



Public Service Commission  
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## **Executive Succession Reconsidered: Planning for Public Service Renewal**

# **Preparing for the Future: Executive Succession in Natural Resources Canada**

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Canada

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## Executive Summary

As in the rest of the federal Public Service, many of Natural Resources Canada's (NRCan) executive corps will soon be retiring. Preparing for the succession of executives requires certain knowledge of the population likely to replace them, that is the middle managers and senior professionals of Natural Resources. The objective of the *Survey of Managers and Professionals* was to provide information with regards to the demographics, career goals, interest in becoming an executive, retirement and retention, skills, and career development of Public Service employees in EX minus-2, EX minus-1 and EX equivalent positions. In order to help Natural Resources plan and manage the succession of its executive cadre, this report focuses on the responses of 129 survey participants from the department and how they compare to those of other respondents. Survey results for Natural Resources bring forth the following findings:

- Half of Natural Resources respondents (51%) considered attaining a higher level position a high priority.
- Compared to other survey participants, Natural Resources respondents showed less interest in progressing to the executive level. Nonetheless, 58% of NRCan respondents were somewhat or very interested in becoming executives.
- The opportunity to influence progress toward a goal was the main reason for the interest in pursuing an executive career (88%). However, earning a higher salary was less important for NRCan respondents than for others in their decision to pursue an executive career (46% of NRCan respondents versus 65% of others).
- Of those who were not interested in progressing to the executive level, 93% indicated that their current job is interesting as a reason for their disinterest.
- Half of Natural Resources respondents intend to retire within the next ten years. However, 11% intend to leave the federal Public Service in the next five years for reasons other than retirement, the main reason being to escape work frustrations (92%).
- Natural Resources respondents identified the following skills as needing the most improvement for their career to advance: knowledge of working at the political level (48%), knowledge of their second official language (47%) and leadership skills (41%).
- Natural Resources respondents had greater experience in the areas of consulting and professional advisory services (54%) and line operations (51%), but less experience in policy development (22%) and central or corporate services (20%). Compared to other survey participants, Natural Resources respondents generally possessed less experience in areas required for executive positions.
- The career development programs that conjured up the most interest among NRCan respondents were the International Exchange Program (33%), Interchange Canada (31%) and the Career Assignment Program (30%). A fair proportion of NRCan respondents applied to (6%) or participated in (4%) the Career Assignment Program. Close to none applied or participated in other programs. Lack of time and information were the most

frequently cited barriers to the participation of Natural Resources respondents in development programs.

- In many instances, Natural Resources respondents were less likely than others to use or have used other learning activities for career development. Still, the learning activities most frequently cited by NRCan respondents were attending a management learning event (32%) and developing a personal learning plan (24%).

# Introduction

As the Canadian labour force ages, the federal Public Service faces many challenges, both as a service provider and as an employer. Filling the vacant positions of retiring baby-boomers will require strategic planning, especially since many Public Service employees approaching retirement occupy high-ranking positions for which specific skills and experience are needed. For example, it is estimated that over the next ten years, 5% of the executive workforce will retire each year and an additional 2.5% will leave the Public Service for reasons other than retirement.<sup>1</sup>

Planning the succession of executives requires an understanding of public servants who are likely to replace current executives, that is the middle managers and senior professionals occupying operational, policy and administrative positions. However, depending on the demographic make-up of their managers and professionals, different departments may call on different human resources strategies. Natural Resources Canada's mandate is highly scientific and technical, specialising in sectors such as earth sciences and energy. Accordingly, managers and professionals of Natural Resources will have a unique profile of experience, skills and development needs. By providing information with regards to demographics, retirement and career plans, interest in becoming an executive, skills and career development, *the Survey of Managers and Professionals* allows us to determine how the specific profile of Natural Resources' middle managers and senior professionals bodes for executive succession in this department.

## 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 within the specific context of Natural Resources. They are comprised of the following:

- Demographics
- Career and retirement plans
- Interest and readiness to assume an executive position
- Skills and career development

In addition, this report provides comparisons between the responses of participants from Natural Resources and those of other survey participants from all other departments combined.

