

The Early Years Professional Development Web Portal Pilot Project

2016-2019



Final Report

Prepared by Kathreen Riel

This report summarizes a three-year project led by BCcampus and sponsored by the Ministry of Advanced Education and the Provincial Office for the Early Years in the Ministry of Children and Family Development.



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Executive Summary

From 2016–19, BCcampus led a project to host, develop, and evaluate a professional development web portal to improve access to and coordination of ongoing training opportunities for early years professionals in British Columbia. This report describes the planning and development approaches we followed to conceptualize, design, build, maintain and evaluate the Early Years Professional Development (EYPD) web portal.

The development of the EYPD web portal was based on a collaborative planning and design approach that brought together leaders from various early years service systems to form an advisory group. These leaders explored ideas, reviewed, and promoted a web portal that would support professional capacity among those working in the early years sector. The advisory group met several times over three years to create and assess measures of success for the project, which were categorized into three themes: people, product, and process. These three themes guided the evaluation of uptake, reach, and engagement patterns of the EYPD web portal by the target audience, and they conveyed the extent to which measures of success were realized.

Uptake, Reach, and Engagement

The EYPD web portal analytics indicate significant uptake, reach, and engagement from Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRR) agencies. However, there was limited uptake, reach, and engagement by other service systems in the early years sector. Of the 1,144 training events advertised on the EYPD web portal in 2017 and 2018, 90% were posted by training coordinators working in CCRR agencies. There was limited uptake by other service systems such as health, child, and family support agencies as evidenced by their lower numbers of training events posted on the EYPD web portal.

The EYPD web portal data shows that geographic reach of the EYPD project was achieved, as evidence confirmed that populations in both urban centres and remote or rural regions visited the EYPD web portal. However, reach to a wide variety of service systems was also not realized. Those who registered for an account on the EYPD web portal self-identified as working as an early childhood educator or an early care provider. Other service systems such as health, child and family support, and those living in and working for Aboriginal communities had limited representation as registered users on the EYPD web portal.

The data suggests that engagement with a wide range of service systems in the early years sector was also limited. “Engagement” for this project was defined as visitors who signed up for an account and returned to use the functions as registered users on the EYPD web portal in 2017–18. Although the EYPD web portal provided open access to search for training events without registering for an account, there were two types accounts that gave visitors access to more functions on the web portal. Visitors had the option of signing up for an Organizer account or a Learner account.

The Organizer account provided access to post and edit training events. Organizer accounts were available to publicly funded organizations in B.C. The Learner account provided access to a record-management page called myEYPD within the EYPD web portal. Those who signed up for a Learner account could save training events that they were interested in attending on the myEYPD page,

calculate the professional development hours they were collecting over time, track the expiry date of their professional certificate, and refine their search for training events based on professional interests.

Of the 128 people who signed up for an Organizer account in 2017–18, 57% posted training events on the EYPD web portal. Of the 231 people who signed up as a Learner on the EYPD web portal, 25% returned to the web portal and logged in again or used the record-management features of the myEYPD page.

Recommendations for the Future

The early years sector in British Columbia is complex, with many different service systems funded, administered, and regulated by different provincial ministries. These service systems have distinct processes to support those seeking ongoing professional learning opportunities. To increase user uptake, reach, and engagement of the EYPD web portal, the recommendations take into consideration the diverse contextual needs of each early years service system, self and social perceptions of early years professionals, and the effects of evolving government policies.

1. Improve Coordination Between EYPD Web Portal and Provincial ECE Registry

This report suggests that more integration of EYPD web portal features and functions with provincial validation systems, such as the ECE Registry, is needed. Recommendations from users of the EYPD web portal also suggest functionality that would allow registered Learners to build a professional portfolio based on newly developed provincial policies may increase continued engagement with those who sign up for an account on the EYPD web portal.

2. Create Stronger Connections Between the EYPD Web Portal and the Revised Early Learning Framework

The EYPD advisory group recommends that future iterations of the EYPD web portal offer search terms and professional interests filters that align more closely with the revised British Columbia Early Learning Framework (ELF). The forum feature on the EYPD web portal may also be an effective tool to implement the Early Learning Framework's recommended pedagogical narration practice.

