

# Real Estate Council of BC

## 2018/19 – 2020/21 SERVICE PLAN

February 2018



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## Board Chair Accountability Statement



The 2018/19 - 2020/21 Real Estate Council of British Columbia (RECBC) Service Plan was prepared under the Board's direction in accordance with the *Budget Transparency and Accountability Act*. The plan is consistent with Government's strategic priorities and fiscal plan. RECBC is accountable for the contents of the plan, including what has been included in the plan and how it has been reported. RECBC is responsible for the validity and reliability of the information included in the plan.

All significant assumptions, policy decisions, events and identified risks, as of December 12, 2017 have been considered in preparing the plan. The performance measures presented are consistent with the *Budget Transparency and Accountability Act*, the Real Estate Council of BC's mandate and goals, and focus on aspects critical to the organization's performance. The targets in this plan have been determined based on an assessment of the Real Estate Council of BC's operating environment, forecast conditions, risk assessment and past performance.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert Holmes". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Robert Holmes, Q.C.  
Board Chair

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## Strategic Direction and Alignment with Government Priorities

The Real Estate Council of British Columbia (RECBC) is a regulatory agency established by the provincial government in 1958. Our mandate is to protect the public interest by enforcing the licensing and licensee conduct requirements of the *Real Estate Services Act*. RECBC is responsible for licensing individuals and brokerages engaged in real estate sales, rental and strata property management. RECBC also enforces entry qualifications, investigates complaints against licensees and imposes disciplinary sanctions under the Act. RECBC does not receive taxpayer funding: our operations are funded through licensing assessment fees.

Our mission is to protect the public interest by promoting and enforcing professional standards to raise the competency and conduct of real estate licensees in British Columbia. Together with the Superintendent of Real Estate, RECBC works to ensure that real estate services regulation in British Columbia is effective, transparent and fair.

RECBC's 2018-2021 Strategic Plan marks our transition from a responsive regulator to a proactive consumer protection agency with a focus on identifying and mitigating risks. We have developed a new vision and mission statement that articulate this purpose:

**Vision:** Public trust in ethical and competent real estate professionals.

**Mission:** RECBC protects the public interest by promoting professional standards, enhancing competency, and regulating the conduct of licensed real estate professionals in B.C.

This service plan identifies three key goals that reflect successfully delivering on our vision and mission: providing consumers and licensees with the information to participate effectively in real estate transactions; ensuring RECBC is a trusted authority in real estate regulation; and fostering a culture of service excellence.

As outlined in the [2018/19 Mandate letter](#) RECBC is also committed to working with the Minister of Finance to identify measures that the Council can action to achieve government's commitment to improve housing affordability.

Over the next three years, we will be working hard to deliver on these goals to better inform and educate consumers, increase professionalism in the real estate industry, raise awareness of RECBC's mandate, and identify and mitigate risks to real estate consumers. Achieving these goals will help ensure that B.C. consumers can participate with confidence in real estate transactions, knowing they are working with competent and ethical real estate professionals.

Our three-year road map includes strategies, performance measures and targets aligned with the objectives in the B.C. Government's Mandate Letter, to fulfill our mission on behalf of real estate consumers and the Province.

The Real Estate Council of BC is aligned with the Government’s key priorities:

Government Priorities	Real Estate Council of BC Aligns with These Priorities By:
Making life more affordable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working with the Minister of Finance to identify measures that the Council can action to achieve Government’s commitment to improve housing affordability.</li> </ul>
Delivering the services people count on	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring RECBC is a trusted authority in real estate regulation.</li> <li>• Fostering a culture of service excellence.</li> </ul>
A strong, sustainable economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing consumers and licensees with the information to participate effectively in real estate transactions.</li> </ul>

## Operating Environment

British Columbia real estate markets, particularly in the lower mainland, have reached unprecedented levels of activity and value in the past several years. The rapid growth in housing costs has led to concerns over affordability, the possibility of speculation in the market, and a high degree of interest in the conduct and regulation of real estate licensees. As a result of the strong market conditions, RECBC has seen consistent growth in new licence applications. There are currently over 25,000 individuals and brokerages licensed to provide real estate services in B.C.

