and the use of force. Last year, when we first looked at the BCSS' mandatory training, we found that less than 40% of sheriffs requalified on their firearm and use of force training on time. During our audit, the BCSS relaxed its training requirements by allowing staff to go longer between requalifications. The BCSS made this change without examining the impact it would have on the sheriffs' ability to safely use their firearms or exert force.

In August 1999, we audited the training and development for deputy sheriffs ([Chapter IV, Report 3: Maintaining Human Capital in the British Columbia Public Service: The Role of Training and Development](#)). In that audit, we concluded that there wasn't enough investment in training to maintain the skill base of the sheriffs and that the lack of investment may place deputy sheriffs, the branch, prisoners and other stakeholders at risk. In this current audit, we found that a lot of the same risks still apply, and the recent change in the BCSS' training requalification requirements sets it even further behind its 1999 standards.

The improper use of a firearm or force can have significant consequences for courthouse staff and the public. Failure to properly train sheriffs increases the risk and severity of incidents, accidents and injuries, should sheriffs need to use their firearm or force.

We made eight recommendations to the BCSS to improve its human resource planning and strategies. These include enhancing its business intelligence data, developing a retention strategy and overarching training plan, and monitoring the progress and effectiveness of its human resource strategies and overall objective of providing for the safety and security of the courts.

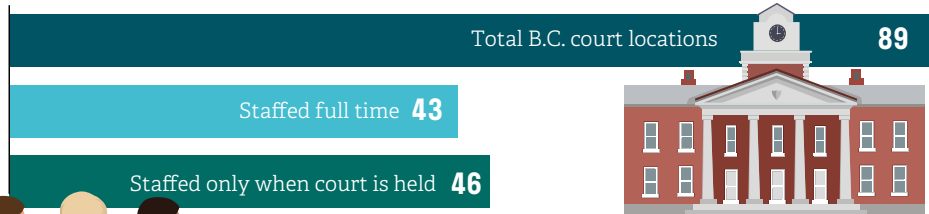
I would like to thank the staff at the B.C. Sheriff Services for their support and assistance during our work on this audit. A special thank you to the sheriffs we met with—for their professionalism and contributions to this audit—and for the services they provide to the people of British Columbia.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carol Bellringer". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'C'.

Carol Bellringer, FCPA, FCA
Auditor General
Victoria, B.C.
October 2019



B.C. sheriffs provide for the safety and security of the courts. Typically, courts don't operate without sheriffs present. A lack of sheriffs in the courtrooms can delay and close courts. If cases are delayed too long they can be dismissed.

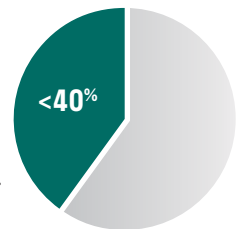


Training

BCSS provides new sheriff recruits with high-quality training that prepares them for their job.

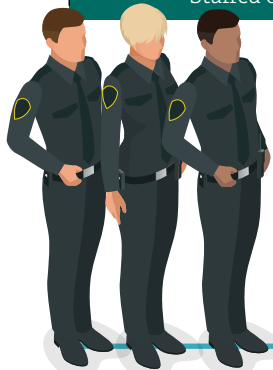
But it does not have a comprehensive plan to meet ongoing training needs of in-service staff.

2017-2018: We found <40% of sheriffs had requalified on their firearm and use of force training on time.



March 2019: BCSS relaxed its training requirements, allowing staff to go longer between requalifications. It made the change without examining the impact on sheriffs' ability to safely use their firearms or exert force.

Improper use of a firearm or force can have significant consequences for courthouse staff and the public. Failure to properly train sheriffs increases the risk and severity of incidents, accidents and injuries if a sheriff needs to use their firearm or force.



In January 2019 the B.C. Sheriff Service (BCSS) had roughly **470 staff** in operations.

In 2016/17, sheriffs provided over **100,000 hours** of in-court security.



We looked at how well the BCSS is recruiting, retaining and training its staff.

While the BCSS launched a plan in 2017 to overcome some of its HR challenges, more needs to be done.



Recruitment

2012-2017: BCSS lost more staff than it could recruit, leading to an overall staffing shortage.

2017-2018: BCSS increased the number of staff it recruited, but recruitment strategy not linked to the number of staff needed to meet its objective.



Retention

BCSS has gathered some information on why sheriffs leave, but not enough to determine primary reasons, or strategies to retain them.

BCSS plans to develop a retention strategy in 2019.



SUMMARY

Sheriffs play a critical role in the province's justice system, ensuring the safety and security of the courts. Their responsibilities include supervising court hearings, transporting prisoners, conducting threat and risk assessments, and executing arrest warrants. Having the right staff in place helps ensure that the B.C. Sheriff Service (BCSS) has the capacity to meet its objective.

The BCSS is a division of the Court Services Branch (CSB) in the Ministry of Attorney General. The CSB has two core business areas: court administration (which includes the provision of courtroom clerks and court registry services), and sheriff services. The CSB also has headquarters staff whose responsibilities cover the entire branch and include strategic planning, financial management, human resources and information and technology services.

We carried out this audit to determine whether the BCSS had implemented effective plans and strategies to recruit, train, develop and retain the staff it needs to meet its objective of providing for the safety and security of the courts in B.C. and the participants in the judicial system.

We concluded that the BCSS had implemented a human resource (HR) plan and strategies to recruit and train staff. However, its recruitment strategy was not based on the staff it needs to meet its objective because the BCSS had not established this figure. Further, while the BCSS had effective training in place for its new recruits, it lacked a comprehensive training plan for its in-service staff, outlining the knowledge, skills and competencies they need to maintain in order to meet the organization's objective.

The BCSS had not implemented a development or retention strategy, but plans to do so in 2019.

As a result, we concluded that the BCSS had not implemented effective plans and strategies to recruit, train, develop and retain the staff it needs to provide for the safety and security of the courts of B.C. and the participants in the judicial system. This does not mean that the courts are not safe and secure, as there are many variables, including human resource plans and strategies, that contribute to the BCSS objective.

HR plan and strategies were not informed by the staff (position and amount) needed to meet the BCSS objective

In order to build an effective HR plan and strategies, organizations must first understand their staffing needs — for example, the number of staff and the types of positions needed. This is a shared responsibility between CSB headquarters and the BCSS. We found that headquarters and the BCSS had not established the BCSS' staffing needs, and as a result had not developed an HR plan or strategies informed by an understanding of the staff required to provide for the safety and security of the courts.

CSB headquarters is developing a model to estimate the staff the BCSS requires to achieve its objective

Although the CSB headquarters and the BCSS had not established the staff the BCSS needs to meet its objective, we found that headquarters was in the process of updating and developing two tools to help estimate future staffing needs.

The first is the Staff Planning Technique (SPT), which estimates the number of staff required on an annual basis to carry out the organization's major activities. However, despite being in place since the 1980s, the tool has not been used to establish the BCSS's overall staffing target because of limitations in the completeness and accuracy of the data it relies on. To address these issues, headquarters had begun to update the SPT methodology and was taking steps to enhance data reliability.

Complementary to the SPT is the Sheriff Planning and Recruitment Model (SPRM) which is used to estimate longer-term staffing needs. The SPRM uses data from the SPT to establish the current demand for staff, but then builds in other supply-and-demand variables. However, given the limitations with the SPT and the data it relies on, the SPRM has not been used to establish the organization's long-term staffing target.

Recruitment strategy to increase the number of recruits was implemented, but strategies to enhance the recruitment process were not clearly defined or monitored

The ability to recruit a qualified workforce and fill staff shortages is crucial to any organization, as it is the workforce that drives productivity and ensures that the organization can meet its objectives.

The BCSS HR plan included a recruitment strategy to increase the number of new recruits, and we found that the BCSS has successfully implemented this strategy. In 2017 and 2018, the BCSS recruited 114 staff, compared with 78 recruits over the previous four years.

The BCSS had also developed three additional strategies in its HR plan to enhance its recruitment process. However, we found that the BCSS had not consistently defined what it was seeking to achieve through these strategies, limiting our ability to determine whether it had implemented them effectively.

The BCSS had not established the causes of staff attrition or developed a retention strategy

Recruitment strategies bring people through the door; retention strategies help keep them there. An effective retention strategy begins with an understanding of the reasons why staff leave, and then deploys initiatives that attempt to address them.

Between 2012/13 and 2016/17, the BCSS lost more staff than it was able to recruit, leading to an overall reduction in staff. We found that the BCSS had gathered some information on the causes of staff attrition, but that it needed a more comprehensive body of knowledge to establish the primary reasons for staff departures. We also found that the BCSS had not developed a retention strategy; however, it plans to do so in November 2019.

Training program for new recruits effectively provided the required knowledge, skills and competencies

Training and development strategies ensure that staff are equipped to fulfill the organization's objective and adhere to policy and standards. The BCSS has two training programs—one for new recruits (the Sheriff Recruit Training [SRT] program) and one for in-service staff (in-service training program).

We found that the SRT program for new recruits included courses that effectively covered the knowledge, skills and competencies that staff need to carry out their duties. We also found that the BCSS, in partnership with Justice Institute of British Columbia, had effectively monitored and tracked the SRT program to ensure that new recruits successfully completed the program prior to commencing their duties.

