

# BC FAMILY MAINTENANCE AGENCY

## 2020/21 – 2022/23 SERVICE PLAN

February 2020



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## Board Chair Accountability Statement



The 2020/21 – 2022/23 BC Family Maintenance Agency 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. The Board is accountable for the contents of the plan, including what has been included in the plan and how it has been reported. The Board 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 February 4, 2020 have been considered in preparing the plan. The performance measures presented are consistent with the *Budget Transparency and Accountability Act*, the BC Family Maintenance Agency 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 BC Family Maintenance Agency’s operating environment, forecast conditions, risk assessment and past performance.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Richard Fyfe'.

Richard Fyfe, QC  
Board Chair

**Table of Contents**

Board Chair Accountability Statement ..... 3

Strategic Direction and Alignment with Government Priorities..... 5

Operating Environment..... 6

Performance Plan ..... 7

Financial Plan..... 11

    Summary Financial Outlook..... 11

    Key Forecast Assumptions, Risks and Sensitivities ..... 12

    Management’s Perspective on the Financial Outlook ..... 12

Appendix A: Hyperlinks to Additional Information..... 13

    Corporate Governance ..... 13

    Organizational Overview ..... 13

## Strategic Direction and Alignment with Government Priorities

The Government of British Columbia remains focused on its three strategic priorities: making life more affordable, delivering better services, and investing in a sustainable economy. Crowns are essential to achieving these priorities by providing quality, cost-effective services to British Columbia families and businesses.

Additionally, where appropriate, the operations of Crowns will contribute to:

- The objectives outlined in the government’s newly released A Framework for Improving British Columbians’ Standard of Living,
- Implementation of the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action, demonstrating support for true and lasting reconciliation, and
- Putting B.C. on the path to a cleaner, better future – with a low carbon economy that creates opportunities while protecting our clean air, land and water as described in the CleanBC plan.

By adopting the Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) lens to budgeting and policy development, Crowns will ensure that equity is reflected in their budgets, policies and programs.

The BC Family Maintenance Agency (BCFMA) is a newly established Crown agency mandated to provide family justice services to families. In November of 2019 the Crown agency successfully took over operations of the Family Maintenance Enforcement Program (FMEP) following a 31-year delivery of services by the private sector under contract to the Ministry of Attorney General. FMEP is delivered under the *Family Maintenance Enforcement Act (FMEA)*, which provides the authority to monitor and enforce maintenance orders and agreements, ensuring that families receive the financial support that they are entitled to under provincial and federal law.

The creation of the BCFMA followed a review by the Ministry of Attorney General of options to maintain the success of the program while addressing recommendations received from the Auditor General and the legislated requirement to provide family justice services within a sustainable service delivery model. The BCFMA was incorporated on June 17, 2019 and worked with the existing service provider, the Ministry of Attorney General, and other government operations to complete the transfer of services without interruption to the families who count on FMEP services.

The Attorney General communicated his expectations of, as well as the key 2020/21 priorities for, the BCFMA in the [2020/21 BCFMA Mandate Letter](#). The key strategic priorities from the Mandate Letter will influence the BCFMA’s mandate, policies and services during this first year of transition.

The BC Family Maintenance Agency is aligned with Government’s key priorities:

Government Priorities	The BC Family Maintenance Agency Aligns with These Priorities By:
Delivering the services people count on	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Goal 1: Provide effective and efficient enforcement services for British Columbians</li> <li>• Goal 2: Ensure BCFMA’s services support the needs of individuals and families</li> </ul>

## **Operating Environment**

The BCFMA was established to take over the operations of the FMEP, one of Canada's most successful support enforcement services over the past 30 years. The BCFMA is starting operations at a time of change in the delivery of family justice services, with greater emphasis on out-of-court services and a changing environment with respect to parental obligations following separation or divorce.

The FMEP is a free public service. FMEP operations include receiving payments from the person required to pay maintenance (the payor) and sending the money to the person entitled to maintenance (the recipient). Over \$4.2 billion has been paid through the lifetime of the program for child and spousal support, and the BCFMA will look to build on this past success. While many payors are making voluntarily payments, the program often has to take administrative enforcement measures or return matters to the courts. Currently, over \$200 million is collected and disbursed to about 37,000 families on an annual basis.

Enforcing support obligations has become more complicated over time as the number of cases with 'special or extraordinary' expenses added to basic child support is increasing, and these cases are often difficult to quantify in a manner that both parties agree with. The impacts of shared or split parenting arrangements have significantly changed the enforcement measures used by Canada's maintenance enforcement programs. These changes have added complications to case management decision-making. The BCFMA is investing in training, legal skills, and information technology services to address these challenges.

The BCFMA will continue to review the needs of families and to revise its services to meet those needs. The BCFMA will offer many of the benefits that were previously provided by the contracted service, but can also take advantage of new opportunities for service integration and work with the Ministry of Attorney General to develop sustainable services that B.C. families can count on.