In July 2016 the Province amended the *Real Estate Services Act*, ending self-regulation of the real estate industry, making the Superintendent of Real Estate an independent office with greater oversight of RECBC and providing the Superintendent with rule-making authority. RECBC is now a public sector organization and continues to be responsible for licensing, licensee and public education, investigation of licensee conduct and licensee discipline. As co-regulators, both the Superintendent and RECBC have the mandate to ensure consumer protection in relation to the conduct and integrity of real estate licensees, through their separate but related functions under the *Real Estate Services Act*.

An ongoing focus for RECBC continues to be the implementation of [recommendations](#) made in 2016 by the Independent Advisory Group (IAG) on Conduct and Practices in the Real Estate Industry in British Columbia, including:

- Enhancements to licensing education so that new licensees enter the industry fully prepared to provide professional service.
- Expanding RECBC’s information and resources for the public, to make sure that the public is informed about the duties and obligations to expect from a real estate licensee.
- Ensuring that consumers have easy access to RECBC’s complaints system, so that when something goes wrong, RECBC can take action to investigate promptly.
- Issuing appropriate discipline and consequences for misconduct.

RECBC recognizes the fast pace of technological change and the need to adapt business-critical systems to provide effective and efficient services. Responding to the threats and opportunities of technological change will require ongoing innovation, collaboration, and systems thinking. We will continue to expand our ability to provide online services, and to develop and promote an interactive

online licensee platform with tools and resources that real estate licensees can use to manage their ongoing educational and licensing requirements.

We will make investments to support strong employee engagement, retention and recruitment, and to build capacity across business areas to help us deliver on our mandate. A third-party total compensation review, to be concluded in 2018, will provide recommendations for the development of an implementation roadmap to bring the Real Estate Council's compensation levels more closely in line with those of comparable organizations.

This is the Council's first service plan under government reporting requirements, and we will review our performance measures and strategies in coming years to reflect our evolving priorities.

## Performance Plan

**Goal 1: Consumers and licensees have the information and resources they need to participate effectively in real estate transactions**

**Objective 1.1: Increase the availability of consumer resources to support informed real estate decisions**

To ensure that real estate consumers are well-informed and feel empowered to make the decisions that are most appropriate for them, they need access to independent, relevant, accessible information that helps them to understand the process of a real estate transaction, and the risks and issues that may be encountered. RECBC will invest in delivering information both online, through our website and social media channels, and offline, through direct engagement campaigns, which will help consumers build the skills and knowledge they need to make sound real estate decisions.

**Key Strategies:**

- Conduct research to gain a deeper understanding of consumer needs and issues
- Develop and promote an updated consumer-focused RECBC brand
- Develop and launch a new consumer-focused website
- Deliver targeted campaigns to inform and educate consumers, including a focus on high-risk or vulnerable consumers

Performance Measure(s)	2017/18 Forecast	2018/19 Target	2019/20 Target	2020/21 Target
1.1a Percentage of consumers who feel informed and knowledgeable to participate effectively in a real estate transaction. <sup>1</sup>	N/A	Establish baseline	5% increase	maintain or increase

<sup>1</sup> Data Source: bi-annual consumer survey

**Linking Performance Measures to Objectives:**

1.1a RECBC intends to build consumer awareness of new RECBC resources and tools for real estate consumers, and increase consumer confidence in real estate transactions. By using a third-party market research firm to survey recent real estate consumers on a bi-annual basis, RECBC will report on consumers’ self-reported level of knowledge and confidence.

**Objective 1.2: Increase the standard of education and resources provided to real estate licensees**

RECBC will increase public confidence in the real estate industry by raising educational standards, promoting best practices and fostering a culture of ethics and professionalism.