The BCSS could not demonstrate that ongoing training provided staff with the required knowledge, skills and competencies

We could not determine whether the BCSS in-service training program provided staff with the knowledge, skills and competencies to carry out their duties. The BCSS did not maintain an accurate and complete list of the courses offered to in-service staff and it did not have an overarching training plan outlining the courses staff were expected to take.

Not all staff completed their firearms and use of force requalification testing on time

Although the BCSS lacked a comprehensive plan for its in-service training program, its policy outlined mandatory training expectations for firearms and use of force. We examined a sample of staff training records in November 2018 and found that less than 40% of staff had completed their firearm and use of force requalifications on time (within 12 and 24 months, respectively) in 2017/18.

The BCSS relaxed its firearms and use of force training requirements without examining potential impacts

In March 2019, the BCSS updated its training policy for firearms and use of force, extending the period between qualifications. We re-examined our sample and found that while compliance rates had improved, 15% of staff had still not completed their firearm requalification on time, and 20% had not completed their use of force requalification on time.

The BCSS stated that the change in policy reflected long-standing practice in the field. We did not find any evidence that it was based on an assessment of the training staff need to safely and effectively discharge their firearm or apply force, or that it reflected changes to broader industry standards. Improper use of a firearm or force can have significant consequences, and the failure to properly train staff increases the risk for and severity of incidents, accidents and injuries.

The BCSS did not have key performance indicators to determine whether it was achieving its objective

Finally, as our audit examined whether the BCSS had effective HR plans and strategies, we looked at whether the BCSS was monitoring its success in meeting its overall objective to provide for the safety and security of the courts.

We found that the BCSS had not developed performance measures or indicators for its objective, which precluded its ability to demonstrate its effectiveness in providing for the safety and security of the courts. The lack of performance measures also limited its understanding of whether, and where, adjustments are needed to enhance its effectiveness (e.g., whether it needed additional resources or enhanced training). The BCSS was aware of its lack of performance measures and had developed (but not implemented) a draft performance measurement framework.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that the:

- 1** Court Services Branch create and fill a strategic human resources position that is responsible for developing, implementing, overseeing and integrating the B.C. Sheriff Service human resources planning and strategies.
- 2** Court Services Branch enhance the B.C. Sheriff Service business intelligence data to ensure that it is complete and reliable.
- 3** Court Services Branch use the updated Staff Planning Technique and Sheriff Planning Recruitment Model to estimate the staff the B.C. Sheriff Service needs to meet its objective and inform its human resources plan, strategies and funding requests.
- 4** B.C. Sheriff Service establish clear goals, actions, resources, targets and performance measures for its human resources plan and strategies (recruitment, retention, training and development) and measure its progress against these.
- 5** B.C. Sheriff Service develop a retention strategy that is informed by and addresses the identified causes of staff attrition.
- 6** B.C. Sheriff Service develop an overarching training plan that defines the training expectations for all of its staff, based on the knowledge, skills and competencies that staff need to carry out their duties. The B.C. Sheriff Service should also ensure that staff complete this training in compliance with the training plan.
- 7** B.C. Sheriff Service conduct regular reviews of its training and development programs to ensure that it is providing its staff with the knowledge, skills and competencies they need to conduct their duties.
- 8** B.C. Sheriff Service develop key performance indicators for its objective of providing for the safety and security of the courts, and use these indicators to regularly monitor its effectiveness.

RESPONSE FROM THE MINISTRY OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, COURT SERVICES BRANCH

The Ministry of the Attorney General, Court Services Branch (CSB) would like to thank the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) for their review of the human resource practices of the B.C. Sheriff Service (BCSS). The Ministry accepts the Auditor's recommendations for process and program improvements as identified in this report.

The mandate of the BCSS is to ensure the safety and security of the courts of B.C. and participants in the justice system. Each day, across the province, highly trained sheriffs demonstrate their commitment and dedication to that mandate. The Ministry is committed to supporting these efforts. The Auditor's report will contribute to further enhance the BCSS human resource practices.

Like many employers in B.C.'s competitive job market, the BCSS faces recruitment and retention challenges. We continue to explore new and innovative ways to recruit and retain staff. While accepting the recommendations of the OAG, it is also important to highlight the actions BCSS has already taken to improve recruitment, training, and succession management practices.

In 2016, recognizing that additional efforts were required to improve staffing levels and engagement, CSB developed a multi-year strategy aimed at tackling these challenges - BC Sheriff Service 2020 (BCSS 2020). The strategy encompassed 14 different streams of work to be undertaken in phases over 4 years. BCSS 2020 touches on many of the OAG recommendations and delves deeper in some additional areas beyond the scope of the audit. Since inception, BCSS 2020 projects have included:

- Implementing a recruitment strategy that includes a commitment of two recruit intakes per year (CSB has exceeded this target and is conducting three intakes per year);
- Increasing the number of staff resources in the recruitment office, and implementing improved, streamlined recruitment processes;
- Developing tools and measures to better predict staffing requirements;
- Introducing an internal communications strategy, leadership and coaching programs, and several other projects aimed at improving retention, succession and employee engagement.

As many of the BCSS 2020 projects are in progress and yet to be assessed, the Ministry acknowledges the OAG was not able to fully measure the results of these projects. The Ministry continues to implement additional projects under the BCSS 2020 strategy. The recommendations of the audit will assist to prioritize these efforts and establish solid measures towards evaluation.

Additionally, the Ministry notes it is important to clarify the audit finding;

“During the audit, the BCSS relaxed its requirements for firearms and use of force training without examining the impact.”

This finding may lead the public to believe that sheriffs are not properly trained in firearms and use of force, thereby exposing them to risk. The Ministry responds that this is not the case. The March 2019 policy amendment referred to in this finding, was updated to reflect existing policy and practice. Current re-certification practices have been in place since April 2017. There was no change to BCSS recertification requirements during the audit. However, the policy manual was updated.

The Office of Professional Standards (OPS) is accountable for reviewing incident reports, trends specific to the Sheriff Service workplace, recertification practices in other Canadian jurisdictions, and industry best practice standards. OPS and BCSS management will improve its documentation in this area, including ensuring clear documentation of policy and practice related decisions.

As outlined in the Attorney General's mandate letter of July 2017, the Ministry is committed to keeping courtrooms open and courthouses safe. We note the Auditor's findings that recruitment increased in 2017 and 2018 when the Ministry received additional funding for this purpose.

The OAG's recommendations are opportunities to further improve the policies and practices identified. The Ministry would like to acknowledge all BC Sheriffs for their dedication, professionalism and the integrity with which they carry out their duties every day in British Columbia.

The Ministry responds to the report's published recommendations as follows:

RECOMMENDATION 1: *We recommend that the Court Services Branch create and fill a strategic human resources position that is responsible for developing, implementing, overseeing and integrating the BCSS human resources planning and strategies.*

RECOMMENDATION # 1 RESPONSE: The Ministry is committed to supporting the strategic human resource management of BCSS. CSB will conduct analysis to determine the appropriate resourcing model to ensure one or more positions within the organization have specified responsibility for developing, implementing, overseeing and integrating the BCSS human resources planning and strategies.

RECOMMENDATION 2: *We recommend that the Court Services Branch enhance the BCSS business intelligence data to ensure that it is complete and reliable.*

RECOMMENDATION #2 RESPONSE: Work is underway to improve BCSS business intelligence data. This is a specific stream attached to BCSS 2020.

RECOMMENDATION 3: *We recommend that the Court Services Branch use the updated Staff Planning Technique and Sheriff Planning Recruitment Model to estimate the staff BCSS needs to meet its objective and inform its human resources plan, strategies and funding requests.*

RECOMMENDATION #3 RESPONSE: The Ministry is actively working to update the Staff Planning Technique and the Sheriff Planning Recruitment Models. This will result in more accurate estimates of BCSS resource requirements.

RECOMMENDATION 4: *We recommend that the BCSS establish clear goals, actions, resources, targets and performance measures for its human resources plan and strategies (recruitment, retention, training and development) and measure its progress against these.*

RECOMMENDATION #4 RESPONSE: The BCSS 2020 strategy includes a range of already implemented and in-progress actions aimed specifically at recruitment, retention, training and development. While some goals, actions, targets and measures are in place, the Ministry accepts the recommendation to develop specific targets and performance measures to better monitor progress.

RECOMMENDATION 5: *We recommend that the BCSS develop a retention strategy that is informed by and addresses the identified causes of staff attrition.*

RECOMMENDATION #5 RESPONSE: The Ministry recognizes that exit surveys are an excellent tool for understanding why people leave. We will re-introduce these surveys and encourage all exiting staff to complete. We will link this information to that gathered by the WES survey, and any other available data, and develop an overarching retention strategy aimed at addressing the causes of attrition.

RECOMMENDATION 6: *We recommend that the BCSS develop an overarching training plan that defines the training expectations for all of its staff, based on the knowledge, skills and competencies that staff need to carry out their duties. The BCSS should also ensure that staff complete this training in compliance with the training plan.*

RECOMMENDATION #6 RESPONSE: The Ministry appreciates the Auditor's acknowledgement that their recruit training program effectively covers the knowledge, skills and competencies required. The Ministry will develop an overarching training plan, and methods to monitor compliance for all staff post-recruitment.

