Preparing for the Future:

Executive Succession in the Policy Community

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

If trends in the policy community mirror those in the overall Public Service, many executives in that community will soon be retiring. Preparing to replace them requires knowledge of the population likely to succeed them — that is, middle managers and senior professionals.

In October 2002 the Public Service Commission's (PSC) Research Directorate released a report titled *Executive Succession Reconsidered: Planning for Public Service Renewal.*[1] The objective of the study was to obtain information about the career plans and development needs of Public Service employees in EX-minus 2, EX-minus 1 and EX equivalent positions, and to use that information to help plan and manage the succession of the executive cadre.

This present report, *Preparing for the Future: Executive Succession in the Policy Community*, focuses on the responses received from 508 members of the policy community in the 2002 survey, and compares them to responses from all the other communities combined.

The results include the following:

• Respondents from the policy community were highly ambitious and placed greater importance than other survey participants on a series of career goals, including attaining a higher level position and taking a special or acting assignment. More than eight out of ten showed an interest in an executive career, compared to 71% in the rest of the sample. This level of interest in executive careers is not surprising considering that the respondents from the policy community primarily belonged to occupational groups such as economics, sociology and statistics (ES) and programme administration (PM), from which executives are traditionally drawn. For this reason the policy community is the largest feeder to the executive ranks, which raises an important question, namely, should entry-level executives come from a more diverse group of occupational backgrounds?

• Compared to other communities, the policy community had a larger proportion of women (44%). The average age of policy respondents was younger than that of respondents from other communities and a majority of surveyed policy managers and professionals were ten years or more away from retirement.

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1 *Executive Succession Reconsidered: Planning for Public Service Renewal* (October 2002), Research Directorate, Public Service Commission; available at **http://www.psc-cfp.gc.ca/centres/reports-rapports/esr-rrd/index_e.htm**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- As in the overall feeder group sample (8%), levels of visible minority representation within the policy community (7%) are not sufficient to support the 20% share of executive appointments by 2005 as identified in the *Embracing Change Initiative*.[2] Moreover, the low levels of bilingualism at the CBC level among visible minority members in the feeder groups represent a further barrier to jobs in the executive cadre.

- A smaller proportion of policy community respondents (41%) than all other respondents (49%) intend to retire within the next ten years. However, almost one in seven of those in the policy community (15% versus 9% of others) intend to leave the federal Public Service eventually for reasons other than retirement and almost a third (31% versus 22% of others) are not certain of their intentions to stay. Those who intend to leave primarily do so to make better use of their education, training, skills and abilities, to see the results of their work and to find more meaningful work.

- Compared to other survey participants, respondents from the policy community were highly experienced in policy development and in working at the political level, and accordingly were less likely than others to believe they needed to improve those skills in order for their careers to advance. However, they possessed comparatively little experience in people management (49% had extensive experience versus 60% of those in other communities). Not surprisingly, improving their leadership skills was identified by policy respondents as a pressing development need.

- Improving their second official language skills was another identified development need. Almost a third (31%) of policy respondents indicated having difficulty obtaining language training and a similar proportion (41%) experienced difficulties in advancing their careers on account of their language profile. This perceived barrier to career advancement was more likely to be reported by policy respondents who indicated English (47%) as their first official language compared to those who indicated French (13%).

- Despite the fact that members of the policy community have more regional experience than those in other communities, they are highly concentrated in the National Capital Region (NCR) with 82% of them working in this location. Although this provides them with wide-ranging career advancement opportunities, it raises the question of whether or not they will have sufficient regional experience to adequately understand the needs of Canadians in communities outside of the NCR.

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2   Task Force on the Participation of Visible Minorities in the Federal Public Service (2000), *Embracing Change in the Federal Public Service*, Ottawa: Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, p.6; also available at **http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pubs_pol/hrpubs/tb_852/ecfps_e.asp**

1.0 INTRODUCTION

One of the best strategies for addressing future human resources challenges is planning. Our ability to conduct planning within the policy community, however, has been restricted by our inability to identify the community through standard data sources. That is not to say that the policy community has not come under scrutiny: over the past several years major studies have examined the strengthening of our policy capacity;[3] horizontal policy management;[4] and the management of policy personnel.[5] This previous research, however, has focussed on three specific themes:

- the need to renew recruitment to avoid shortages of qualified personnel;

- the rejuvenation of policy capacity at mid and senior career levels through development programs; and

- the need to strengthen horizontal policy development through inter-departmental mobility.

One of the key gaps in all of these studies, however, was a lack of basic demographic information about the policy community. In identifying the policy community through our study, the *Survey of Managers and Professionals*, not only were we able to provide an analysis of executive succession issues within that community, but also we were able to extract a basic demographic snapshot and analysis of this senior level of policy professionals.

Among functional communities, science and technology had the largest representation in the survey (26%), followed by the policy community (25%). Given the large size of the policy community (n=508), we were able to analyse responses in greater depth than would be the case for smaller functional communities. In particular, because the policy community has a sufficient number of women respondents, a number of analyses can be undertaken to examine the differences between genders. This represents a unique opportunity to study women in a community that has a high likelihood of progressing to the executive ranks. As will be shown, the policy community has a particular demographic profile, experience base and training requirements that vary significantly from those of other communities.