3. Continue Working Within the Collaborative Leadership Framework

While “one-stop shop” was a prominent expression used to describe the potential of the EYPD web portal, the analytics indicate that the portal did not become a first choice resource for all early years professionals, particularly for those not working in early care and learning systems. Continued dialogue with Aboriginal communities and agencies outside of early care and learning may be required to ensure broader use of the EYPD web portal.

4. Establish Stronger Connections with Post-Secondary Institutions

Establishing partnerships with post-secondary institutions that educate early years professionals could expose the EYPD web portal to students and provide continuous support throughout all stages of an early years professional's career.

5. Explore What Motivates Early Years Professionals to Engage in Professional Development

This report suggests that projects such as this one, which aim to support early learning professionals, should be evaluated through the lens of historical, political, and social factors that potentially influence how and why professionals in the early years sector seek to continue their learning. During this pilot phase of the EYPD project, other multiple workforce policies and initiatives were also initiated

(<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2018CFD0057-001707>) and included wage enhancements as well as practical support, such as on-site professional development for the early years sector. To what extent do these government-led strategies influence uptake, reach, and engagement of the EYPD web portal? While the EYPD web portal provides easier access to and coordination of ongoing professional development, there may be other prevalent social and political factors that also influence early years professionals to seek out learning opportunities on the EYPD web portal.

Background Information

From 2015–19, the Provincial Office for the Early Years (POE) collaborated with BCcampus to identify and respond to training needs of professionals working in the early years sector in B.C. This project was an initiative born out of the B.C. Early Years Strategy launched in 2013. This strategy's aim was to improve access to professional development opportunities for those who work in the early years sector.

In 2015, BCcampus conducted research on behalf of the POE to better understand the early years professional learning context in B.C. and make recommendations on how to support early years professionals' engagement with ongoing learning opportunities. The findings from this research were published in two B.C. early years professional development reports (see Appendix B). *Professional Learning in the Early Years Sector: An Environmental Scan of Professional Development Opportunities in 2015* described emerging trends and potential opportunities for professional development among people who work with children aged 0–12. The second report, *An Analysis of Business Models Used by Professional Development Training Providers in 2015*, revealed insights into the distinct circumstances faced by coordinators, directors, researchers, and trainers who organize, promote, and deliver learning opportunities to early years professionals and practitioners working in diverse communities throughout the province.



Figure 1: Early Years Environmental Scan of Professional Learning Opportunities in 2015



Figure 2: An Analysis of Business Models Used by Professional Development Trainers in 2015

Evidence from both reports suggested that there were substantial training opportunities for early years professionals; however, interviews with agency training coordinators uncovered a need for a centralized coordinated process to easily identify available training events across service systems in various regions around B.C. As one CCRR coordinator in the Interior Region noted in the *Early Years Environmental Scan*:

“It’s like you’re hunting for information constantly. Even our coalition coordinator—she is researching and trying to find presenters and what’s new and what’s happening.”¹

Following these two reports, BCcampus published *The Early Years Professional Development Web Solution Proposal*, (seem Appendix B) which recommended web portal designs and functions to consolidate all professional development and training resources related to the early years sector in a centralized online environment.