RECOMMENDATION 7: *We recommend that the BCSS conduct regular reviews of its training and development programs to ensure that it is providing its staff with the knowledge, skills and competencies they need to conduct their duties.*

RECOMMENDATION #7 RESPONSE: The BCSS continuously strives to be an industry leader in providing protective services for the justice system. The Ministry will conduct regular reviews of training and development programs to ensure staff have the skills and competencies required to conduct their duties.

RECOMMENDATION 8: *We recommend that the BCSS develop key performance indicators for its objective of providing for the safety and security of the courts and use these indicators to regularly monitor its effectiveness.*

RECOMMENDATION #8 RESPONSE: The BCSS will identify performance targets and associated measures that demonstrate BCSS is fulfilling its objective of providing for the safety and security of the courts.

ABOUT THE AUDIT

Background

What is a sheriff?

The B.C. Sheriff Service (BCSS) plays a critical role in the province's justice system, ensuring the safety and security of the courts (the Provincial Court of British Columbia, the British Columbia Supreme Court and the British Columbia Court of Appeal). Sheriffs in B.C. maintain courtroom and courthouse security by supervising court hearings, searching courtrooms and courthouses, and operating search gates. In 2016/17, sheriffs provided over 100,000 hours of in-court security.

In addition to providing court security, sheriffs are responsible for:

- transport services—transporting prisoners (accused and convicted) to/from courthouses, correctional facilities, police detachments and hospitals
- holding cell supervision—holding accused individuals in courthouse cells and making sure they get to court on time; ensuring that individuals are properly checked and cleared prior to release
- threat and risk assessments—assessing, mitigating and gathering intelligence on threats and risks for high-security and high-profile trials, appearances and transports; conducting operational planning based on threat and risk assessments
- jury administration—facilitating the jury selection process and managing the oversight and security of jurors for criminal and civil trials at the B.C. Supreme Court
- document services—serving documents to the public (e.g., orders of the court, civil/family warrant of arrest, order of committal)
- warrants and arrests—executing warrants for arrest, and arresting individuals for contempt on orders of the judge

The environment that sheriffs work in can be unpredictable, both due to the courthouse setting—where tensions among court participants can run high—and the nature of the population they deal with. In monitoring, holding and transporting prisoners, sheriffs are in contact with the same population police and correctional officers—a population that can be violent at times and present with complex needs, including substance use issues and mental health conditions.

PEACE OFFICERS

The term peace officer describes anyone who has statutory law enforcement powers. Common examples of peace officers in Canada are sheriffs, police officers, and correctional officers. The *Criminal Code of Canada* defines the power and authority of peace officers, which includes the use of force when carrying out an arrest.

As peace officers, sheriffs have the authority to arrest and hold someone for breaching the peace when they are engaged in one of their legislated duties. Between 2014 and 2017, sheriffs made roughly 400 arrests in B.C. This responsibility, coupled with the BCSS objective of maintaining safety and security, means that sheriffs may be required to use force in the execution of their duties. Sheriffs therefore carry firearms and receive training in the appropriate use of force to ensure that incidents are resolved safely.

OBJECTIVE OF THE B.C. SHERIFF SERVICE

The objective of the BCSS is to provide for the safety and security of the courts and the participants in the judicial system (participants in the judicial system include judges, lawyers, members of a jury, witnesses, court administration staff, accused persons, government officers and members of the public.)

B.C.'s court system

The BCSS is a decentralized organization with five regional areas—North, Interior, Vancouver Coastal, Vancouver Island, and Fraser—that cover all 89 court locations across the province (see [Exhibit 1](#)). Of these court locations, 43 are staffed full time. The remaining 46 locations are circuit court sites, which are staffed only on days when court is being held. On these occasions, sheriffs (and all other court participants) travel from their base location to the circuit court and back.

B.C. has a hierarchy of three different levels of court:

- B.C. Court of Appeal—This is the highest court in the province. It hears appeals from the B.C. Supreme Court on criminal matters, as well as appeals from some administrative boards and tribunals. Appeal Court justices render judgments on appeal by reviewing the original trial record and deciding whether the decision was lawfully correct.
- B.C. Supreme Court—This court is the second level of the court hierarchy. It hears civil cases over \$35,000, family law cases involving divorce and custody, and serious criminal cases. Jury trials can only take place in Supreme Court. The court can also hear appeals from the Provincial Court.
- Provincial Court of B.C.—This court has the power to deal with all criminal matters (except murder and other serious offences), as well as cases involving family law, child protection law and civil law. The Provincial Court hears over 95% of all criminal cases in the province.

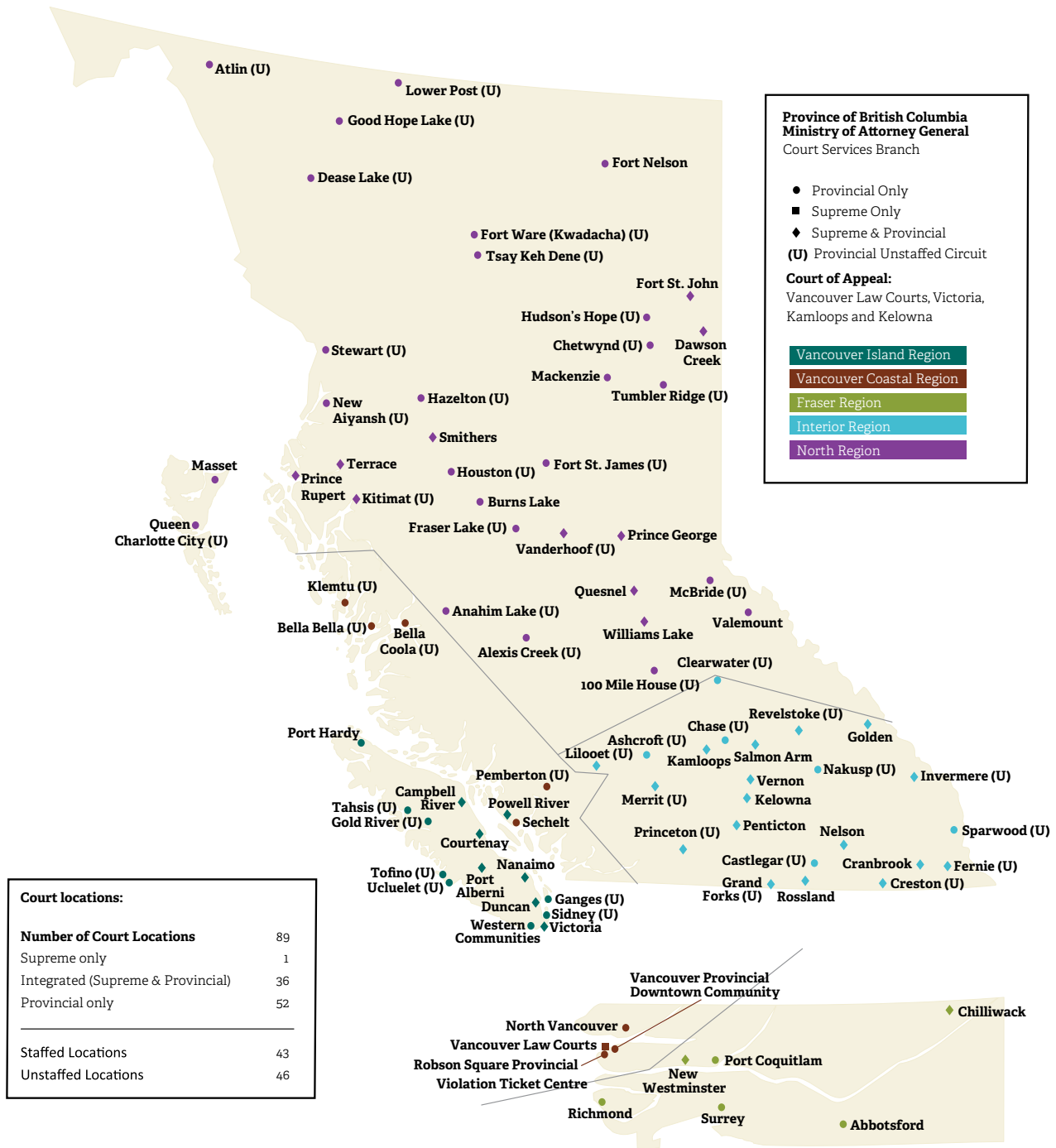
WHAT IS A CIRCUIT COURT?

When the number of people in an area doesn't warrant a full-time court, judges from Provincial Court visit and hold court in the community. This is also available for Supreme Court. These community sittings of the court are called circuit courts.

Organizational structure of the BCSS

The BCSS is a division of the Court Services Branch (CSB) in the Ministry of Attorney General. The CSB is responsible for the delivery of all court administration and sheriff services, and has two core business areas: court administration (which includes the provision of courtroom clerks and court registry services), and sheriff services. The CSB also has headquarters staff whose responsibilities cover the entire branch and include strategic planning, financial management, facilities, policy and legislation, human resources, and information and technology services.