**Key Strategies:**

- Work with education service delivery partners to develop and implement new measures to raise entry standards for the profession
- Enhance content and delivery of professional education throughout the career continuum
- Develop and promote accessible professional resources
- Engage and support managing brokers as industry change agents
- Develop and implement a conduct review process

Performance Measure(s)	2017/18 Forecast	2018/19 Target	2019/20 Target	2020/21 Target
1.2a Percentage of managing brokers who agree that RECBC education prepares licensees for competent and professional practice <sup>1</sup>	N/A	Establish baseline	Maintain or increase	Maintain or increase
1.2b Number of website visits to RECBC professional resources pages <sup>2</sup>	134K	5% increase	5% increase	5% increase

<sup>1</sup> Data Source: annual managing broker survey

<sup>2</sup> Data Source: [www.recbc.ca](http://www.recbc.ca) website analytics

**Linking Performance Measures to Objectives:**

- 1.2a Under the *Real Estate Services Act*, managing brokers supervise licensees and are accountable for brokerage operations. Annual surveys of managing brokers will measure the effectiveness of changes to the delivery and content of licensing education.
- 1.2b Website traffic to new resource sections featuring accessible content and tools for real estate licensees in a variety of formats will measure awareness of RECBC’s professional resources.

**Goal 2: RECBC is a Trusted Regulatory Authority**

**Objective 2.1: Raise awareness of RECBC’s mandate and strengthen relationships with stakeholders**

Through engagement and collaboration with our co-regulator, the Superintendent of Real Estate, as well as industry stakeholders, government, and key consumer groups, we will build support and recognition of our role as a consumer-focused regulator of licensed real estate professionals, and a source of accurate, impartial real estate information.

**Key Strategies:**

- Create and implement a public relations strategy
- Strengthen relationships with key stakeholders and government partners
- Enhance transparency in decision-making and governance

Performance Measure(s)	2017/18 Forecast	2018/19 Target	2019/20 Target	2020/21 Target
2.1 Percentage of recent real estate consumers who are aware of RECBC and recognize the RECBC brand <sup>1</sup>	Establish baseline	N/A	maintain or increase	Maintain or increase

<sup>1</sup> Data Source: bi-annual consumer survey

**Linking Performance Measures to Objectives:**

2.1 RECBC will measure success by seeing an increase in the percentage of recent real estate consumers who recognize the RECBC brand and who are aware of RECBC’s role as the regulator of licensed real estate professionals in a bi-annual survey.

**Objective 2.2: RECBC will work with partners to identify and reduce risks to consumers**

RECBC will take an evidence-based approach to identify and understand the causes of emerging risks in the B.C. real estate market. We will work with other regulatory agencies, government partners, and industry stakeholders to address these issues, educate licensees about how to avoid conduct that may result in risks to consumers, and raise consumer awareness of risks and how they can be avoided or reduced.

**Key Strategies:**

- Take an evidence-based approach to identifying and responding to emerging risks
- Cooperate with other agencies to identify and mitigate consumer risks
- Develop and implement consumer and licensee awareness campaigns about emerging risks

Performance Measure(s)	2017/18 Forecast	2018/19 Target	2019/20 Target	2020/21 Target
2.2 Number of people who access RECBC Advisory Notices online <sup>1</sup>	Establish baseline	5% increase	5% increase	Maintain or increase

<sup>1</sup> Data Source: RECBC website analytics

**Linking Performance Measures to Objectives:**

2.2 RECBC will measure success by demonstrating annual increases in the number of visits to Advisory Notices made available on our website alerting consumers and licensees to emerging risks and providing guidance on ways to prevent or reduce the likelihood of harm.

**Objective 2.3: Implement those recommendations of the Independent Advisory Group Report under RECBC’s responsibility**

The Independent Advisory Group Report includes 28 wide-ranging recommendations on measures to strengthen the enforcement of conduct requirements for real estate licensees and increase consumer protection. RECBC has committed to implementing all those recommendations that remain within its jurisdiction and to working collaboratively with the Superintendent’s office to support the implementation of those recommendations that will require changes to the rules governing the conduct of real estate licensees.