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3   Ivan Fellegi (April 3, 1995), *Strengthening our Policy Capacity*, Report of the Task Force on Strengthening the Policy Capacity of the Federal Government.

4   Mel Cappe (May 15, 1996), *Managing Horizontal Policy Issues*, Task Force on Horizontal Issues.

5   Joy F. Kane and Jack Stagg (May 1997), *Report of the ADM Sub-Group on the Management of Policy Personnel*, Recommendations to Improve Current Practices in the Recruitment, Training and Career Development of Federal Personnel Engaged in Policy Work.

1.1 About this Report

This report addresses the key themes of the *2002 Survey of Managers and Professionals* and how they relate to succession planning for executive renewal, specifically within the context of the policy community. They comprise the following:

• demographics;

• career and retirement plans;

• interest in and readiness to assume an executive position; and

• skills and career development.

In addition, this report provides a comparison between the responses of survey participants from the policy community and those of participants from all other communities combined. When the number of respondents is sufficient, the responses of women in the policy community are compared to those of their male counterparts.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Population and Sample

The base sample for the *2002 Survey of Managers and Professionals* was established by randomly drawing 8,000 individuals from the EX-equivalent, EX-minus 1 and EX-minus 2 population in the Treasury Board Secretariat pay system database at the end of September 2001. The population contained 25,956 employees: 4,488 at the EX-equivalent level; 8,693 at the EX-minus 1 level; and 12,775 at the EX-minus 2 level.

In addition to this, the managers and professionals from the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (CCRA) were invited to participate in the survey. CCRA drew their base sample in the same manner and with the same ratio as above from their employee database, adding a further 1,266 individuals to the initial sample, for a total of 9,266 potential participants.

The final sample of potential participants consisted of those for whom e-mail addresses could be located either via departments' databases or through the Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC) Web 500 directory of employees. In the final tally, e-mail addresses were located for 8,576 of the 9,266 individuals in the baseline sample. The final sample was compared to the original sample and no systematic biases due to attrition were found. Therefore, it was considered to be a representative sample of the population.

The PSC contracted Ipsos-Reid to conduct the survey, which was administered via the Internet. Potential survey respondents were provided with the survey Web site address, which they accessed using a confidential unique personal identification number (PIN). Each PIN was valid for one completed survey. Respondents who interrupted the survey before completing it were permitted to access the site again using their PIN to complete the survey. The on-line survey was fielded between February 12, 2002 and March 5, 2002. In total, there were 2,650 useable responses, rendering a 31% response rate. The survey results are accurate ±1.8%, 19 times out of 20.

3.0 RESULTS

3.1 Survey Respondent Profile

Of respondents who identified the community they belonged to,[6] one fourth (25%) identified themselves as belonging to the policy community. Overall, it was the second largest functional community after science and technology, which comprised 26% of respondents. Given the proportion of policy respondents in the overall survey, we estimate the size of this community at the executive feeder level to be 5,100. They are mostly found in the following departments: Foreign Affairs and International Trade (9%); Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (8%); Human Resources Development Canada (8%); Health Canada (7%); and the Department of Justice (5%).

As shown in Table 2, respondents from the policy community were concentrated in occupational groups such as economics, sociology and statistics (ES), programme administration (PM), commerce (CO), foreign services (FS) and administrative services (AS). In terms of access to executive positions, managers and professionals of the policy community are favoured, as these aforementioned occupational categories traditionally feed the executive level.[7]

Table 1: Survey respondents by their functional community

Community	Survey respondents (N=2,033)
Policy	25%
Science & technology	26%
Regulatory and inspection	15%
Information management / information technology	13%
Finance	8%
Human resources	7%
Communication	6%

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6   Nearly one in four (23%) respondents did not identify with any of the seven communities listed in Table 1.

7   While the federal Public Service comprises more than 130 occupational groups and levels considered to be executive feeder groups, 70% of all executives appointed in 2001 came from the following ten classifications: PM-6; AS-7; ES-7; ES-6; CO-3; FS-2; FI-4; PE-6; IS-6; and AS-8. From *The Demographics of PS Executives and EX Feeder Groups*, presentation by Scott Serson to the Board of Governors of the Canadian Centre for Management Development (December 14, 2001), available at **http://www.psc-cfp.gc.ca/research/demographics/communities/ex-demo-ccmd_e.htm** Middle managers and senior professionals in AS, PM, ES, CO, FS, FI, PE and IS positions are thus considered traditional feeder groups.

Table 2: Top occupational groups of respondents

Occupational groups	Policy respondents (N=508)	Other respondents (N=2,142)
Economics, Sociology & Statistics (ES)	34%	7%
Programme Administration (PM)	28%	15%
Commerce (CO)	9%	8%
Foreign Services (FS)	8%	2%
Administrative Services (AS)	7%	9%
Engineering and Land Survey (EN)	1%	8%
Scientific Research (SE)	0%	7%

Compared to other communities, the policy community had a larger proportion of women among its respondents to the survey (44% of policy versus 34% of other respondents). Other employment equity groups were represented in the following proportions: Aboriginal peoples (3%); persons with disabilities (3%); and visible minorities (7%). For persons with disabilities and visible minorities these levels of representation raise a concern regarding the diversity of future executives. Since such a large proportion of executives are drawn from the policy community, there needs to be a larger pool of employment equity members in this community, especially visible minorities. This will ensure that the senior cadre reflects the Canadian population that it serves.