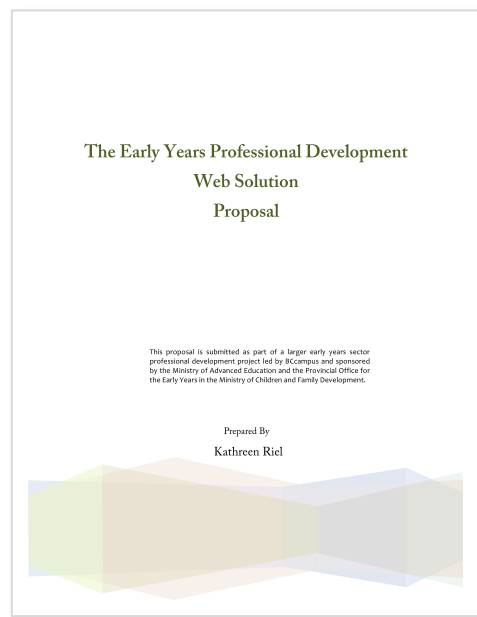


Figure 3: *The Early Years Professional Development Web Solution Proposal*

In 2016, in response to this proposal, the POE sponsored a new pilot project called The Early Years Professional Development Web Portal Pilot Project in collaboration with BCcampus. The purpose of this project was to support the B.C. Early Years Strategy to promote quality by hosting, developing, and evaluating a professional development web portal for early years sector professionals in B.C. over three years.

¹ Kathreen Riel, *Professional Learning In The Early Years Sector, An Environmental Scan of Professional Development Opportunities in 2015*, 24, <https://urls.bccampus.ca/61i>

In July 2016, a project charter was ratified to guide the direction and focus of the Early Years Professional Development (EYPD) Web Portal Pilot Project. The project charter included the following goals.

Year one goals:

- To support training providers in the promotion of professional development opportunities for adult learners in the early years sector
- To increase access to and engagement with professional development opportunities and resources for adult learners in the early years sector

Year two and three goals:

- To support training providers in the coordination and promotion of professional development opportunities for adult learners in the early years sector
- To increase awareness of and engagement with professional development opportunities and resources for adult learners in the early years sector
- To develop refinements and functions informed by evidence collected from sector stakeholders.

These goals guided the planning, web development, promotional activities, and priorities that would shape the design and direction of the EYPD web portal over the next three years.

On January 9, 2017, the EYPD web portal at earlyyearsbc.ca was publicly launched. For the next two years BCcampus monitored the uptake, reach, and engagement of the EYPD web portal by early years professionals throughout B.C. Web portal analytics, direction from the project advisory group, and feedback from sector stakeholders informed the continued development of various functions of EYPD web portal.

How Did We Co-create a Web Portal?

The BCcampus Collaborative Design Process

As Figure 4 below illustrates, the development of the EYPD web portal was based on a planning and design approach that brought together leaders from various service systems within the early years sector. These leaders worked together to explore ideas, create a plan, scan the sector's needs and then frame, build, and review a web portal that would support professional capacity for those working in the early years sector.



Figure 4: The BCcampus collaborative projects design cycle

BCcampus' role in the EYPD project was one of convener. BCcampus helped the POE define a vision, clarify ideas, and communicate priorities and progress. A project advisory group was also created comprised of leaders representing federal, provincial, and regional organizations and businesses working in the B.C. early years sector.

The neutral role of convener afforded BCcampus opportunities to facilitate discussion and planning sessions so that the project advisory group could exchange expertise, knowledge, and experiences in order to guide all stages of the project cycle and its deliverables. As Figure 5 shows below, BCcampus also endeavoured to follow five collaborative leadership principles while working with the POE; the advisory group; and an internal team of web designers, developers, and content creators throughout the duration of the EYPD project.