**Key Strategies:**

- Continue to prioritize resources towards implementation of IAG recommendations
- Develop and implement metrics to track progress towards full implementation of recommendations
- Work collaboratively with the Office of the Superintendent of Real Estate to support development and implementation of future rule changes

Performance Measure(s)	2017/18 Forecast	2018/19 Target	2019/20 Target	2020/21 Target
2.3 Recommendations initiated or completed	25%	50%	75%	100%

<sup>1</sup> Data Source: RECBC progress reports

**Linking Performance Measures to Objectives:**

2.3 RECBC has submitted two reports to the Minister of Finance on the progress of implementation in 2017, and will continue to issue bi-annual reports tracking and evaluating our success at implementing the measures suggested in the IAG report.

**Goal 3: RECBC fosters a culture of service excellence**

**Objective 3.1: RECBC employees are engaged and motivated**

Engaged and motivated employees contribute to higher levels of organizational success. To create a workplace that enhances employee satisfaction and commitment, RECBC will invest in creating the foundation for a work environment in which all employees are invested in and accountable for implementing our strategic priorities and receive the support to increase their skills, expand their knowledge and develop their careers.

**Key Strategies:**

- Develop and implement an employee performance review framework
- Update and implement a new organizational structure with defined roles and responsibilities
- Develop and implement employee training policies and career development paths
- Introduce a total compensation policy and program

Performance Measure(s)	2017/18 Forecast	2018/19 Target	2019/20 Target	2020/21 Target
3.1 Level of employee engagement <sup>1</sup>	N/A	Establish baseline	Maintain or increase	Maintain or increase

<sup>1</sup> Data Source: employee engagement survey

**Linking Performance Measures to Objectives:**

3.1.1 Employee engagement will be measured through an employee engagement survey that tracks employee perceptions on motivation, work satisfaction, alignment with organizational goals, and skills development.

**Objective 3.2: Enhance the efficiency and timeliness of compliance and licensing processes**

To ensure that RECBC can effectively manage the increasing number and complexity of complaints and investigations in a timely manner, we are committed to developing processes that enable the organization to respond effectively to a changing environment. This includes moving the complaint process online, streamlining administrative and licensing processes, automating internal document management, prioritizing and expediting critical investigations, and implementing practices to facilitate and encourage flexibility and problem-solving. RECBC has made significant strides in making licensing processes available online, and we will continue to streamline and enhance these services.

**Key Strategies:**

- Use baseline service standards as performance measures
- Audit key processes to identify efficiencies to achieve service standards
- Prioritize and implement continuous improvements and monitor impacts of changes
- Continue to transition licensing processes online and eliminate paper applications

Performance Measure(s)	2017/18 Forecast	2018/19 Target	2019/20 Target	2020/21 Target
3.2a Average number of calendar days to complete a complaint investigation	310	Maintain or decrease	Maintain or decrease	Maintain or decrease
3.2b Percentage of complete applications for new individual licences processed within three weeks <sup>2</sup>	Establish baseline	Maintain or increase	Maintain or increase	Maintain or increase

<sup>1</sup> Data Source: RECBC complaints tracking system (note that 2017/18 is a 9-month fiscal period)

<sup>2</sup> Data Source: RECBC licensing tracking system (note that 2017/18 is a 9-month fiscal period)

**Linking Performance Measures to Objectives:**

- 3.2a RECBC demonstrates its ability to respond to reported conduct issues in a timely manner, while continuing to ensure administrative fairness, through the average length of time required to complete complaint investigations. As RECBC continues to streamline and automate processes, we will update this performance measure to improve service standards.
- 3.2b In addition to providing services to the public, RECBC has an obligation to provide licensing services to suitable and qualified applicants in a timely manner. The processing of new licence applications is a key indicator of licensing service standards and efficiency.