Policy respondents were, on average, younger than other survey participants (45 years of age for policy versus 47 for other respondents). In fact, compared to other communities, the policy community had a larger proportion of respondents under the age of 45 (45% of policy versus 35% of other respondents). In the same manner, policy respondents had, on average, fewer years of service in the federal Public Service than respondents from other communities (16 versus 18). Moreover, women in the policy community were, on average, younger than their male counterparts (43 versus 47) and consequently, had been working in the federal Public Service for fewer years (15 versus 18).

Graph 1: Age profile of policy respondents

Age	
25 to 34	14%
35 to 44	31%
45 to 54	40%
55 to 64	14%
65 to 74	0.4%

N=488

RESULTS
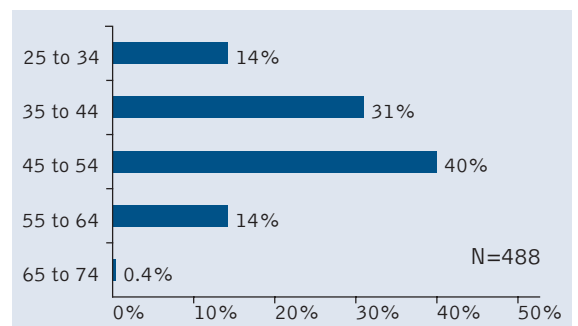
In terms of educational attainment, respondents from the policy community appeared to be more highly educated than respondents from other communities. In fact, 53% of policy respondents held at least a master's degree, compared to 45% of other respondents. Their high educational attainment and, consequently, their additional years of schooling before entering the federal Public Service seem at odds with their younger average age.

Similar to respondents from other communities, English was the first official language of a majority of policy respondents. Still, the proportion of policy respondents who selected English (80%) as their first official language was higher than that of other survey respondents (75%). More than a third (37%) of all policy respondents were bilingual at the CBC level or above.

Compared to other survey participants, policy respondents were highly concentrated in the National Capital Region (NCR) (82% of policy respondents versus 60% of others). The policy community may benefit from this concentration in terms of access to executive jobs, as a majority of executive positions are located in the NCR. The concentration of the policy community in the NCR may, however, be detrimental as it would afford a less developed understanding of regional issues.

3.2 Career Plans

The *Survey of Managers and Professionals* enabled us to gauge respondents' career plans by asking them to rate, on a scale of 1 to 7 ("not at all a priority" to "high priority"), the priority given to certain career goals for the next three years. Table 3 illustrates the proportion of policy respondents who considered the proposed career goals a high priority (5-7 on a 7-point scale). Respondents from the policy community considered the following career goals their greatest priorities: attaining a higher level position (64%); taking a special or acting assignment (49%); and participating in a development program (37%). Other respondents also chose these career goals as their top three priorities.

However, compared to other survey participants, policy respondents considered most of the suggested career goals higher priorities: attaining a higher level position (64% of policy versus 52% of others); taking a special or acting assignment (49% of policy versus 42% of others); changing departments or agencies (31% of policy versus 20% of others); taking up a different area of specialization (30% of policy versus 23% of others); and moving to another position at the same level as their current position (30% of policy versus 23% of others). Interestingly, women and men of the policy community did not differ in terms of their career goals.

Table 3: Career goals considered important

Career goals	Policy respondents (N~505)	Other respondents (N~2,130)
Attaining a higher level position	64%	52%
Taking a special or acting assignment	49%	42%
Participating in a development program	37%	35%
Changing departments or agencies	31%	20%
Taking up a different area of specialization	30%	23%
Moving to another position at the same level as my current position	30%	23%

3.2.1 Executive Interest and Readiness

Executive succession planning requires insight into the level of interest among EX-feeder groups in progressing to the executive level and readiness to assume a position at that level. Accordingly, respondents were asked to what extent they were interested in progressing to the executive level of the federal Public Service and, if interested, how soon they thought they would be ready to work at that level given their current classification and experience. More than four out of five respondents (81%) from the policy community indicated that they were interested in becoming executives. In fact, respondents from the policy community (43%) were more likely than other respondents (32%) to be "very interested" in an executive career. In rates similar to other respondents, 43% of policy respondents interested in becoming an executive indicated that, given their current level and experience, they were ready now to assume an executive position. A further 25% indicated they would be ready in one to two years and another 24% in three to five years.