## 1.2 Background of the Department

Having an overview of the department under examination provides a context in which to interpret the results. NRCan's labour force is specific in a number of ways. For instance, as of March 31 2002, executive-feeders were predominantly men (78%). One tenth of this group were members of visible minorities while 1% were Aboriginal Peoples and 3% were persons with disabilities. In terms of occupational group, the top five groups were scientific research (SE) (39%), physical sciences (PC) (16%), engineering and land survey (EN) (12%), economics, sociology and statistics (ES) (11%) and commerce (CO) (8%). The average age among EX-feeders at Natural Resources Canada was 46.

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<sup>1</sup> *Executive Succession Reconsidered: Planning for Public Service Renewal*, October 2002, Labour Market and Research Unit, Research Directorate, Public Service Commission of Canada.

## 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 (4488 EX-equivalent, 8693 EX-minus-1 and 12775 EX-minus-2).

In addition to this, 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 in the baseline sample.

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, email 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.

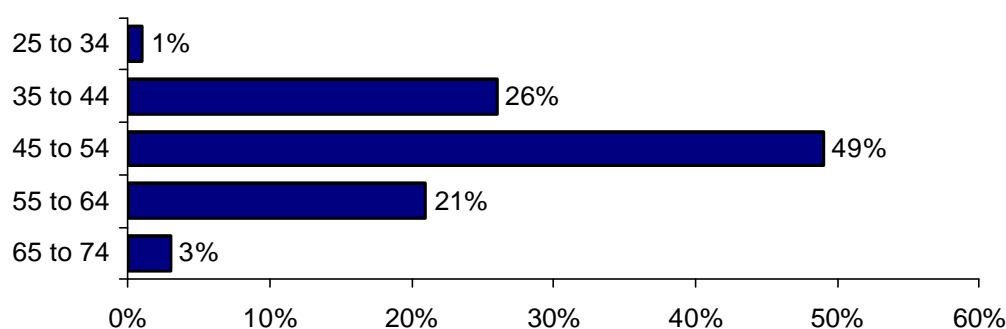
The Public Service Commission contracted Ipsos-Reid to conduct the survey, which was administered via the Internet. Potential survey respondents were provided with the survey web site address, which they accessed using a confidential unique personal identification number (PIN). Each PIN was valid for 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 12th, 2002 and March 5<sup>th</sup> 2002. In total, there were 2,650 useable responses, rendering a 31% response rate. The survey results are accurate  $\pm 1.8\%$ , 19 times out of 20.

### 2.2 Survey Respondent Profile

Compared to other respondents, Natural Resources Canada (NRCan) had a smaller proportion of women among its respondents to the survey (19% of NRCan versus 37% of other respondents). However, the representation of visible minorities (7%) and persons with disabilities (3%) was similar to that of other departments. The proportion of Aboriginal Peoples (1%) was slightly lower than in the rest of the sample (2%).

NRCan respondents were, on average, older than other survey participants (49 for NRCan versus 47 for other respondents). In fact, compared to other departments, Natural Resources had a smaller proportion of respondents below 45 years of age (27% of NRCan versus 37% of other respondents).

**Graph 1:  
Age Profile of RSN Respondents (N=120)**



In terms of educational attainment, respondents from Natural Resources greatly differed from other survey participants. In fact, 93% of NRCan respondents held at least a bachelor’s degree (compared to 79% in other departments) and close to half (46%) had a Ph.D (compared to 8% in other departments). Their longer years of schooling and consequently, their later entry into the workforce might explain the fact that despite their slightly older age, NRCan respondents had, on average, the same number of years of service as other respondents (18).

Similar to respondents in other departments, English was the first official language of 70% of NRCan respondents while French was the first official language of 30% of them. More than a third (35%) of NRCan respondents were bilingual at the CBC level or above.

When asked to select the functional community they belonged to, three out of four respondents from Natural Resources selected the Science and Technology community (compared to 23% of respondents from other departments). On the other hand, a small percentage of NRCan respondents (12%) identified with the Policy community, which was selected by one fourth (26%) of other respondents.