EXHIBIT 1: Court locations in B.C., 2018



Source: Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia, based on Ministry of Attorney General court location map

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE EXECUTIVE AND JUDICIAL BRANCHES OF GOVERNMENT FOR COURT ADMINISTRATION

B.C. has three branches of government: the legislative, the executive and the judicial. In its simplest form, the legislative branch creates the law, the executive branch enforces the law, and the judicial branch interprets and applies the law. The CSB in the Ministry of Attorney General falls under the executive branch.

While each branch of government has separate and independent areas of power and responsibility, the provision of court resources (particularly facilities, registries and court staff) is an area that requires the co-operation of both the executive and judicial branches. Sheriffs are a unique example of this interrelationship. While they report administratively to the CSB, they are under the supervision and control of the judiciary when carrying out their duties as officers of the court; this makes them accountable to both the executive and judicial branches of government.

There are two divisions, both reporting directly to the assistant deputy minister of the CSB, that oversee and maintain the roles and functions for BCSS staff (see [Exhibit 2](#)): BCSS operational services (led by the chief sheriff) and the BCSS Office of Professional Standards (led by the superintendent of the Office of Professional Standards).

Operational services

The operational services division is responsible for carrying out the core activities of the BCSS, including providing courtroom security, conducting transports, supervising courthouse cells and undertaking threat assessments. The division is led by the chief sheriff, who is responsible for ensuring that sheriff services are delivered in alignment with policies, programs and standards.

Operational services staff are posted in all five regions and include:

- deputy sheriffs—responsible for ensuring the safety of all court participants (deputies represent the majority of operational staff and can be found at all court locations across the province)
- sergeants—responsible for supervising the daily operation of sheriffs at each courthouse
- inspectors—responsible for overseeing operations of specific courthouses
- superintendents—responsible for the operations of an entire region

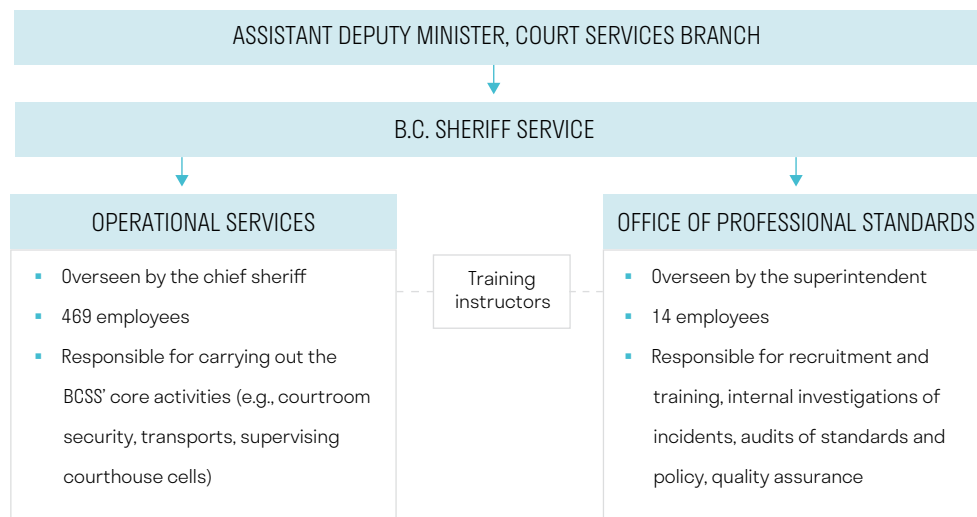
As of January 2019, operational services had 469 active employees.

Office of Professional Standards

The Office of Professional Standards (OPS) was established in 2013 to provide independent oversight of the organization’s professionalism and standards. The OPS is responsible for internal investigations of incidents, audits of standards and policy, quality assurance and performance management programs. The mandate of the OPS has evolved since 2013 to also include sheriff recruitment and training.

The OPS has a total of 14 employees, including the superintendent who oversees the program. Positions within the OPS include an inspector, a coordinator and an administrator of recruitment and training. The OPS also has eight provincial training officers who are responsible for monitoring and delivering the BCSS’ training program across the organization.

EXHIBIT 2: BCSS organizational structure



Source: Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia, based on Ministry of Attorney General organizational charts and business intelligence data.

Note: Employees are defined as the total number of active sheriff service employees, but does not include auxiliary deputy sheriffs, deputy sheriff recruits, administrative positions or employees on leave. These numbers are current as of January 2019.

Although operational services and the OPS are independent from one another, they use some of the same staff. For example, operational sheriffs serve as instructors for some of the training provided by the OPS, maintaining their operational duties and reporting to the chief sheriff, but instructing when called upon.

Audit scope

Our audit looked at the BCSS human resource (HR) practices in the areas of staff planning, recruitment, training and development, and retention. Because the impacts of HR strategies and activities take time to materialize, we focused on the BCSS practices over a six-year period—from 2013 to 2019. We also considered work beyond this timeframe if it significantly impacted BCSS practices.

Our audit scope covered all five of the BCSS regions (North, Interior, Vancouver Coastal, Vancouver Island, and Fraser) and all positions (e.g., deputy sheriffs, sergeants, inspectors, superintendents and executive directors).

Although we examined the BCSS compliance with its internal recruitment process, we did not assess the merits of its recruitment decisions. The Merit Commissioner, an independent officer who reports directly to the Legislative Assembly, conducts reviews of both internal and external recruitment and hiring processes.

Audit method

Our work involved:

- researching good practices in the area of HR management, specific to law enforcement where possible
- reviewing over 200 BCSS HR documents
- reviewing a targeted sample of BCSS recruitment files from 2017/18
- reviewing targeted samples of BCSS sheriff recruit training files from the period 2017–18, and in-service training files from the period 2014–2018
- carrying out site visits to eight courthouses, a correctional centre, a training facility and the Sheriff Provincial Operations Centre
- conducting over 90 interviews with CSB executives, BCSS operational staff and OPS staff, as well as with external stakeholders
- consulting with subject matter experts on HR management, with specific expertise in law enforcement

The report is dated May 16, 2019. This is the date on which the audit team finished obtaining the evidence used to determine the findings and conclusions of the report.

AUDIT OBJECTIVE AND CONCLUSION

Audit objective

Our objective was to determine whether the B.C. Sheriff Service (BCSS) had implemented effective plans and strategies to recruit, train, develop and retain the staff it needs to provide for the safety and security of the courts of B.C. and the participants in the judicial system (the BCSS objective).

Audit conclusion

We found that the BCSS had implemented a human resource plan and strategies to recruit and train staff. However, its recruitment strategy was not based on the staff it needs to meet its objective because the BCSS had not established this figure. Further, while the BCSS had effective training in place for its new recruits, it lacked a comprehensive training plan for its in-service staff outlining the knowledge, skills and competencies they need to maintain in order to meet the organization's objective.

The BCSS had not implemented a development or retention strategy, but plans to do so in 2019.

As a result, we concluded that the BCSS had not implemented effective plans and strategies to recruit, train, develop and retain the staff it needs to provide for the safety and security of the courts of B.C. and the participants in the judicial system. This does not mean that the courts are not safe and secure, as there are many variables, including human resource plans and strategies, that contribute to the BCSS objective.

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

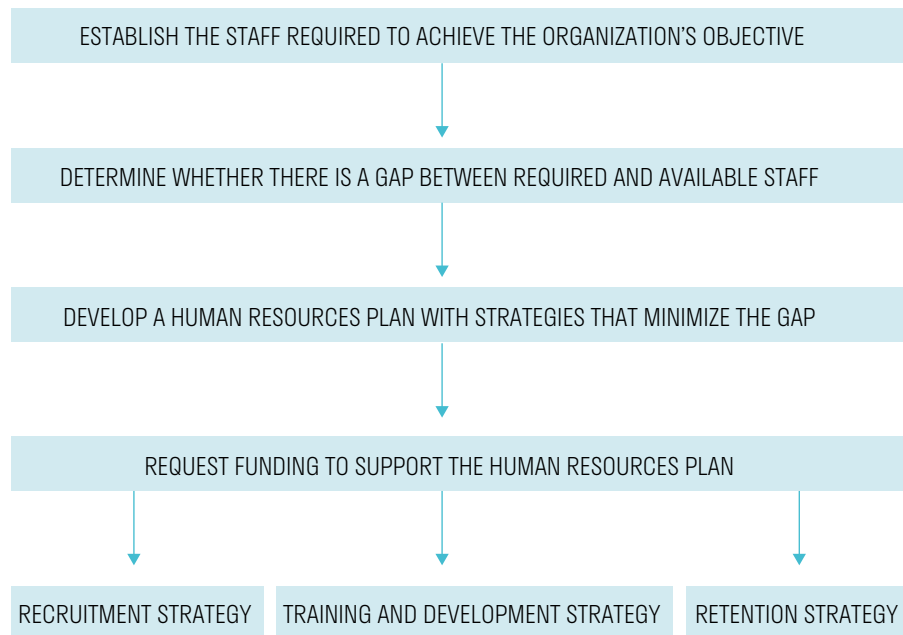
Determining the required staff

Strategic human resource (HR) planning is an important activity that can help an organization achieve its objective and minimize risks in the delivery of critical services by ensuring that it has the right staff in place. For the B.C. Sheriff Service (BCSS), this means having sufficient staff—in terms of both the number of staff and the types of positions—to provide for the safety and security of the courts. As a result, we expected to find that the BCSS had analyzed its workforce to determine the staff it needs (position and amount) in order to achieve its objective, and that it had used this information to inform its HR plan and strategies.