Graph 2: Policy respondents' readiness to work at the executive level
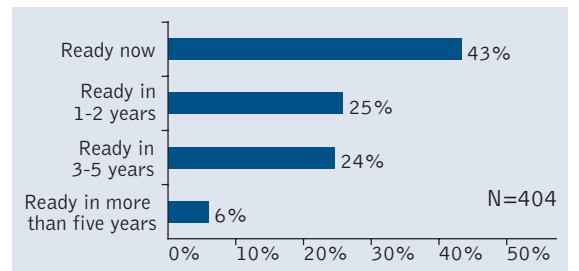
Women and men in the policy community were equally interested in progressing to the executive level. However, men were more likely than women to feel they were ready now to assume an executive position (50% of men versus 32% of women) while women were more likely than men to estimate they would be ready in five years or more (9% of women versus 3% of men). Further analysis shows that women's younger age and correspondingly fewer years of service in the federal Public Service explain part of this delay in readiness. In fact, age and years of service in the Public Service are strongly correlated with one's readiness to assume a position at the executive level. As in other communities,

women in the policy community are, on average, four years younger than their male counterparts and have fewer years of service.

These higher levels of interest in executive careers are favourable to executive succession in the policy community. Still, understanding the reasons for which managers and professionals pursue or decide not to pursue an executive career is necessary to effectively plan and manage human resources.

3.2.2 Pursuing an Executive Career

In order to provide us with a better understanding of the reasons for pursuing an executive career, survey participants were presented with a series of factors that might have influenced their interest. Respondents were asked to rate each factor's influence on a scale of 1 to 7, which is from "not at all" to "a lot". The reported percentages refer to the proportion of policy respondents who felt the proposed factors had highly influenced (5-7 on the 7-point scale) their interest in becoming an executive.

Large proportions of policy respondents felt the following three factors had highly influenced their interest in pursuing an executive career: to influence progress toward a goal (92%); to participate in senior level decision-making (90%); and the opportunity to work on broader issues (85%). These factors were also the top reasons for which other survey participants pursued an executive position. However, respondents from the policy community were more likely than others to feel certain factors had highly influenced their interest in becoming an executive: the opportunity to participate in senior level decision-making (90% of policy respondents versus

83% of others); better access to senior decision makers (78% of policy respondents versus 70% of others); and the opportunity to better see the results of their work (68% of policy respondents versus 62% of others).

Women and men in the policy community generally indicated that they were interested in pursuing an executive career for similar reasons. However, women attributed greater importance to the following factors: better access to senior decision makers (83% of women versus 74% of men); the opportunity for greater cross-departmental collaboration (78% of women versus 58% of men); and the opportunity to better see the results of their work (75% of women versus 62% of men).

When planning the succession of the executive cadre, the reasons for the lack of interest of managers and professionals in becoming executives are as important as the reasons for wanting to become an executive. Survey respondents who indicated they were not interested in progressing to the executive level were asked the extent to which certain factors had influenced their decision. The influence of each factor was rated on a scale of 1 to 7, that is from "not at all" to "a lot". The stated percentages refer to the proportion of respondents who felt the proposed factors had highly influenced (5-7 on the 7-point scale) their decision not to pursue an executive level position.

Among policy respondents, the top three reasons for not pursuing an executive career were: concerns with work-life balance (85%); interest in their current job (74%); and satisfaction with current responsibilities (66%). These factors were also among the top three reasons of respondents from other communities. Overall, respondents from the policy community and other respondents did not differ in their reasons for not pursuing an executive career. However, policy respondents were more likely than other survey participants to mention their concern with work-life balance as a reason for not pursuing an executive career (85% of policy versus 76% of others), but were less likely to mention the limited opportunities for advancement in their field of work (12% of policy versus 29% of others).

Women and men in the policy community also differed in some of their reasons for not wanting to become executives. Work-life balance was more of an issue for women than for men (94% of women versus 79% of men). The proximity of retirement was less likely to have influenced women's decision not to pursue an executive career (28% of women versus 62% of men). This last finding was expected, given women's younger average age.

Balance between personal and professional lives was a prevalent concern among respondents of the policy community. The younger age profile of the community and its gender distribution might partly explain the greater concern with work-life balance.[8] Strategies aimed at managers and professionals of the policy community should emphasize the qualitative nature of executive work, with a focus on the factors that make an executive career particularly interesting to them, such as influencing progress towards a goal, participating in senior level decision-making and working on broader issues.

3.2.3 Retirement and Retention

In accordance with their younger age profile, a smaller proportion of policy respondents intend to retire within the next ten years (41% of policy compared to 49% of other respondents). On average, policy respondents were 14 years away from retirement, compared to 12 years for other survey participants.