**Table 1:  
Functional Communities of Respondents**

Functional community	Natural Resources respondents (N=119)	All other respondents (N=1914)
Science and technology	76%	23%
Policy	12%	26%
Communication	3%	6%
Regulatory and Inspection	3%	15%
Information Management/ Information Technology	3%	14%
Finance	3%	8%
Human Resources	2%	8%

Respondents from Natural Resources were also concentrated in occupational categories such as “Scientific Research” (SE) (45%), “Engineering and Land Survey” (EN) (12%) and “Physical Sciences” (PC) (9%) in which other respondents were few. This might pose a challenge to the managers and professionals of Natural Resources interested in progressing to the executive level, as executives are traditionally not drawn from these occupational categories. However, similar percentages of NRCan respondents and respondents from other departments were found in the “Economics, Sociology and Statistics” (ES) (10%) and “Commerce” (CO) (10%) categories, which are traditional executive feeder groups.<sup>2</sup>

**Table 2:  
Top Occupational Groups of Respondents**

Occupational groups	Natural Resources respondents (N=119)	All other respondents (N=2526)
Scientific Research (SE)	45%	4%
Engineering and Land Survey (EN)	12%	6%
Economics, Sociology and Statistics (ES)	10%	12%
Commerce (CO)	10%	8%
Physical Sciences (PC)	9%	3%

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<sup>2</sup> While the federal Public Service comprises more than 130 occupational groups and levels considered to be executive feeder groups, 70% of all executives recruited 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, AS-8. Scott Serson, *The Demographics of Public Service Executives and Executive Feeder Groups*, presentation to the Board of Governors of the Canadian Centre for Management Development, December 14, 2001

[http://www.psc-cfp.gc.ca/research/demographics/communities/ex-demo-ccmd\\_e.htm](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 executive feeders.



## 3.0 Results

### 3.1 Career Plans

The *Survey of Managers and Professionals* enabled the measurement of 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 in the next three years. Table 3 illustrates the proportion of Natural Resources respondents who considered the proposed career goals a high priority (5-7 on a 7-point scale). NRCan respondents considered the following career goals their greatest priorities: attaining a higher level position (51%), participating in a development program (29%) and taking a special or acting position (28%). These career goals were also chosen by other respondents as their top three priorities, although they were more likely than NRCan respondents to consider a special or acting assignment a high priority (28% of NRCan respondents versus 44% of other respondents).

Table 3:  
Career Goals of NRCan Respondents

Career goals	Natural Resources respondents (N~124)
Attaining a higher level position	51%
Participating in a development program	29%
Taking a special or acting assignment	28%
Changing departments or agencies	24%
Taking up a different area of specialization	20%
Moving to another position at the same level as my current position	17%

#### 3.1.1 Executive Interest and Readiness

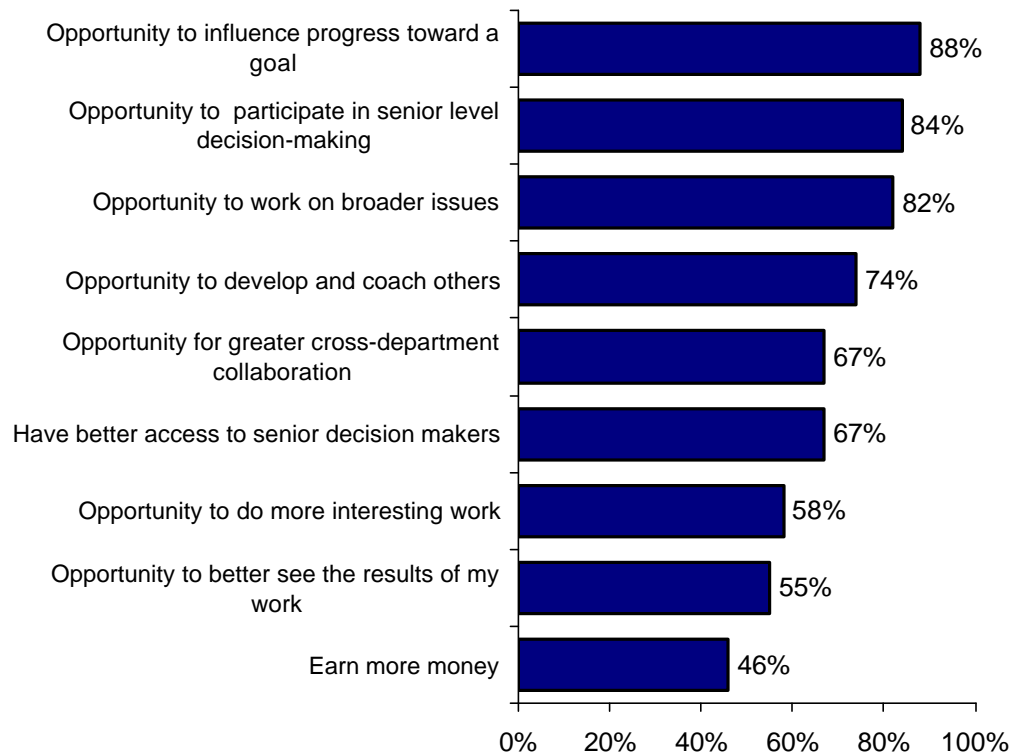
Executive succession planning requires insight into the degree of interest among ex-feeder groups in progressing to the executive level and readiness to assume a position at that level. Accordingly, respondents were asked to what extent they were interested in progressing to the executive level of the federal Public Service and if interested, how soon they thought they would be ready to work at that level given their current level and experience. More than half (56%) of Natural Resources respondents indicated they were somewhat or very interested in becoming an executive while 40% were not at all interested and 4% did not know. Their level of interest was lower than that of other respondents of whom 72% were interested in becoming an executive. Of the NRCan respondents who showed interest in progressing to the executive level, 46% thought they were ready now to assume such a position while 10% estimated they would be ready in more than five years. An equal percentage (10%) did not know when they would be ready to become an executive.