HR plan and strategies were not informed by the staff (position and amount) needed to meet the BCSS objective

We found that the BCSS had not established the staff it needed to achieve its objective because it did not have the data and tools required to estimate those needs. As a result, the HR plan and strategies were not informed by an understanding of the staff needed to provide for the safety and security of the courts.

Understanding staffing needs is the starting point for building an effective HR plan and strategies (see [Exhibit 3](#)). It enables an organization to identify any gaps between the staff it has now and the staff it needs both currently and in the future (also known as a gap analysis). Equipped with this information, organizations can then develop and prioritize HR strategies and initiatives to close the gap. Simply stated, if an organization determined that it needed 100 staff to carry out its objective but had only 75, it could develop an HR plan and strategies to hire 25 staff and then request funding to execute the plan.

EXHIBIT 3: *Human resources planning*

Source: Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia, based on review of good practice

The human resource planning and management function is shared between headquarters at the Court Services Branch (CSB) and the BCSS. While there is no documented delineation of roles and responsibilities in these areas, we observed that headquarters is responsible for gathering business intelligence data, developing staff forecasts and submitting budget requests, while the BCSS is responsible for deploying funds to meet its operational needs through recruitment, training and retention strategies.

We found that in 2017, headquarters and the BCSS developed an HR plan—the BCSS 2020 Strategic Action Plan—to “build a stronger, healthier and more sustainable workforce.” The plan set out work to be undertaken from 2017 to 2020 and included strategies to recruit and develop staff, along with plans for work in the area of retention.

However, the HR plan was not informed by an assessment of the staff BCSS needs to achieve its objective (providing for the safety and security of the courts), but rather by the staff needed to maintain court sitting hours in 2011/12 (i.e., 491 staff). Not only was this assessment dated, but it did not account for all the activities that sheriffs undertake to provide safety and security in the courts, such as transporting prisoners, maintaining holding cells, conducting risk and threat assessments, and training to ensure that sheriffs can safely execute their responsibilities.

The assessment also assumed that the number of sheriffs assigned to the courts between 2007/08 and 2011/12 was sufficient to maintain court sitting hours, which was not the case. In fact, in 2011, an average of six sheriffs were redeployed every day from their regular duties into court to avoid courtroom closures. And, even still, courtrooms were being closed, or cases delayed, due to a lack of available sheriffs.

Since 2011/12, the BCSS has identified the need for additional staff to meet specific requirements, such as those resulting from major trials and courthouse expansions; however, its target of 541 staff is based on the original assessment from 2011/12.

EXHIBIT 4: HR plan staffing target

Base staffing needs (identified in 2011/12)	491 staff
Additional staffing needs (identified between 2012 and 2018)	50 staff
Staff target	541 staff

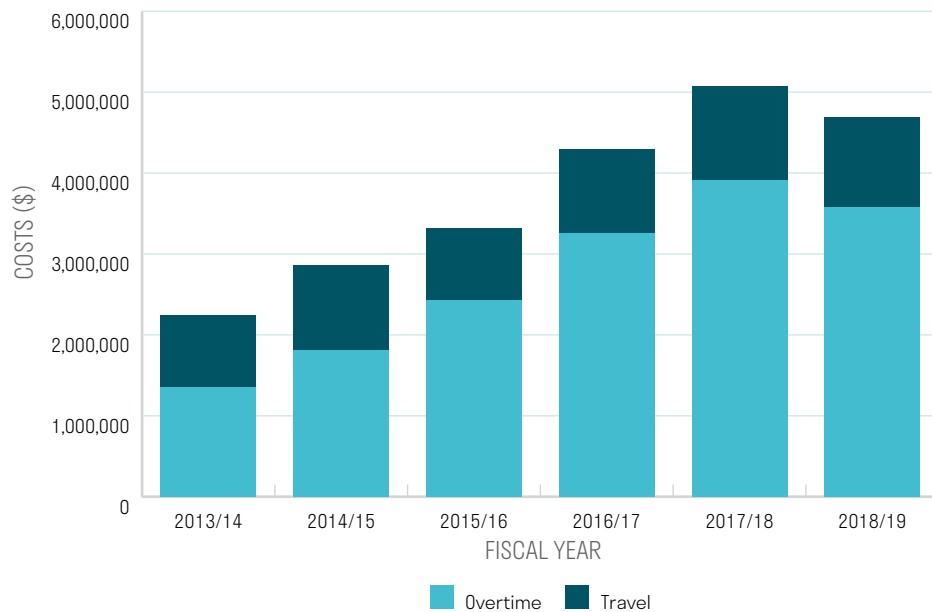
Source: Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia, based on 2011 Treasury Board Briefing Note and Ministry of Attorney General documentation

Although we could not determine the BCSS staffing needs, we did observe several trends suggesting that the BCSS did not have sufficient staff between 2012/13 and 2018/19. Trends we observed include:

- scheduled court matters being deferred or cancelled due to a lack of sheriffs (27 closures were reported between 2012/13 and 2018/19)
- mandatory and supplementary training, such as firearms training, being cancelled or deferred because the BCSS did not have the in-court coverage to approve training leave
- high levels of overtime which increased between 2013/14 and 2017/18 (see [Exhibit 5](#))
- high travel costs, in part from loaning staff between offices to backfill shortages (the BCSS spent an annual average of \$1 million on travel between 2014 and 2019); (see [Exhibit 5](#))

¹ Operational staff report court closures via email to CSB headquarters staff, who manually track the data. CSB confirmed that there are known gaps in this data between 2012/13 and 2015/16 due to the manual reporting and tracking process. As a result, the number of closures is likely under-reported.

EXHIBIT 5: Overtime and travel costs, 2013/14 – 2018/19



Source: Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia, based on the BCSS’s overtime expenses from 2013/14 – 2018/19

The field of human resources is complex and evolving, and organizations require significant levels of expertise to develop, coordinate and implement human resource plans and strategies. We found that the BCSS did not have a strategic HR position, and lacked clear accountability for its HR planning and management. This, along with the lack of coordination between headquarters and the BCSS, was a contributing factor for many of our findings, and we recommend that the CSB address this gap by establishing a strategic HR position for the BCSS. This would enable integration and clear accountability of the BCSS HR management and strategies.

RECOMMENDATION 1: *We recommend that the Court Services Branch create and fill a strategic human resources position that is responsible for developing, implementing, overseeing and integrating the B.C. Sheriff Service human resources planning and strategies.*

CSB headquarters is developing a model to estimate the staff the BCSS requires to achieve its objective

Although CSB had not established the staff the BCSS needed in order to meet its objective, we found that it was in the process of updating and developing two tools to estimate future staffing needs: the Staff Planning Technique and the Sheriff Planning and Recruitment Model.

Staff Planning Technique

Headquarters uses the Staff Planning Technique (SPT) to estimate the number of staff the BCSS requires on an annual basis to carry out its major activities, including in-court security, pre- and post- court activities, transporting prisoners to and from court, executing court orders, serving documents and overseeing jury administration.

For each major activity, the SPT examines the following factors:

- workload indicator— an indicator of the work conducted to complete the activity, based on historical data (e.g. for court security the workload indicator is the number of days that required security in the previous fiscal year)
- service level standard—the average number of staff needed to complete the activity
- time standard—the average amount of time required to complete the activity

The SPT multiplies the workload indicator by the time and service level standards to estimate the staff required for each major activity. For example, if sheriffs spent 2,500 hours providing in-court supervision in a particular court over the previous year (workload indicator), and headquarters determined that two staff were needed to safely supervise that court (service level standard), 100% of the time (time standard), the SPT would predict that 5,000 hours of staff time were needed to carry out that activity. The final output of the SPT is a total estimate of the number of staff required to carry out all of the BCSS's major activities.

The SPT was first developed in the 1980s, but it has not been used to establish the *overall* BCSS staffing target because of limitations in the completeness and accuracy of data. For one thing, the SPT does not include some key activities that sheriffs undertake to provide for the safety and security of the courts, including training and threat/risk assessments. Further, headquarters acknowledged that there are several flaws in the data that feeds the SPT workload indicator activities. In 2017, headquarters conducted a review of the BCSS' business data management and found that:

- the data being collected did not accurately reflect the business (i.e., is not complete/useful)
- data entry practices were inconsistent

- the BCSS had no effective quality control processes in place to confirm data accuracy

We carried out our own testing of the SPT and confirmed headquarters' findings. In particular, we found that there were a lack of effective controls in place to ensure the accuracy of data drawn from the primary business intelligence system—the BCSS Statistics System—which is used to inform several variables in the SPT.

The BCSS Statistics System tracks how sheriffs allocate their time in each court location, but it relies entirely on manual data entry. Court supervisors, often sergeants, track information in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, which they then enter into the system. This process increases the risk for inaccuracies because data is not entered at the point in time when the event is happening; it also slows the flow of information (as data can be entered days or months later). Supervisors are expected to enter their location's data for each month by the 10th day of the following month (i.e. data for September should be entered by October 10). However, when we examined submission rates for each court location as of October 10, 2018, we found that the data from several locations was still outstanding, in some cases as far back as May 2018.