However, retirement may not be the only reason for leaving the federal Public Service. Fully 15% of respondents from the policy community intend to leave the federal Public Service for reasons other than retirement and 31% are not certain of their intention to stay. In fact, these proportions are larger than for respondents of other communities, of whom 9% intend to leave before retirement and 22% are undecided. Of those policy respondents who intend to leave for reasons other than retirement, 35% intend to do so within three years, 19% within three to five years, 24% in more than five years and 22% are uncertain of their timeframe for departure.
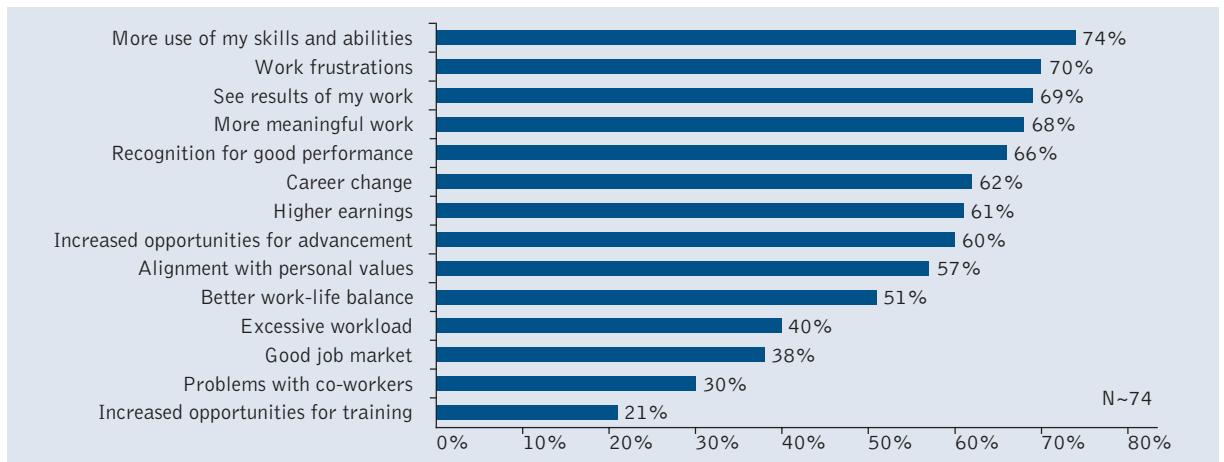
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8 In general, women and younger respondents are more likely than others to mention their concern with work-life balance as a reason for not pursuing an executive career.

Respondents who intend to leave the federal Public Service were asked to rate, on a scale of 1 to 7, that is from "no importance at all" to "extreme importance", certain reasons for their intention to leave. The stated percentages refer to the policy respondents who rated the proposed reasons as important (5-7 on a 7-point scale). The primary reasons for leaving the Public Service were to make better use of their education, training, skills and abilities (74%); to escape work frustrations (70%); to better see the results of their work (69%); and to find more meaningful work (68%). Reasons such as taking advantage of a good job market (38%); escaping an excessive workload (40%); problems with co-workers (30%); and increased opportunities for training (21%) were important reasons for a minority of respondents in the policy community.

Despite a higher risk of voluntary departures, respondents from the policy community did not differ from other survey participants in their reasons for planning to do so. The small number of respondents who intend to leave the federal Public Service prevents us from comparing the responses of women and men in the policy community.

Graph 3: Policy respondents' reasons for intending to leave the FPS

Reason	Percentage
More use of my skills and abilities	74%
Work frustrations	70%
See results of my work	69%
More meaningful work	68%
Recognition for good performance	66%
Career change	62%
Higher earnings	61%
Increased opportunities for advancement	60%
Alignment with personal values	57%
Better work-life balance	51%
Excessive workload	40%
Good job market	38%
Problems with co-workers	30%
Increased opportunities for training	21%

N~74

3.3 Career Development

Career development is of prime importance when planning the succession of executives, to ensure that middle managers and senior professionals acquire the experience, skills and abilities needed to progress to the executive level. To identify the areas in which career development is needed, survey respondents were asked to rate, on a scale of 1 to 7, that is, from "not at all" to "a lot", the extent to which they needed to improve certain skills in order for their career to develop. Among policy respondents, the following skills needed the most overall improvement (5-7 on a 7-point scale): knowledge of their second official language (53%); leadership skills (52%); and knowledge of working at the political level (47%). The issue of second official language capacity is addressed in an upcoming section.

Respondents from the policy community differed from other survey participants in terms of the skills they needed to improve. As was expected given the nature of their work, policy respondents were less likely than other respondents to feel they needed to improve their policy development skills (38% of policy respondents versus 48% of others), their knowledge of working at the political level (47% of policy respondents versus 56% of others) and their knowledge of job-related software (10% of policy versus 15% of others). On the other hand, they were more likely than other respondents to feel they needed to improve their leadership skills (52% of policy respondents versus 44% of others) and financial leadership skills (43% of policy respondents versus 34% of others) in order for their career to develop.

Table 4: Career development needs as identified by policy respondents

Career development needs	Policy respondents (N~501)
Learn or improve my knowledge of my second official language	53%
Improve my leadership skills	52%
Improve my knowledge of working at the political level (or with senior management)	47%
Improve my financial leadership skills (e.g. budgeting)	43%
Improve my policy development skills	38%
Improve my project management skills	37%
Improve my ability to communicate my ideas easily	34%
Improve my time management skills	32%
Learn more about career planning	28%
Learn more about providing services to clients	15%
Further my formal education	15%
Learn to use job-related software	10%

Compared to men, women in the policy community generally felt a greater need to improve their skills. In fact, women were more likely than their male counterparts to believe they needed to improve the following skills "a lot": leadership skills (59% of women versus 47% of men); knowledge of working at the political level (55% of women versus 41% of men); financial leadership skills (53% of women versus 36% of men); policy development skills (45% of women versus 32% of men); project management skills (43% of women versus 32% of men); formal education (21% of women versus 11% of men); and knowledge of job-related software (13% of women versus 7% of men). It is worth noting that women's younger age profile and fewer years of service in the federal Public Service indicate that they have had less of an opportunity to gain substantial experience in these areas.