These lower levels of interest among NRCan respondents can have implications for executive succession, as the pool from which executives are selected is thereby limited. Understanding the reasons underlying the interest or disinterest of NRCan's managers and professionals in becoming executives is thus necessary to effectively recruit them in the executive ranks. The *Survey of Managers and Professionals* explored such issues.

### 3.1.2 Pursuing an Executive Career

In order to better understand the reasons for pursuing an executive career, survey participants were presented with a series of factors that might have influenced their interest in becoming an executive. Respondents were asked to rate each factor's influence on a scale of 1 to 7, that is from "not at all" to "a lot". Graph 3 illustrates the proportions of NRCan respondents who felt the proposed factors had highly influenced (5-7 on the 7-point scale) their interest in becoming an executive.

Graph 2:  
Reasons for Interest in Executive Career (N~69)



As with other survey participants, large proportions of NRCan respondents considered the following three factors as having highly influenced their decision to pursue an executive career: the opportunity to influence progress toward a goal (88%); the opportunity to participate in senior level decision-making (84%); and the opportunity to work on broader issues (82%). However, Natural Resources respondents differed from other survey participants when it came to salary. Compared to others, NRCan respondents were less likely to consider the higher earnings associated with an executive position as having influenced their decision to pursue an executive career (46% of NRCan respondents versus 65% of others). This may be explained by the fact that managers and professionals in the high ranks of certain occupational categories such as scientific research (SE)

can earn a higher salary than executives in entry-level positions.<sup>3</sup> In that case, some managers and professionals would experience a salary decrease when taking up executive positions.

When planning the succession of the executive core, the reasons for the lack of interest of managers and professionals in becoming executives are as important as the reasons for wanting to become executives. Survey respondents who indicated they were not interested in progressing to the executive level were then asked the extent to which certain factors had influenced their decision not to pursue an executive level position. 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 NRCan respondents, the top three factors for not pursuing an executive career were: my current job is interesting (93%); concerns with work-life balance (78%); and satisfaction with current level of responsibilities (73%). While these factors were also among the top three reasons of other respondents, NRCan respondents were more likely than others to feel their current job being interesting had highly influenced their decision not to pursue an executive career (93% of NRCan respondents versus 74% of others). Furthermore, Natural Resources respondents were less likely to mention the proximity of retirement as reasons for not wanting to become an executive (31% of NRCan respondents versus 48% of others). This finding is surprising since a similar percentage of NRCan respondents and other survey participants intend to retire within the next ten years. Lastly, Natural Resources respondents were twice as likely to believe that their current salary exceeding that of an EX 01 (22% of NRCan respondents versus 11% of others) had highly influenced their decision not to pursue an executive career. Again, close to half (45%) of NRCan respondents were from the scientific research (SE) occupational category and thus, could reach salaries surpassing those of entry-level executives.