Following its review, headquarters developed a number of recommendations to enhance the overall BCSS business intelligence data. Recommendations included:

- mapping out data requirements for the BCSS
- hiring a systems architect to develop a business intelligence plan and prioritize next steps
- developing new business systems and enhancing existing systems
- designating a champion within BCSS to monitor data compliance

The review also recommended updating the SPT. At the time of our audit, headquarters had begun to update the SPT methodology and had started to implement some of the broader recommendations to enhance its data reliability. Implementing these recommendations will help enhance the accuracy and reliability of the BCSS business intelligence data, which is critical for forecasting staffing needs.

RECOMMENDATION 2: *We recommend that the Court Services Branch enhance the B.C. Sheriff Service business intelligence data to ensure that it is complete and reliable.*

Sheriff Planning and Recruitment Model

The SPT provides a point-in-time snapshot of BCSS staffing needs. It does not estimate long-term staffing needs or account for the potential impacts of broader trends on the supply and demand for sheriff staff over time. To address these areas, headquarters began building a complementary model, the Sheriff Planning and Recruitment Model (SPRM), to estimate sheriff staffing requirements over a three-year period.

Headquarters uses data from the SPT as a starting point in the SPRM to determine the current demand for sheriff staff. It then builds in other variables that impact the demand for (e.g., new initiatives and high-profile court cases) and supply of (e.g., attrition, new hires and/or overtime) sheriff staff over the next three years. Exhibit 6 provides an overview of the supply-and-demand factors that have been built into the SPRM.

EXHIBIT 6: *Supply-and-demand factors that the SPRM examines*

Supply factors	Demand factors
Number of existing sheriffs	Baseline demand for sheriff staff (the SPT)
Forecasted attrition rates	New demand for sheriff staff not in the baseline:
Number of anticipated new sheriff hires	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Projected new courthouses and correctional centres, and courthouse expansions
Amount of overtime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Upcoming high-profile court cases
Different training scenarios	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Response to the R. v. Jordan ruling

Source: Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia, based on the Ministry of Attorney General's Staff Planning and Recruitment Model

R. V. JORDAN RULING

In July 2016, the Supreme Court of Canada established reasonable expectations for a timely trial: 18 months in Provincial Court and 30 months in Supreme Court. The ruling was made to reduce delays, allowing individuals charged with an offence to be tried within a reasonable time. This has put pressure on the court system to hear cases faster.

However, given the data limitations with the SPT (which serves as the foundation for the SPRM), the SPRM has not been used to establish the long-term staffing target for the BCSS.

RECOMMENDATION 3: *We recommend that the Court Services Branch use the updated Staff Planning Technique and Sheriff Planning Recruitment Model to estimate the staff the B.C. Sheriff Service needs to meet its objective and inform its human resources plan, strategies and funding requests.*

Developing, implementing and monitoring the recruitment strategy

Recruitment is the process that begins with the identification of a vacancy and is completed when a successful candidate is selected. It involves identifying, attracting, searching for, screening and interviewing potential candidates. A good recruitment strategy is targeted and efficient. The ability to recruit a qualified workforce and fill staff shortages is crucial to any organization, as it is the workforce that drives productivity and ensures that organizations can carry out their objectives.

Recruitment strategy to increase the number of new recruits was successfully implemented

We found that the BCSS HR plan, the BCSS 2020 Strategic Action Plan, included a recruitment strategy to increase the number of sheriffs by offering two recruitment classes in 2017 (24 recruits in January 2017 and 32 recruits in June 2017, for a total of 56 recruits in 2017). This strategy was developed to assist in filling the gap to meet the overall BCSS staffing target of 541; however the BCSS indicated that additional recruits would still be required.

We found that the BCSS had successfully implemented this strategy: it offered two recruitment classes in 2017, hiring 24 recruits in January 2017 and 30 recruits in June 2017, and offered three recruitment classes in 2018.

Since implementing its enhanced recruitment strategy in 2017, the BCSS had recruited a total of 114 staff as of October 1, 2018— compared with the 78 staff it recruited during the previous four years. We also found that the BCSS complied with its own recruitment processes while implementing its strategy.

THE BCSS RECRUITMENT PROCESS

Activities within the BCSS recruitment process included reviewing regional staffing needs, posting and marketing the position, reviewing applications (which include tests that candidates take), scheduling and conducting interviews, and facilitating the start of training at the Sheriff Academy.

The BCSS recruitment process occurs in cycles, as training classes for recruits can only be scheduled a few times throughout the year to accommodate other training at the Sheriff Academy. All new recruits must attend and successfully complete the training before they receive a final letter of offer.

Strategies to enhance the recruitment process were not clearly defined or monitored

In addition to increasing the number of recruits, the BCSS developed three strategies in its HR plan to enhance its recruitment process. However, we found that the BCSS had not consistently defined what it was seeking to achieve through these strategies, limiting our ability to determine whether it had implemented all of its strategies or had achieved its intended objectives. The three strategies were:

- establishing partnerships to support the BCSS, such as creating a BCSS career page on MyHR, developing an online calendar for scheduling interviews, and assisting with applicant screening
- fully staffing the recruitment office
- streamlining and improving recruitment processes, including marketing and outreach

Establishing partnerships

We found that the BCSS had implemented the first of these strategies: establishing partnerships. The BCSS had partnered with the Public Service Agency (PSA) in 2017 to enlist support for its recruitment efforts and improve its process. Since then, the BCSS and the PSA have had an ongoing partnership, with the PSA supporting the BCSS in applicant screening, marketing, and helping with questions and inquiries from the Office of the Merit Commissioner.

The BCSS had also developed a career page on MyHR (a portal where current and potential BC Public Service employees can find job postings, as well as HR information and services)

and implemented an online scheduling calendar, online screening questionnaire and applicant tracker system.

Staffing the recruitment office

Unlike the strategy to establish partnerships, we could not determine whether the strategy to fully staff the recruitment office had been implemented. This is because the BCSS had not established a target, or defined *fully staffed*.

The Office of Professional Standards (OPS) is the division that maintains functional oversight and responsibility for sheriff recruitment. At the time of our audit, the OPS had five positions dedicated to recruitment, as well as designated staff from the PSA to support recruitment efforts as needed. We found that the volume of applications had grown since 2017 with the increase in frequency and size of the recruit classes: in 2018, the BCSS received 1,163 applications, compared with 324 in 2017. While the OPS had added staff to support its recruitment activities, we could not determine whether its staffing complement was sufficient to process applications in a timely manner, given the absence of a target or objective.

Streamlining and improving the recruitment process

As with the strategy to staff the recruitment office, there was ambiguity in the strategy to streamline and improve the BCSS recruitment process. The BCSS had made a number of changes to its recruitment process, including updating its career pages, developing an online application process and implementing an online calendar for scheduling interviews. However, the BCSS had not defined outcomes for its strategy, limiting our ability to determine the status of implementation and whether it had achieved its intended results.

Overall, our findings on the BCSS recruitment strategies demonstrate that the BCSS had taken steps to enhance its recruitment process but had not consistently defined what it wanted to achieve and how it would measure progress. We had similar findings in our examination of the BCSS training and development strategies (discussed below). Taking further steps to clarify expectations and monitor progress will allow the BCSS to take corrective action and improve its strategies when performance does not meet expectations.

RECOMMENDATION 4: *We recommend that the B.C. Sheriff Service establish clear goals, actions, resources, targets and performance measures for its human resources plan and strategies (recruitment, retention, training and development) and measure its progress against these.*

Developing, implementing and monitoring the retention strategy

Recruitment strategies bring people through the door; retention strategies help keep them there. Retention strategies also minimize the costs associated with frequent turnover, including the loss of corporate knowledge and impacts on organizational capacity and staff morale. It is more efficient to retain a quality employee than to recruit, train and orient a new one.

An effective retention strategy begins with an understanding of the reasons why staff leave. It then deploys initiatives that attempt to minimize them. We therefore expected to find that the BCSS had developed and implemented a retention strategy targeting the cause(s) of staff attrition in the organization.

The BCSS had not established the causes of staff attrition or developed a retention strategy

We found that the BCSS had gathered some information on the causes of its staff attrition, but this was not comprehensive enough to establish the primary reasons for staff departures (for the purposes of the audit, *attrition* refers to any loss of staff, whether through retirement, termination or resignation). We also found that the BCSS had not developed a retention strategy.