## Financial Plan

The Real Estate Council of BC does not receive taxpayer funding. Key activities described in this Service Plan will be primarily funded through licensing assessment fees gathered bi-annually from the more than 25,000 individuals and brokerages we license and regulate. A small portion of our revenue is derived from enforcement sanctions, and required under the *Real Estate Services Act* to be directed to the internally-restricted Education Fund. RECBC's budget includes fees collected and remitted on behalf of the Superintendent of Real Estate, the Errors and Omissions Insurance Corporation, and the Real Estate Compensation Fund Corporation. RECBC expenditures are divided between investigative functions (compliance department and a portion of audit and legal expenses) and other administrative costs (education, communications, legal, audit and professional advisory services).

### Summary Financial Outlook

(\$000)	2017/18 Forecast*	2018/19 Budget	2019/20 Budget	2020/21 Budget
<b>Total Revenue</b>				
<b>By Major Sources</b>				
Licence Fees	773	1,141	1,141	1,141
Assessment Fees	5,736	10,002	10,002	10,002
Course Fee	263	317	318	318
Other Int and Investment Income (net)**	17	(179)	(179)	(179)
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>6,789</b>	<b>11,281</b>	<b>11,282</b>	<b>11,282</b>
<b>Total Expenses</b>				
<b>By Program Area or Function</b>				
Operational & Administration	5,260	7,851	9,533	9,409
Investigative	367	998	999	999
Other	448	1,312	749	773
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>6,075</b>	<b>10,161</b>	<b>11,282</b>	<b>11,182</b>
<b>Excess of Revenue over Expenses</b>	<b>714</b>	<b>1,121</b>	<b>(0)</b>	<b>100</b>
Total Liabilities	700	700	700	700
Accumulated Surplus - (RECBC)	7,418	8,539	8,539	8,639
Accumulated Surplus - (REEOIC)	22,518	22,518	22,518	22,518
<b>Capital Expenditures</b>	<b>693</b>	<b>1,208</b>	<b>734</b>	<b>60</b>

\*Fiscal year 2017/18 is a 9 month reporting period to account for change in fiscal year from June 30 to March 31. Comparatives for 2018/19 – 2020/21 are a 12 month reporting period.

\*\* Interest and investment income is net of credit card and bank charges.

## Key Forecast Assumptions, Risks and Sensitivities

Our key revenue assumptions are as follows for comparative year 2018/19:

- Licence renewals are predicted to drop 10% as a result of anticipated changes to education standards and new rules.
- Despite this projected decline, licensing revenue is forecast to increase \$1.4M as a result of a proposed fee increase for April 1, 2018 to ensure sufficient revenue to cover continuous process improvements and staffing initiatives: \$100 increase to licence assessment (from \$400 to \$500); \$20 increase in application fee for licence renewals (from \$30 to \$50) and \$40 for increase in application fee for new licensees (from \$60 to \$100).
- No change in revenue stream after 2019 RECBC budget.

Our key expense assumptions are as follows for comparative year 2018/19:

- \$1.3M increased staffing costs to implement the recommendations from the Independent Advisory Group and to ensure salaries remain competitive with other similar organizations. Future year salary increases include additional staffing to expand audit capacity and professional standards advisory services.
- \$0.3M increased legal expenses as a result of growing numbers of cases proceeding to hearing and rising legal costs per case.
- \$0.5M in increased operating expenses due to investments in information technology and the development of an IT strategy including a systems modernization project. Annual IT expenses have historically been \$0.24M.
- RECBC currently has 12,176 sq. ft. of downtown Vancouver office space at a cost of \$24/sqft. RECBC has renewed the lease for its current premises until 2034, with additional space totaling 17,389 sqft at an average cost of \$31.25/sqft over a 16-year commitment.
- \$1.2M in renovation costs will be incurred in 2018/19 to increase space efficiency and staff capacity within existing premises. These costs will be partially offset by tenant improvement allowance of \$50/sqft as a result of new lease agreement.
- No changes anticipated in liabilities.
- No change anticipated to investment in controlled entities: Real Estate Compensation Fund Corporation (assets in trust) or Real Estate Errors and Omissions Insurance Corporation (government business enterprise).
- Other interest and investment income is net of credit card expenses.
- Capital assets are amortized straight line for computer hardware and software additions and office furniture and equipment over three and five years respectively.