In order to better prepare the managers and professionals of the policy community who demonstrate an interest in becoming executives, training opportunities should be directed at developing the skills needed at the executive level, particularly those in relation to second official languages and leadership.

3.3.1 Competency Profile

Interest in progressing to the executive level and self-evaluation of EX-feeders' readiness to become executives are certainly important factors when planning executive succession. However, experience in key areas is required of managers and professionals seeking an executive position. Therefore, survey participants were asked to rate on a scale of 1 to 7, that is, from "none" to "extensive", their degree of experience in a number of areas. The stated percentages refer to the respondents who evaluated their experience as being between 5 and 7 on the 7-point scale.

Given the political nature of their work, policy respondents were mostly experienced in the following areas: policy development (73%); exposure to the political level (71%); and consulting and professional advisory services (61%). In fact, their level of experience in these areas was far greater than that of other respondents, of whom 27% were highly experienced in policy development, 30% had substantial exposure to the political level and 47% were highly experienced in consulting and professional advisory services.

Policy respondents also possessed greater experience than other respondents in regional operations (36% of policy respondents versus 30% of others). However, compared to other survey participants, respondents from the policy community were less likely to have extensive experience in line operations (42% of policy respondents versus 55% of others) and people management or supervision including staffing (49% of policy respondents versus 60% of others). In fact, other respondents were more likely than policy respondents to supervise employees (70% of other respondents versus 53% of policy respondents). Moreover,

while other respondents supervised an average of 13 employees, respondents from the policy community supervised an average of only six employees.

Women and men in the policy community did not differ much in terms of their experience in areas required for executive positions. Still, when it came to people management or supervision including staffing, a smaller proportion of women compared to men indicated that they had extensive experience (43% of women versus 53% of men). Interestingly, both supervised, on average, a similar number of employees. Further analysis reveals that this difference might be explained in part by women's younger age profile, fewer years of service in the Public Service and concentration in lower levels.

In order to better prepare managers and professionals from the policy community to advance to the executive level, efforts should be directed at providing the opportunities to acquire diversified experience. Gaining experience in fields such as people management and supervision, staffing and line operations would equip them with the diverse experience required for executive positions.

3.3.2 Language Profile

Proficiency in both official languages is a requirement for executive positions. Therefore, the second official language profile of managers and professionals who wish to progress to the executive level must be at least CBC.[9] Among policy respondents, 37% were bilingual at the CBC level or above, while 36% had a language profile below the CBC level. A similar percentage of respondents had not been tested (27%). When comparing tested individuals only, no difference was found between the language proficiency of policy respondents and that of others. Differences based on employment equity group were found for visible minority members in the overall sample; specifically, among those tested, this equity group (27%) was much less likely to have a CBC level or above than others (55%). In terms of gender, the differences found in the rest of the sample were not found in the policy community.[10]

Nonetheless, levels of bilingualism were not equally distributed among respondents. In fact, being bilingual at the CBC level or above was largely dependent on having French as a first official language. While a third (33%) of tested policy respondents who selected English as their first official language indicated they had a CBC language profile or above, almost all (97%) of tested respondents who selected French did so. In fact, very few respondents who had French as a first official language had not been tested (3%) compared to respondents who indicated English as their first official language (33%).

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9   The term 'CBC' refers to the respective levels of competence in reading, writing and oral communication in one's second official language. The letters denote an increasing level of competence, with 'A' representing a more rudimentary competency than a 'C'.

10   When comparing tested individuals in the rest of the sample, a larger proportion of women compared to men were bilingual at the CBC level or above (59% of women versus 52% of men).

Four out of ten (41%) respondents from the policy community indicated that they had experienced difficulties advancing in their career because of their language profile. A majority of those (93%) had a language profile below the CBC level or were untested. Again, respondents whose first official language was English (47%) were more likely to report such difficulties than those who had French as a first official language (13%).

Nearly a third (31%) of policy respondents felt they experienced great difficulty in obtaining language training (5-7 on a 7-point scale). Survey results indicate that of policy respondents who were bilingual at the CBC level or above, a majority (57%) had not taken any language training offered by the federal Public Service. On the other hand, 87% of those who had a language profile below the CBC level had taken a Public Service language course. Thus, respondents proficient in their second language were most likely bilingual when they entered the federal Public Service.

3.3.3 Development Programs

Progressing to the executive level requires managers and professionals to possess extensive experience in a number of areas as well as specific skills and abilities. Therefore, programs providing opportunities for career development are offered to federal Public Service employees who wish to develop skills and abilities and acquire valuable experience. The survey enabled us to evaluate the level of interest among managers and professionals in career development programs as well as their application and participation rates. Respondents were asked the degree to which, on a scale of 1 to 7 ("not at all" to

"a lot"), they were interested in several development programs. The reported percentages refer to the proportion of respondents who expressed a high level of interest (5-7 on a 7-point scale).