Results from the Survey indicate that NRCan managers and professionals attribute great importance to a work that is interesting and to a certain degree, to salary. Executive succession strategies at Natural Resources should therefore emphasise both the qualitative nature of executive work and the opportunities for career and monetary rewards that the executive level render possible.

### **3.1.3 Retirement and Retention**

Despite being slightly older than other survey participants, a similar proportion of Natural Resources respondents intend to retire within the next ten years (50% of NRCan respondents versus 48% of others). However, retirement may not be the only reason for leaving the FPS. In proportions similar to other survey participants, 11% of NRCan respondents intend to leave the federal Public Service before retirement and 26% are uncertain of their intentions to stay. Of those NRCan respondents who intend to leave the FPS for reasons other than retirement, 21% intend to do so within three years, 14% within three to five years, 43% in five years or more and 21% do not know.

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<sup>3</sup> As of October 2002, the annual salary range for SE-RES-5 was \$88 374 to \$107 779. At that date, the annual salary range for EX-1 was \$84 700 to \$99 700. From Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, [http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pubs\\_pol/hrpubs/RatesofPay/RA97\\_e.asp](http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pubs_pol/hrpubs/RatesofPay/RA97_e.asp)

Respondents who intend to leave the federal Public Service were then asked to rate, on a scale of 1 to 7, that is from “not important at all” to “extremely important”, certain reasons for their intention to leave the federal Public Service. The stated percentages refer to the NRCan respondents who rated the proposed reasons as important (5-7 on a 7-point scale). Reasons for leaving the FPS include: to escape work frustrations (92%); to find a job more in keeping with their personal philosophy and values (86%); to get more recognition for good performance (79%); to find more meaningful work (64%); to obtain a better balance between work and personal life (57%); to make better use of their education, skills and abilities (57%); to increase opportunities for advancement (57%); and to earn more money (57%). Reasons such as escaping an excessive workload (43%), making a career change (36%), problems with co-workers (36%), increased opportunities for training (29%) and to take advantage of a good job market (21%) were important reasons for a minority of NRCan respondents. The small number of NRCan respondents (14) who intend to leave the public service for reasons other than retirement prevent us from making any comparisons with other survey participants.

## **3.2 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 careers to develop. Among NRCan respondents, the following skills needed the most improvement (5-7 on a 7-point scale): knowledge of working at the political level (48%); knowledge of their second official language (47%); policy development skills (46%); and leadership skills (41%). Compared to other survey participants, NRCan respondents were generally confident in their skills. In fact, they were less likely to believe they needed to improve their communication skills (24% of NRCan respondents versus 36% of others), further their formal education (11% of NRCan respondents versus 18% of others), improve their financial leadership skills (21% of NRCan respondents versus 37% of others) or improve their project management skills (26% of NRCan respondents versus 39% of others).

In order to better prepare the managers and professionals of Natural Resources who demonstrate an interest in becoming an executive, training opportunities should be directed at developing the skills needed to become an executive, specifically their knowledge of working at the political level, their knowledge of their second official language and their policy development skills.

**Table 4:  
Career Development Needs as Identified by  
Natural Resources Respondents**

Skill	Percentage of NRCan respondents (N=123)
Improve my knowledge of working at the political level	48%
Learn or improve my knowledge of my second official language	47%
Improve my policy development skills	46%
Improve my leadership skills	41%
Improve my time management skills	29%
Improve my project management skills	26%
Improve my ability to communicate my ideas easily	24%
Improve my financial leadership skills (e.g. budgeting)	21%
Learn more about career planning	21%
Learn more about providing services to clients	13%
Learn to use job-related software	12%
Further my formal education	11%

### 3.2.1 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, managers and professionals seeking an executive position are required to possess experience in key areas. 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 between 5 and 7 on the 7-point scale.

Natural Resources respondents were mostly experienced in the following areas: consulting and professional advisory services or providing advice and consultation across departments, governments, provinces, internationally, or across sectors (54%); line operations or managing a major operation with significant program deliverables (51%); and people management or supervision including staffing (46%).