## Performance Plan

### Goal 1: Provide effective and efficient enforcement services for British Columbians

Continue to provide a high level of service during transition of the FMEP to the new BCFMA. Ensure service levels during and after transfer are maintained and/or improved where possible.

### Objective 1.1: Maintenance orders and agreements filed under the Family Maintenance Enforcement Act are enforced and payments are recovered

#### Key Strategies:

- Continue to work with payors and recipients to ensure the terms of maintenance orders are fulfilled
- Continue to work with payors to facilitate payment to an enrolled recipient, and to collect outstanding debts or fees
- Continue to work with the courts to enforce maintenance orders and agreements

Performance Measures	2012/13 Baseline	2018/19 Actuals	2019/20 Forecast	2020/21 Target	2021/22 Target	2022/23 Target
1.1a Child and family support payments recovered through the Family Maintenance Enforcement Program <sup>1</sup>	5,053	5,839	5,897	5,956	6,015	6,076
1.1b Telephone call response time – in minutes (industry target is less than 3 minutes) <sup>1</sup>	1:00	1:49	2:30	2:30	2:30	2:30
1.1c Web message response time – in hours:minutes (internal standard for the program is less than 16 business hours) <sup>2</sup>	6:07	7:06	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30

<sup>1</sup> Data Source: FMEP Key Indicators Report.

<sup>2</sup> Data Source: FMEP Key Indicators Report. 8 hours equals one business day.

#### Linking Performance Measures to Objectives:

1.1a This outcome measure assesses the impact of effective case management and administrative enforcement by measuring the recovery of financial support for families. An annual increase in the number of support payments recovered during and after transition means that the BCFMA is providing its services effectively and efficiently.

1.1b and 1.1c These outcome measures reflect the timely and efficient communication between program staff, clients, and stakeholders. Although response times are expected to increase due to case complexity, keeping the time required to reply to telephone and web messages below established standards will demonstrate that the BCFMA is providing efficient service.

**Discussion:**

For the first year following the establishment of the new BCFMA, the focus will be to support continuous improvement of FMEP operations and the services it provides. To that end, a robust performance framework for the delivery of the FMEP program will be established focussing on recovery of payments and timely communications that protect the health and safety of payors, recipients, and children. Target values for support payments recovered are set to increase by 1% each year, which is in line with the historic average annual increase during the life of the program.

Communications staff address both telephone calls and web enquiries. The complexity of client cases has risen in recent years and additional staff time/effort is required for client discussions in both the telephone and web support environments. Since the program baseline was established in 2012/13 staffing resource levels have remained relatively constant. The volume of web messages received will more than double from 51,896 in 2012/13 to a forecast of over 108,000 for 2019/20, while the number of telephone calls responded to has fallen from 273,000 in 2012/13 to 232,000 in 2018/19.

Although the average length of time required to respond to telephone calls remains below the three-minute industry standard, it has risen from the baseline (of one minute) and is forecast to rise from one minute and 49 seconds during 2018/19 to two minutes and 30 seconds for 2019/20.

Staff consistently (50% of the time) respond to web messages received within one business day (eight business hours), and 95% of web messages are answered within two business days (the existing internal service standard for the program). A further 10% annual increase in web messages received is forecast for the coming years. At current resource levels the average web message response time is forecast to increase by 30 minutes this year, and an additional 30 minutes for each year that follows.



**Goal 2: Ensure BCFMA’s services support the needs of individuals and families**

Work collaboratively with service delivery partners, including the Ministry of Attorney General, affected ministries, and relevant stakeholders, to determine opportunities to better meet the needs of low-income individuals and families for support and enforcement.

**Objective 2.1: Raise awareness of BCFMA mandate and strengthen relationships with FMEP participants and stakeholders**

**Key Strategies:**

- Strengthen relationships with key stakeholders and government partners
- Develop a multi-year strategic plan that includes a performance framework
- Contribute to Ministry of Attorney General’s goal that justice and public safety sector in British Columbia is sustainable

Performance Measure	2018/19 Actuals	2019/20 Forecast	2020/21 Target	2021/22 Target	2022/23 Target
2.1a Agency completes a multi-year strategic plan <sup>1</sup>	n/a	n/a	100%	100%	100%

<sup>1</sup> Data Source: BCFMA

**Linking Performance Measures to Objectives:**

2.1a A multi-year strategic plan produced with guidance from the BCFMA Board of Directors will demonstrate how the BCFMA intends to work/communicate with its service delivery partners. This outcome measure will assess the agency’s progress in developing the overall strategic framework for the long-term sustainability of the BCFMA service delivery model.

**Discussion:**

The BCFMA strives to meet the needs of low-income individuals and families for support and enforcement. A multi-year strategic plan, including a performance framework, will be developed to better measure, improve accountability, and to ensure sustainability of the new BCFMA service delivery model.