Respondents from the policy community were moderately interested in a number of the career development programs available in the federal Public Service. The development programs that elicited the most interest among policy respondents were: International Programs (49%); Interchange Canada (45%); special departmental programs (38%); and the Career Assignment Program (38%).

Policy respondents were consistently more interested than other survey participants in the proposed programs: International Programs (49% of policy respondents versus 42% of others); Interchange Canada (45% of policy respondents versus 36% of others); special departmental programs (38% of policy respondents versus 32% of others); Career Assignment Program (38% of policy respondents versus 33% of others); and Assistant Deputy Minister Prequalification Process (29% of policy respondents versus 18% of others). This greater interest in career development programs is not surprising given that policy respondents were also more interested than other survey participants in pursuing executive careers. Among the policy community, women and men showed equal interest in the career development programs.

Considering the interest expressed in development programs, one would expect to find comparable rates of application or participation. However, very few survey participants, including those from the policy community, applied to or participated in the development programs mentioned above (Graph 4). Still, the Career Assignment Program received reasonably high application and participation rates (11% and 4%, respectively), reflecting the calibre of the Program and the career advancement it usually brings. Promoting the potential of development programs should be stressed, as 81% of policy respondents are interested in executive careers.

3.3.4 Development Barriers

In order to give us a better understanding of the barriers preventing managers and professionals from taking advantage of the development opportunities available to them, survey respondents were asked to rate, on a scale of 1 to 7 ("not at all" to "a lot"), the degree to which they felt various conditions had limited their participation in the federal Public Service's development programs. The reported proportions refer to the respondents who felt the conditions had considerably limited their participation (5-7 on a 7-point scale).

Graph 4: Development programs and policy respondents
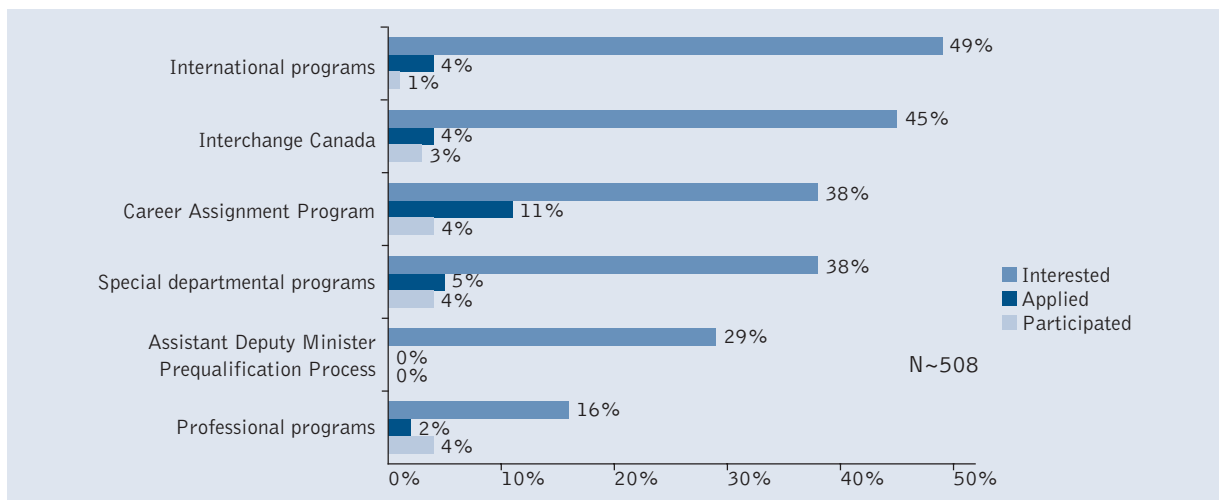
Among policy respondents, the most frequently cited barrier was lack of time, which was mentioned by 49% of them. Other barriers to the participation of policy respondents included: lack of awareness of the eligibility criteria (40%); insufficient support from management (38%); relocation requirements (32%); lack of awareness of where to obtain information (31%); and thinking the development programs would not lead to greater advancement opportunities (30%). Policy respondents were less likely than other survey participants to consider that not knowing where to obtain information had prevented them from participating in development programs (31% of policy respondents versus 37% of others). Furthermore, the potential relocation requirements of development programs were an issue for a smaller proportion of policy respondents (32% of policy respondents versus 38% of others). The relative concentration of the policy community in the NCR might account for this finding. Women and men in the policy community shared similar perceptions of the learning barriers.

As with other survey participants, time was particularly an issue for respondents of the policy community. Granting time to participate in the development programs is essential to ensure that managers and professionals acquire the skills and experience needed to occupy an executive position. In addition, improving communications about development programs, whether it be about the eligibility criteria or the potential career advancement, is an easy but effective way of promoting participation.