However, compared to respondents from other departments, NRCan respondents were less likely to have the core experience factors needed to progress to the executive level. In fact, lower percentages of NRCan respondents had a high degree of experience in the following areas: people management (46% of NRCan respondents versus 59% of others); exposure to the political level (26% of NRCan respondents versus 38% of others); policy development (22% of NRCan respondents versus 37% of others); and central or corporate services (20% of NRCan respondents versus 35% of others).

Their comparative lack of experience in certain areas is expected given the scientific nature of their work. Moreover, a majority of NRCan respondents (61%) never worked for a department other than Natural Resources. This lack of generalised experience may doubly challenge Natural Resources respondents wishing to become executives, as they are concentrated in occupational groups from which executives are not traditionally drawn. In order to ensure that Natural Resources managers and professionals can advance to the executive level on an equal footing, efforts should be directed at providing the opportunities to acquire the core experience factors required for executive positions.

**Table 5:  
Areas of Experience of Natural Resources Respondents**

Areas of Experience	Percentage of NRCan Respondents (n~124)
Consulting and professional advisory services	54%
Line operations	51%
People management or supervision	46%
Exposure to the political level	26%
Regional operations	24%
Policy development	22%
Central or corporate services	20%

### 3.2.2 Language Profile

Being proficient in both official languages is a requirement for executive positions. As such, the language profile of managers and professionals who wish to progress to the executive level must be at least CBC.<sup>4</sup> In rates similar to survey participants from other departments, more than a third (35%) of Natural Resources respondents were bilingual at the CBC level or above and 23% had a language profile below the CBC level. The remainder (42%) had not been tested at the time of the survey.

Interestingly, among NRCan respondents who had been tested, only a third (33%) of those who indicated being bilingual at the CBC level or above had taken language courses in the federal Public Service compared to 76% of those whose language profile was below the CBC level. The language proficiency of those bilingual at the CBC level or above was thus mostly acquired outside the FPS.

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<sup>4</sup> 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 an “A” representing a more rudimentary competency than a “C”.

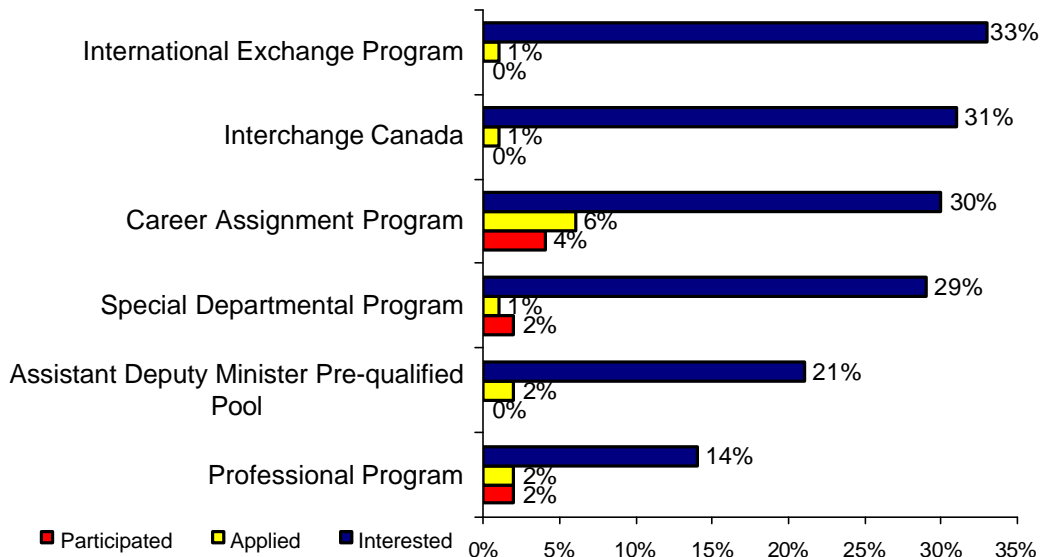
### 3.2.3 Development Programs

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 FPS employees who wish to develop their skills and abilities and acquire experience in various areas. 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. As such, 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 degree of interest (5-7 on a 7-point scale).

Natural Resources respondents were fairly interested in the career development programs offered by the federal Public Service. NRCan respondents were mostly interested in the following development programs: the International Exchange Program (33%), Interchange Canada (31%), the Career Assignment Program (30%) and Special Departmental Programs (29%). Other programs such as the Assistant Deputy Minister Pre-qualified Pool (21%) and Professional Programs (14%) received less interest. These levels of interest among NRCan respondents were similar to those of other respondents, with the exception of the International Exchange Program, in which NRCan respondents (33%) were less interested compared to other survey participants (44%).