**Goal 3: Develop and maintain a responsive and resilient organization**

Establish a governance framework to deliver the mandate of the BCFMA while reviewing opportunities to maintain a healthy workplace environment, in consultation with the Minister of Attorney General.

**Objective 3.1: Provide a workplace that promotes employee engagement and satisfaction**

**Key Strategies:**

- Promote strong teamwork and open communication amongst all staff members, and provide significant learning opportunities
- Develop a measure and method for employee engagement
- Review roles and responsibilities and, where required, update and implement a new organizational structure

Performance Measure	2018/19 Actuals	2019/20 Forecast	2020/21 Target	2021/22 Target	2022/23 Target
3.1a An employee engagement survey has been completed <sup>1</sup>	n/a	n/a	100%	100%	100%

<sup>1</sup> Data Source: BCFMA

**Linking Performance Measures to Objectives:**

3.1a The BCFMA believes that providing employees with a healthy work environment improves staff well-being and encourages employees to contribute to organizational success. Initiating an employee engagement survey establishes a baseline and helps to identify new strategies that could be implemented in order to support continuous improvement.

**Discussion:**

The BCFMA is committed to improve staff satisfaction and retention, and to develop and maintain employee skills, while maximizing productivity and efficiency. Future workplace environment performance measures will be developed using the baseline data established through this survey.

## Financial Plan

### Summary Financial Outlook

(\$m)	2019/20 Forecast <sup>1</sup>	2020/21 Budget	2021/22 Plan	2022/23 Plan
<b>Total Revenue</b>				
Provincial Transfers <sup>2</sup>	8.145	16.851	16.851	16.851
<b>Total Revenue</b>	8.145	16.851	16.851	16.851
<b>Total Expenses<sup>3,4</sup></b>				
Salaries	4.946	11.322	11.322	11.322
Benefits	1.243	2.362	2.362	2.362
Travel	0.073	0.192	0.192	0.192
Contracts	0.232	0.225	0.225	0.225
Information technology	0.423	0.675	0.675	0.675
Office expenses & equipment	0.324	0.593	0.593	0.593
Facilities	0.829	1.241	1.241	1.241
Miscellaneous	0.075	0.241	0.241	0.241
<b>Total Expenses</b>	8.145	16.851	16.851	16.851
<b>Net Income</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>Accumulated Surpluses</b>	0	0	0	0

1. Fiscal year 2019/20 is transitional as the program changed from a contractor service delivery model to a Crown agency as of November 1, 2019. The 2019/20 Forecast has been prorated accordingly.
2. Federal funding of \$0.366M flows through the Provincial base funding.
3. Cost pressures may arise if demand exceeds available funding. BCFMA will work with the Ministry of Attorney General to mitigate this risk and provide services within available funding.
4. The amounts for Management Fees and Transition Costs are forecast for 2019/20 only, related to the transition from the contractor to the Crown agency service delivery model.

## **Key Forecast Assumptions, Risks and Sensitivities**

### **Contributions from the Province**

The Provincial Government provides the annual base operating budget to BCFMA through transfers made under the Operations Vote in the Ministry of Attorney General. The program is dependent on this funding to provide services to the public.

### **Costing Assumptions**

The projected budget numbers in the Summary Financial Outlook table are based on the current-year forecast, status quo. As such, there is a risk of budget pressures from increasing external costs over which the program has limited or no control.

Mitigation strategies to manage these risks include more frequent and detailed forecast reporting to the Ministry of Attorney General and central agencies to monitor and assess options.

### **Resource Planning**

BCFMA is managing challenges related to succession planning and other staffing matters, like many other public and private sector entities, and is developing plans to address these risks and ensure continuity of service delivery to its clients.

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

BCFMA is working with the Ministry of Attorney General, social service ministries, central agencies and other stakeholders to ensure continued accessibility of responsive and sustainable services for family maintenance and enforcement clients.

Further to the financial risks and mitigation strategies set out in the above sections, BCFMA management is taking a broader look at service delivery demand drivers and trends in the context of factors such as:

- shifting demographics
- increasing case complexity
- variable economic conditions
- poverty measures and services
- legislative changes
- court and tribunal process improvements
- developments in complementary access to justice programs
- technology enhancements

BCFMA is developing plans and options that consider these factors, while also ensuring that service quality and costs align with the Province's fiscal plan and other priorities.

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

### **Corporate Governance**

Board of Directors: <https://www.bcfma.ca/about-us/board-of-directors/>

Statutes and Regulations: <https://www.bcfma.ca/about-us/statutes-and-regulations/>

### **Organizational Overview**

Home Page: <https://www.bcfma.ca/>

About Us: <https://www.bcfma.ca/about-us/>

Family Maintenance Enforcement Program: <https://www.fmep.gov.bc.ca/about-the-program/>