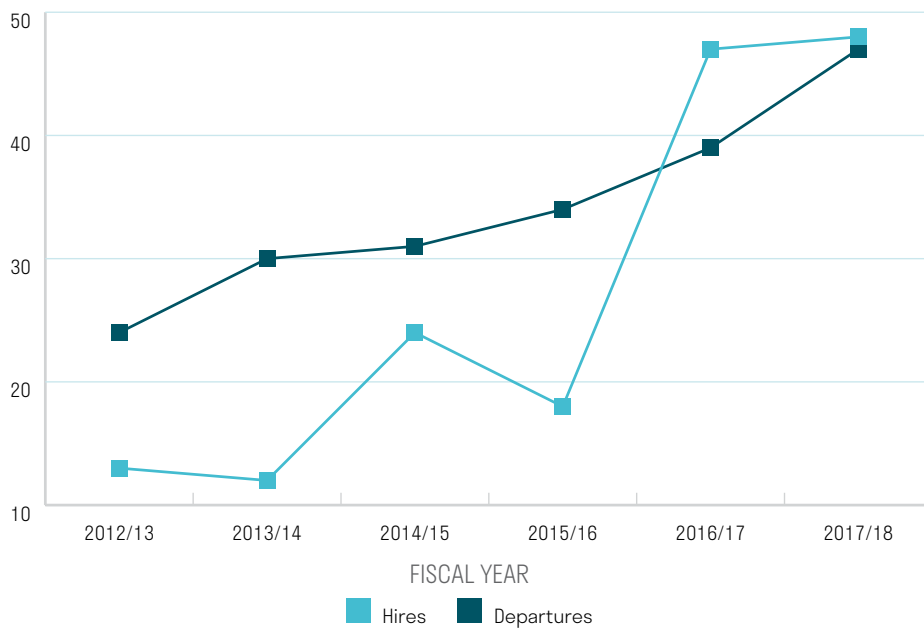
In 2004, the BCSS began conducting exit surveys among departing staff to understand the reasons for staff departures. The survey contains 16 questions that cover the job itself, supervisory and executive management, compensation and benefits, and the respondents' primary reason for leaving. The BCSS examined the survey results in 2016 and identified the following three themes for staff departures:

- desire for higher wages and benefits
- desire for higher staffing levels
- desire for additional resources to support their work

While exit surveys provide insight into the factors influencing staff attrition, the BCSS has not ensured that all departing staff have an opportunity to complete the survey. As of 2016, only 88 individuals had completed the survey, a fraction of the 311 deputies that the BCSS estimates left the organization between 2004 and 2016. Further, of the 88 responses, 75% came from the Lower Mainland, which may skew the results, since the reasons for staff departures may vary by region. For example, sheriffs in the Lower Mainland may leave the organization in pursuit of other law enforcement jobs that offer higher pay because of the high cost of living in the region (which may not be the case in other parts of the province).

The BCSS also collects information on staff engagement through the Work Environment Survey (WES). In 2018, overall BCSS staff engagement was 48 (out of a score of 100) —20 points lower than the BC public service score. However, while WES scores provide insight into employee dissatisfaction, it targets existing employees, not those that depart.

EXHIBIT 7: Annual hires versus departures 2012/13—2017/18



Source: Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia, based on the Ministry of Attorney General's hire and attrition data

EXIT SURVEYS

Exit surveys are conducted with employees when they leave an organization. Surveys typically offer opportunities for employees to provide feedback, and identify why they are leaving, what they liked about their employment and what areas within the organization could be improved.

As a result, while the BCSS has access to some information on staff attrition, it needs to ensure that its body of knowledge is comprehensive. As [Exhibit 7](#) shows, BCSS attrition increased between 2012/13 and 2017/18. A total of 205 staff left the organization during that period, the majority of them (79%) at the deputy sheriff level. Further, of these departures, only 27% were due to retirements. The remainder were terminations or resignations. Over time, this contributed to a reduction in staff, as additional recruitment was not enough to keep pace with staff losses.

WORK ENVIRONMENT SURVEY

The Work Environment Survey (WES) was launched in 2006 as a means to measure the health of the work environment in the BC Public Service. The survey is sent bi-annually to all regular and auxiliary employees of the BC Public Service whose organizations are under the Public Service Act. BC Stats compiles responses and produces reports on results for the BC Public Service as well as for specific organizations, such as the BCSS.

With limited financial and staff resources available, the BCSS prioritized recruitment in its HR plan. It has not developed a retention strategy. Despite the absence of a targeted and comprehensive strategy, the BCSS did request and receive a temporary market adjustment (TMA) for deputy sheriffs in the BC Government and Services Employees' Union as a means to address the wage issue cited by departing staff. TMAs are used as a temporary solution to increase wages and attract employees to occupations with skill shortages. The TMA came into effect on April 1, 2019, and applies only to BCSS staff at the deputy sheriff level. However, it is unclear if the increase will address staff concerns regarding pay.

Retention is identified as a stream in the BCSS HR plan, but work in this area is still preliminary, with development of a retention approach slated for November 2019. The BCSS should ensure that it follows through on this timeline and develops a retention strategy that addresses the causes of staff attrition.

RECOMMENDATION 5: *We recommend that the B.C. Sheriff Service develop a retention strategy that is informed by and addresses the identified causes of staff attrition.*

Developing, implementing and monitoring the training strategy

Recruitment and retention strategies help to ensure that an organization is attracting and retaining the staff it requires to achieve its objective. Training and development strategies, on the other hand, ensure that staff are appropriately equipped to fulfill the organization's objective, and adhere to its policies and standards. In addition, investing in training communicates to staff that management understands the risks of the job and is committed to preparing staff to respond to those risks.

We therefore expected to find that the BCSS had developed and implemented a training program to provide staff with the skills, knowledge and competencies they need, as well as a development program to support succession planning.

Training program for new recruits effectively provided the required knowledge, skills and competencies

We found that the BCSS has two training programs—one for new recruits (Sheriff Recruit Training [SRT] program) and one for in-service staff (in-service training program).

We found that the SRT program for new recruits includes courses that cover the knowledge, skills and competencies that staff need to carry out their duties. Administered through the Justice Institute of British Columbia's (JIBC's) Sheriff Academy, the SRT is a 14-week program that includes courses ranging from legal studies to the use of force and firearms. The BCSS has formalized the SRT program through an annual general services agreement with the JIBC that secures the appropriate training facilities based on the number of annual planned recruits.

We examined a sample of training records for the June 2017 and January 2018 SRT classes and found that the BCSS, in partnership with the JIBC, had effectively monitored and tracked the program to ensure that new recruits successfully completed the training prior to commencing their duties.

The BCSS could not demonstrate that ongoing training provided staff with the required knowledge, skills and competencies

After the SRT program, ongoing training is provided through the BCSS in-service training program, which includes both mandatory and non-mandatory courses. The program is intended to provide staff with the training they need to maintain their certifications and to build their skills and qualifications. The in-service program uses BCSS staff as instructors and is delivered at a variety of sites, including the JIBC's Sheriff Academy, off-site, and online.

However, we could not determine whether the BCSS in-service training program provided staff with the knowledge, skills and competencies they need to carry out their duties:

- Besides the mandatory firearm and use of force training (discussed in more detail below), the BCSS did not have an overarching training or learning plan that outlined the courses staff are expected to take to maintain the knowledge, skills and competencies they need.
- Further, the BCSS did not maintain an accurate and complete list of the in-service courses it provides to its staff. We compared the in-service courses offered with the competencies outlined in BCSS job descriptions, and we found that a number of the courses were inactive and no longer offered, or the course outlines were incomplete.

The OPS is responsible for sheriff recruitment (as described above) and training. However, we found that the increased focus on recruitment had impacted the OPS's ability to meet its training responsibilities. The OPS had multiple priorities to address with limited resources, resulting in incomplete and fragmented plans and documentation to support the BCSS' in-service training program.

Our finding was reinforced by an independent external review initiated by the BCSS that examined the OPS service delivery model. The review recommended a broader review of the BCSS organizational structure and staffing strategies in the areas of recruitment, hiring and training to determine whether these were properly situated within the organization.

The absence of a comprehensive training plan can result in untrained and unqualified staff, leading to an unsafe work environment, decreased employee performance and productivity, increased staff turnover and reduced employee morale. Many of these outcomes were confirmed in our interviews with BCSS staff. A number of interviewees told us that they were not receiving sufficient in-service training and that after the SRT, they'd had minimal opportunities to brush up on and develop their skill sets, which was impacting their overall performance.

These impacts are also closely linked with retention, as a fragmented training program can decrease job satisfaction and lead to more attrition. Investment in staff training shows employees that they are valued and creates a supportive workplace. Interviewees told us that the BCSS was providing its staff with limited training opportunities and that this had reduced staff morale and had led some staff to pursue employment opportunities elsewhere.

RECOMMENDATION 6: *We recommend that the B.C. Sheriff Service develop an overarching training plan that defines the training expectations for all of its staff, based on the knowledge, skills and competencies that staff need to carry out their duties. The B.C. Sheriff Service should also ensure that staff complete this training in compliance with the training plan.*

Not all staff completed their firearms and use of force requalification testing on time

Even though the BCSS lacked a comprehensive training plan for its staff, its policy outlined mandatory training expectations for firearms and the use of force. When we began our audit, in 2017, the BCSS policy required staff to requalify in their firearm training every 12 months and in their use of force training every 24 months (see Exhibit 8 for a complete list of mandatory training requirements). These policy requirements were based on research, input from the field, and training in major police departments in B.C.