Considering the interest expressed toward development programs, one would expect to find equal rates of application or participation in these programs. However, very few survey participants including those from Natural Resources applied or participated in the development programs mentioned above. Still, the Career Assignment Program received reasonably high application and participation rates (6% and 4%, respectively) given the calibre of the program and the career advancement it usually brings. However, considering 58% of NRCan respondents expressed some interest in becoming an executive but many lack the essential experience, training or skills needed to progress to the executive level, promoting the potential of development programs such as the Career Assignment Program should be stressed.

**Graph 3:  
Development Programs and Natural Resources Respondents (N~124)**



### 3.2.4 Development Barriers

In order to better understand 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 limited their participation in the federal Public Service’s development programs. The reported percentages refer to the respondents who felt the conditions had considerably limited their participation (5 to 7 on a 7-point scale). Among Natural Resources Respondents, the most frequently cited barrier was lack of time, which was mentioned by 65% of them. While lack of time also posed the greatest limit to the participation of other survey participants (48%), NRCan respondents were significantly more likely to feel it had prevented them from participating in the development programs. The issue of lack of time is worthy of investigation, as it might negatively impact the career development of NRCan managers and professionals, or even their job satisfaction and retention. Again, 93% of NRCan respondents who intended to leave the FPS before retirement plan to do so to escape work frustrations.

Other barriers to the participation of NRCan respondents included: unawareness of the eligibility criteria (44%); relocation requirements (41%); unawareness of where to obtain information (40%); thinking the development programs would not lead to greater advancement opportunities (37%); and insufficient support from management (25%). These responses were similar to those of other respondents, with the exception of insufficient support from management, which was a limiting factor for a larger percentage of other survey participants (35%).

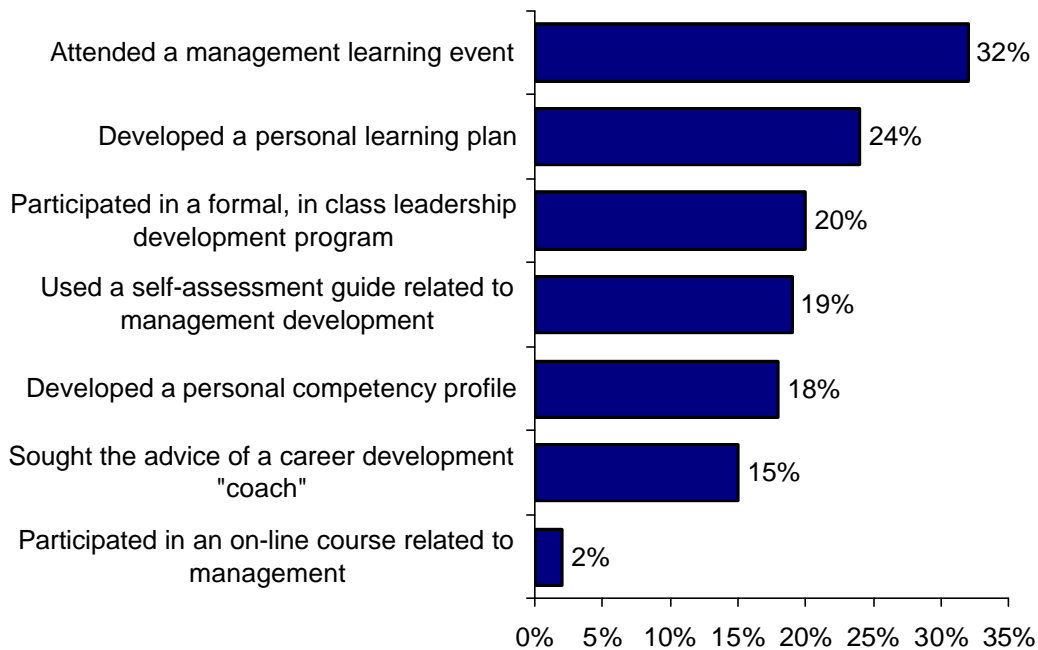
In sum, to fully take advantage of the federal Public Services’ development programs, managers and professionals need to be informed of their career development opportunities, whether it be the eligibility criteria of the programs or the career advancement that might result from participating in such programs. Clearly, improving communications is less challenging than other issues identified.