3.3.5 Learning Methods

In addition to participating in development programs, there are several learning methods that can help federal Public Service employees develop their careers. The *Survey of Managers and Professionals* permitted an exploration of those learning methods by asking respondents to indicate whether or not they had undertaken a series of learning activities or if they were unfamiliar with the activity. As with development programs, large percentages of respondents from the policy community were not currently using or had never used the learning methods listed. In fact, many respondents were unfamiliar with the proposed activities. Still, the most popular learning activities were developing a personal learning plan and attending a management learning event, which were undertaken respectively by 42% and 38% of policy respondents.
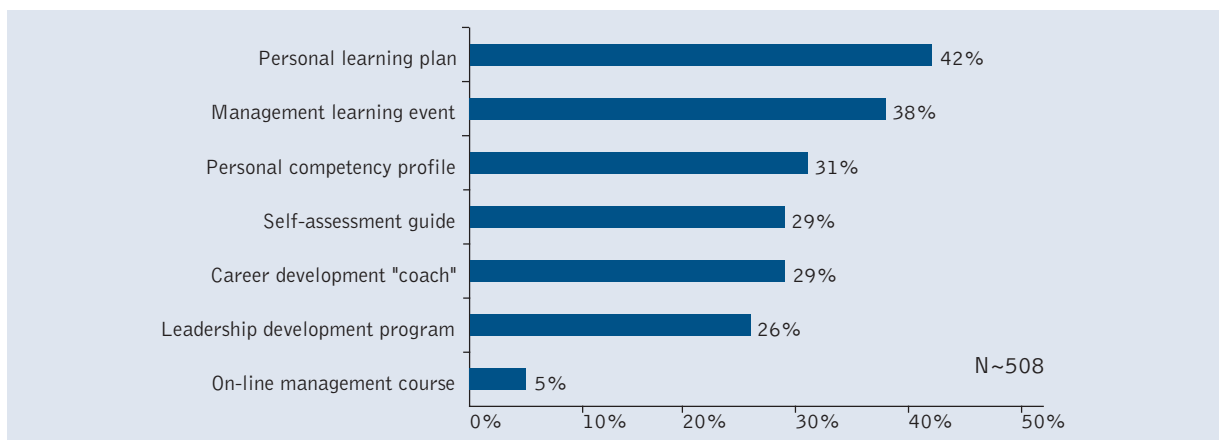
In most cases, policy respondents and other survey participants did not differ in their use of learning methods. However, policy respondents were more likely than other respondents to have sought the advice of a career development "coach" such as a career counsellor, a consultant or a mentor (29% of policy respondents versus 22% of others). Similarly, few differences were found between men and women, with the exception of management learning events, which more women had attended (43% of women versus 32% of men). Graph 5 illustrates the responses of the policy community.

Learning methods such as competency profiles, self-assessment guides and personal learning plans are simple ways to discover how skills correspond to career goals, and thus, to identify areas in which improvement is necessary in reaching one's career objectives. Again, sharing information with regard to these learning activities might prove to be a simple way of encouraging the career advancement of managers and professionals in the policy community.

Graph 5: Policy respondents' participation in learning activities

Personal learning plan 42%
Management learning event 38%
Personal competency profile 31%
Self-assessment guide 29%
Career development "coach" 29%
Leadership development program 26%
On-line management course 5%

N~508

4.0 CONCLUSION

The objective of the *Survey of Managers and Professionals* was to obtain information on middle managers and senior professionals in order to inform succession planning in the federal Public Service. This present report aimed at providing planning information for the policy community as it explored the career plans, interest in executive careers and development of managers and professionals of that community.

The demographic profile of policy respondents differed from that of other survey participants. First, the policy community comprised a larger proportion of women. Potentially, this will result in greater representation of women at the executive level. Secondly, policy respondents were younger, on average, and further away from retirement than others. Consequently, there is more time to develop policy members in preparation for executive positions. Thirdly, in this key feeder group, the current representation of visible minorities is problematic in light of the *Embracing Change* benchmark and the corporate objective of increasing representation of this group at the executive level.

It was found that managers and professionals of the policy community possess a comparative advantage in terms of progressing to the executive level. A majority of policy respondents belong to occupational groups that traditionally feed entry-level executive positions. Furthermore, the nature of their work provides them with more extensive experience in most areas required for executive positions than respondents from other communities.

Respondents from the policy community differed greatly from other survey participants in terms of their work experience, particularly in fields related to policy. For example, policy respondents were more than twice as

likely as other survey participants to possess extensive experience in areas such as policy development and working at the political level. In addition, although the policy community is more concentrated in the NCR, in relative terms, these executive feeders have more regional experience than those in other communities. Nevertheless, as aspiring executives are required to possess diversified experience, managers and professionals from the policy community would benefit from additional experience in areas such as people management and line operations. Increasing the rate of bilingualism of this community would also remove a major barrier to the career advancement of its members.

When asked about their career goals over the next three years, policy respondents were found to be highly motivated and more likely than others to consider the proposed career goals as high priorities. For example, nearly two thirds of policy respondents, compared to half of other survey participants, considered attaining a higher level position a high priority. Not surprisingly, policy respondents also showed a greater interest in progressing to the executive level than others.

Overall, results from the *Survey of Managers and Professionals* bode well for executive succession in the policy community. Simple steps such as improving communications with regard to career development and development programs would help to ensure that aspiring executives from the policy community achieve their career objectives.