EXHIBIT 8: Original BCSS policy on firearms and use of force training, November 2018

	Firearm	Use of force
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend a structured practice three months before requalification Attend a re-certification course one month before requalification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete one day of topical training every year Complete the National Use of Force Model and Crisis Intervention and De-escalation online modules before requalification
Requalification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Every 12 months 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Every 24 months

Source: Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia, based on the Ministry of Attorney General's Sheriff Policy Manual (prior to March 2019)

USE OF FORCE TRAINING

Use of force training is intended to provide staff with the required knowledge and skills to respond to attacks (both verbal and non-verbal). It can include reviews and simulations of handcuffing, passive and active takedowns, situational awareness and effective communication skills. Use of force training is commonly provided within organizations that have enforcement roles (e.g., the BCSS and municipal, provincial and federal police departments).

In November 2018, we examined a sample of staff training records for 2017/18 and found that less than 40% of staff had completed their firearm and use of force requalification on time—that is, within 12 and 24 months respectively. We could not determine whether staff met the additional training requirements outlined in Exhibit 8, because the BCSS did not track these.

The BCSS relaxed its requirements for firearms and use of force training without examining the impacts

In March 2019, the BCSS updated its training policy for firearms and the use of force. Staff were no longer required to re-qualify within 12 and 24 months; instead, they must requalify once per fiscal year for firearms and once per biennial fiscal year for the use of force (see Exhibit 9). The update also removed additional training expectations (beyond those offered through requalification). This change in policy meant that sheriffs could now go up to two years² without receiving any training (or re-qualification) on their firearm, and three years without training (or re-qualification) on their use of force.

EXHIBIT 9: Updated BCSS policy on firearms and use of force training, March 2019

	Firearm	Use of force
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No additional training required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No additional training required
Requalification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Once per fiscal year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Once per biennial fiscal year

Source: Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia, based on the Ministry of Attorney General, Sheriff Policy Manual (as of March 2019)

The BCSS stated that the change in policy reflected long-standing practice in the field. We did not find any evidence that it was based on an assessment of the training staff need to safely and effectively do their jobs, or that it reflected changes made to broader industry standards. In fact, many of the staff we interviewed felt that even the original policy (with stricter requirements) was insufficient to maintain their skills in these areas.

We re-examined our sample of staff training records in March 2019 against the updated BCSS policy and found that although overall compliance had improved, 15%–20% of staff still did not meet training expectations. [Exhibit 10](#) provides a breakdown of our file review.

² For example, if a staff member qualifies on their firearm at the start of the first fiscal year (April 1, 2017) and the end of the next fiscal year (March 31, 2019), they will have gone almost two years without training on their firearm. They can go up to three years without training on their use of force if they qualify at the start of the first fiscal year (April 1, 2017) and the end of the second fiscal year (March 31, 2020).

EXHIBIT 10: *Percentage of sampled staff in compliance with firearm and use of force requalification standards, original and updated policy, March 2019*

Firearm requalification		Use of force requalification	
Original policy (12 months)	Updated policy (once per fiscal year)	Original policy (24 months)	Updated policy (once per biennial fiscal year)
39%	85%	37%	80%

Source: Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia, based on sample of 41(10%) of the BCSS' staff

Improper use of a firearm or the use of force can have significant consequences for both staff and members of the public. Research shows that in response to an emergency or high-stress situation, staff will revert to their training and experience. The failure to properly train staff increases the risk for and severity of incidents, accidents and injuries should they encounter a situation that requires the use of their firearm or force. The BCSS training program should be based on research, industry standards and a needs assessment to confirm that staff are equipped with the skills they need to safely and effectively discharge their firearm and apply the use of force. Reducing the amount of training and testing staff receive in these areas should not be based on operational constraints.

It is worth highlighting that we conducted an audit of deputy sheriffs' training and development in 1999 and found that the Ministry of Attorney General's investment in training was insufficient to maintain the sheriffs' skills base. At that time, sheriffs were required to requalify on their firearm every 18 months. The recent change in policy sets the BCSS even further behind its 1999 standards, when we concluded that the lack of investment in training may place deputy sheriffs, the branch, prisoners and other stakeholders at risk.

RECOMMENDATION 7: *We recommend that the B.C. Sheriff Service conduct regular reviews of its training and development programs to ensure that it is providing its staff with the knowledge, skills and competencies they need to conduct their duties.*

The BCSS was working to implement a new developmental program

Developmental programs are another type of training that organizations provide their staff to help them obtain the knowledge, skills and competencies they need to advance. In support of development, organizations commonly develop succession plans that assess the

job requirements and skills of existing employees and then provide targeted training and development activities to fill organizational gaps. These programs can ensure leadership continuity, help retain and preserve organizational knowledge and encourage individual development and advancement.

The BCSS HR plan included two actions to support staff development within the organization: a coaching program and a succession management plan.

We found that the BCSS, in partnership with the Public Service Agency, had developed and piloted a coaching program to help staff develop their supervisory and leadership skills. The six-month program was piloted in 2018, using a cross-section of staff from various ranks, with plans for a second intake in development.

In addition to the coaching program, we also found that the BCSS had drafted, but had not implemented, a succession management program that supported staff development. The draft program included learning plans for each rank and provided a career path for those seeking promotion, including required competencies and courses for each step. The program was expected to be ready in 2019.

This was not the first succession management program that the BCSS has developed. The BCSS had started three different succession management initiatives since 2010, but each initiative was unsuccessful because of challenges in funding and lack of prioritization. The current program, which was still under development during the time of our audit, was prioritized under the BCSS HR plan.

Monitoring organizational effectiveness

The BCSS did not have key performance indicators to determine whether it was achieving its objective

All of an organization's activities should be linked in some way to its objective. This begins with a clear articulation of the organization's vision, mission and objective, as well as performance measures that enable the organization to gauge whether it is achieving its objective. This is widely known as a performance management framework.

The BCSS objective is to “provide for the safety and security of the courts of British Columbia and the participants in the judicial system.” Our audit looked at whether the BCSS had effective plans and strategies in the areas of recruitment, training and development, and retention to ensure that it had the staff it needs to meet this objective.

To understand effectiveness, we looked at whether the BCSS was monitoring the success of its individual human resource strategies (discussed above), as well as its overall success in meeting its objective. We found that the BCSS had not developed performance measures or indicators for its objective, which precludes its ability to demonstrate whether it is effective in providing for the safety and security of the courts. The lack of performance measures also limits its understanding of whether, and where, adjustments are needed to enhance its effectiveness (e.g., whether it needs additional resources or enhanced training).

The BCSS was aware of its lack of performance measures. In 2017, the BCSS business intelligence working group (that we discussed above in relation to business intelligence data) developed a draft performance measurement framework that included goals and indicators related to recruitment, training and development, and retention, as well as operations. However, the framework was very preliminary and had not been approved or implemented. It also did not clearly establish what degree of safety and security the BCSS is aiming for and how it intends to measure this.

The working group also reinforced the need for enhanced data collection systems and processes, as performance measures will rely on data from the same systems as the Staff Planning Technique. As discussed above, the BCSS data was unreliable, and until this underlying data issue is addressed, the BCSS cannot rely on its data to make business decisions or measure its performance in relation to its HR strategies, or more broadly, its overall objective.

RECOMMENDATION 8: *We recommend that the B.C. Sheriff Service develop key performance indicators for its objective of providing for the safety and security of the courts, and use these indicators to regularly monitor its effectiveness.*

AUDIT QUALITY ASSURANCE

We conducted this audit under the authority of section 11 (8) of the *Auditor General Act* and in accordance with the standards for assurance engagements set out by the Chartered Professional Accountants of Canada (CPA) in the *CPA Canada Handbook – Canadian Standard on Assurance Engagements (CSAE) 3001* and *Value-for-money Auditing in the Public Sector PS 5400*. These standards require that we comply with ethical requirements, and conduct the audit to independently express a conclusion on whether or not the subject matter complies in all significant respects to the applicable criteria.

We apply the CPA Canadian Standard on Quality Control 1 (CSQC), and accordingly, maintain a comprehensive system of quality control, including documented policies and procedures regarding compliance with ethical requirements, professional standards, and applicable legal and regulatory requirements. In this respect, we have complied with the independence and other requirements of the code of ethics applicable to the practice of public accounting issued by the Chartered Professional Accountants of British Columbia, which are founded on the principles of integrity, objectivity and professional competence, as well as due care, confidentiality and professional behaviour.

APPENDIX A: COMPLETE AUDIT CRITERIA

The following is a list of our audit criteria:

- The BCSS has analyzed its workforce to establish the staff (position type and amount of positions) it needs to achieve its objective.
- The BCSS has an HR plan in place and strategies to recruit, train, develop and retain the staff it needs to achieve its objective.
- The BCSS has implemented strategies to recruit the staff it needs to achieve its objective.
- The BCSS has implemented strategies to train and develop the staff it needs to achieve its objective.
- The BCSS has implemented strategies to retain the staff it needs to achieve its objective.
- The BCSS monitors the effectiveness of its recruitment, training, development and retention strategies and takes action to improve these where required.

We developed our audit criteria using various sources, including B.C. human resources policies (e.g. the B.C. Core Policy Objectives and Human Resources Policies and the B.C. Accountability Framework for Human Resource Management), Treasury Board Secretariat human resources planning guides, human resources guides in law enforcement, and audits from other jurisdictions.



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