### 3.2.5 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 NRCan respondents were not currently using or had never used the learning methods stated. In fact, many respondents were unfamiliar with the proposed activities. The most popular learning activities were attending a management learning event or developing a personal learning plan, which were undertaken by respectively 32% and 24% of NRCan respondents. Graph 4 depicts the responses of Natural Resources respondents.

Graph 4:  
Natural Resources Respondents' Participation in  
Selected Learning Activities (N~124)



In most cases, Natural Resources respondents were less likely than other survey participants to have undertaken a learning activity. In fact, smaller proportions of Natural Resources respondents had used a self-assessment guide related to management development (19% of NRCan respondents versus 29% of others), had developed a personal learning plan (24% of NRCan respondents versus 39% of others), had developed a personal competency profile (18% of NRCan respondents versus 31% of others), or had sought the advice of a career development “coach” (15% of NRCan versus 24% of others). As was mentioned above, Natural Resources managers and professionals are disadvantaged in terms of the specific experience and the skills needed to progress to the executive level. It is therefore important for Natural Resources to share information with employees on the various learning activities available and to encourage participation as a way to advance one’s career.

## 4.0 Conclusion

The *Survey of Managers and Professionals'* objective was to obtain information on middle managers and senior professionals of the federal Public Service in order to inform succession planning in the FPS. In the same manner, this report aimed at providing planning information for Natural Resources Canada as it explored the demographic profile, career goals, interest in becoming an executive, retirement and retention, skills and career development of its managers and professionals. The report revealed the challenges facing Natural Resources managers and professionals interested in progressing to the executive level. It was found that Natural Resources respondents were concentrated in occupational categories from which executives were not traditionally drawn, and possessed comparatively less experience in fields required for executive positions.

The demographic profile of Natural Resources respondents differed from that of other survey participants. The survey revealed women were considerably under-represented among NRCan respondents (19% of NRCan respondents versus 37% of others) although this result is not unexpected as a large majority of NRCan respondents are from traditionally male-dominated occupational categories. Nonetheless, efforts to recruit women should be intensified, not only at the executive-feeder levels, but also below the feeder groups.

As with other survey participants, attaining a higher level position was a high priority for about half of NRCan respondents. However, compared to respondents from other departments, NRCan respondents were less interested in becoming executives. Most reasons cited by NRCan respondents for pursuing an executive position or not pursuing an executive position were similar to those of other respondents. However, an interesting finding surrounded the issue of salary. Compared to other survey participants, NRCan respondents were less likely to consider "salary" an influential factor in their decision to pursue an executive career. On the other hand, a larger proportion of NRCan respondents cited the fact that their current salary exceeds that of an EX 01 level position and that it had highly influenced their decision not to become an executive. The fact that senior professionals in certain occupational categories such as scientific research (SE) can earn a higher salary than an executive in an entry-level position might explain this pattern of response among NRCan respondents.

Still, 58% of NRCan respondents showed some interest in progressing to the executive level and nearly half of those interested (46%) estimated that, given their level and experience, they would be ready now to assume an executive position. Natural Resources respondents' self-evaluation of their readiness to assume a position at the executive level was however put in perspective with further analysis of survey results. While NRCan respondents generally felt a lesser need to improve certain skills for their careers to advance compared to others, their actual experience was relatively limited. As executive successors are required to possess extensive experience in certain fields, the middle managers and senior professionals of Natural Resources might not have equal access to executive positions.

Ultimately, Natural Resources middle managers and senior professionals face a comparative challenge in terms of their access to executive positions. Firstly, many of them belong to occupational categories from which executives are not traditionally drawn. Secondly, the nature of their work does not provide them with the experience and skills needed to progress to the executive

level. Their low levels of application and participation in career development programs or learning activities add to the challenge. Providing opportunities for experience and career development are thus essential to ensure that Natural Resources managers and professionals can progress to the executive level, but might not be sufficient. More importantly, managers and professionals need to be informed of such opportunities and of the career advancement they render possible.