Risks include:

- RECBC revenue is uncertain due to fluctuations in licensees and the unpredictability of enforcement sanctions.
- Proposed net operating positions for fiscal years 2020 and 2021 are subject to change based on licensee assessment and renewal fees. RECBC's revenue strategy will be reviewed annually and licensees will be provided with advance notice of any proposed increases.

- Costs associated with the implementation of an IT strategy remain preliminary. RECBC is undertaking additional scoping work that will help to refine the project estimates for 2019/20.

## **Management's Perspective on the Financial Outlook**

RECBC prepares an annual budget for approval by the Council, monthly budget variance reporting to management and requests Council approval of significant expense variances.

Compensation and occupancy costs account for about 68% of the organization's expenses for 2018/19. We are increasing our staff to align with operational demands and shifting strategic priorities as a result of implementing the recommendations of the Independent Advisory Group together with the Office of the Superintendent of Real Estate. To accommodate the increase staff and improve space efficiencies, RECBC has secured a 15-year lease expanding our current premises in downtown Vancouver until 2034. RECBC is not a capital intensive organization and has no capital projects valued at more than \$50M.

RECBC will increase its use of technology to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its services, and will increase the use of data analytics to predict trends and identify potential consumer risks. IT expenditures are projected to increase over the next three years as licensing process are modernized, case management systems are improved, and hardware and infrastructure (wireless) are upgraded. Our revenue strategy and any future changes to assessment fees will be reviewed annually based on changing strategic priorities, operating expenditures and licence renewal trends.

RECBC appoints the majority of the board members to the Real Estate Compensation Fund Corporation (RECFC). RECFC provides protection for members of the public who have entrusted real estate licensees with money that was misappropriated or wrongfully converted, intentionally not paid over or accounted for, or obtained by fraud. The funds administered by RECFC under the *Real Estate Services Act* (RESA) meet the definition of a trust under administration and are not included in RECBC's financial statements.<sup>1</sup>

The Real Estate Errors and Omissions Insurance Corporation (REEOIC) is a government business enterprise (GBE) controlled by RECBC. REEOIC is a special act corporation incorporated under the RESA. REEOIC pools the insurance premiums paid by real estate licensees in a fund that is used to pay the costs of defending and indemnifying licensees against professional liability claims.

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<sup>1</sup> As determined by RECBC auditors Grant Thornton LLP in 2017.



## **Significant IT Projects**

As part of its commitment to business process improvements, in 2018 RECBC will develop an IT strategy, including an initiative to expand performance reporting and enhance its database functionality. Moving more functionality online will streamline processes, increase efficiency as well as support the business objectives of RECBC.

Key components to the project to ensure successful implementation of IT upgrades include:

- Business Analysis Expertise
- Change Management
- Staff Training

Further information will be detailed in the 2019/20 Service Plan.

## **Appendix A: Hyperlinks to Additional Information**

### **Corporate Governance**

Information about RECBC's Corporate Governance can be found at:

<https://www.recbc.ca/about/governance.html>

This includes links to information regarding:

- Council members
- Council committees and advisory groups
- Executive Team

### **RECBC Organizational Overview**

Information about the Real Estate Council of BC's operating environment can be found at:

<https://www.recbc.ca/about/overview.html>.

This includes links to information about:

- RECBC's mandate
- Core business areas
- Organizational goals

The *Real Estate Services Act*, the enabling statute for the Real Estate Council of BC, is available here:

<https://www.recbc.ca/licensee/legislation.html>.

### **Related Organizations**

Information about the Real Estate Compensation Fund Corporation can be found at:

<https://www.recbc.ca/about/ar.html>

Information about the Real Estate Errors and Omissions Corporation can be found at:

<https://www.reeoic.com/>

Information about the Office of the Superintendent of Real Estate can be found at:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/organizational-structure/ministries-organizations/central-government-agencies/office-of-the-superintendent-of-real-estate>

### **Independent Advisory Group**

Information about the Independent Advisory Group can be found at:

<https://www.recbc.ca/about/independent-advisory-group.html>