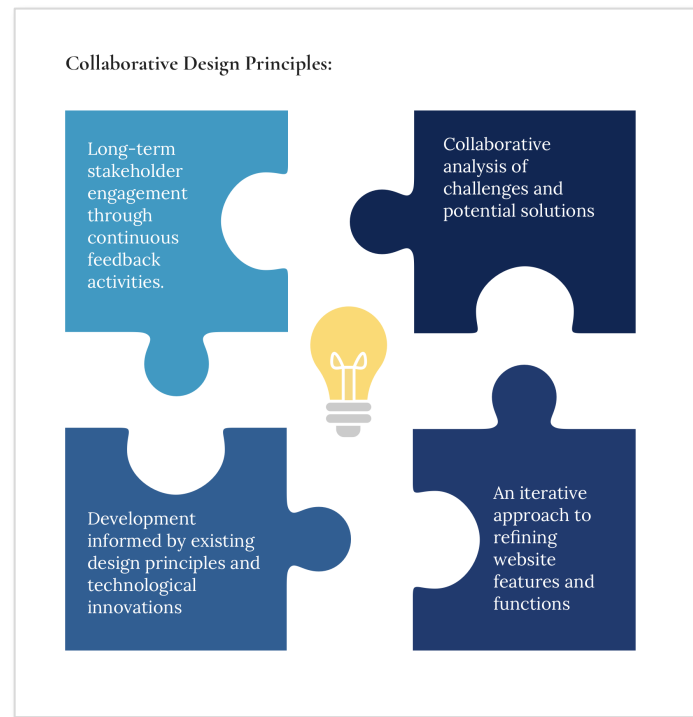


Figure 5: Collaborative design principles used in the EYPD project

Distilling ideas and feedback from multiple groups of people, including the advisory group, the POE, internal staff, and the people who used the EYPD web portal was a challenging process that required frequent reviews of the initial project vision and goals. It also required ongoing explorations and discussions about subjective or contextual perceptions associated with professional development. Diverse perspectives were evident during discussions about what it means to participate in high quality professional development; the multiple barriers to ongoing training; and the economic, personal, and social factors that may build professional capacity in the early years sector. Reflecting upon, summarizing, and communicating these common themes of understanding from multiple groups of people helped to prioritize the development the EYPD web portal features and functions.

Once the EYPD project advisory group was established, the collaborative leadership principles, as shown in Figure 6 below, influenced the way in which the EYPD web portal was conceptualized, developed, and revised over the next two years. BCcampus used various modes of communication to put collaborative leadership principles into practice. An EYPD project wiki was created so that the project advisory group and BCcampus staff could observe and respond to the project’s progress. BCcampus also communicated project updates and EYPD web portal analytics through public blog posts, infographics, Facebook updates, journal and newsletter articles, and conference presentations. These communication activities aimed to support the ongoing engagement with the advisory group as well as current and prospective users of the EYPD web portal.



Figure 6: Collaborative leadership principles used in the EYPD project

The Role of the EYPD Advisory Group

The EYPD advisory group played a significant role in working on the vision, priorities, and community uptake of the EYPD web portal. This advisory group was comprised of representatives from several sectors including government ministries, non-profit agencies, business, Aboriginal organizations, and academic institutions (see Appendix A). Their professional roles also represented a broad spectrum of responsibilities; some members were directly responsible for delivering training and others worked in a management capacity.

The advisory group membership changed as the project progressed and as emerging needs and priorities were identified, and new members were invited to join throughout the project's three-year cycle. The EYPD advisory group met in person two to three times a year throughout each phase of the project. The members of the EYPD advisory group were asked to commit at least twelve months to the project. Meetings were structured to brainstorm a wide spectrum of ideas and assess and prioritize strategies, including:

- Developing the EYPD brand, such as:
 - The name of the site
 - The qualifying statement, Explore, Learn, Grow
 - The look and feel of the homepage to ensure a simplicity in design
- Defining user roles on the web portal, such as:
 - Organizer: a registered user who posts and edits events
 - Learner: a registered user who views, saves, and tracks events on the myEYPD page
 - Visitor: anyone who visits the web portal can search for events without registering for an account
- Creating a myEYPD page, which was a place on the EYPD web portal for registered users to save and keep track of their training event selections

The Measures of Success

During the first meeting in September 2016, the EYPD advisory group articulated their purpose, which was to inform and support the development and promotion of the EYPD web portal through the following responsibilities:

- To endeavour to provide objective and evidence-based advice and feedback that informs the goals of the project
- To act in the best interests of all stakeholders
- To dedicate sufficient time to make a meaningful contribution to the progress of the project

During the first meeting EYPD advisory group members were asked to envision the future by answering the following question:

What would you like to be able to say to describe this project's success?

This question elicited responses that were categorized into three common themes for the project: the people, the product, and the process (as Figure 7 shows below). The advisory group reviewed these measures of success annually, and they guided the technical, promotional, and evaluation activities of the EYPD project throughout the three-year term.

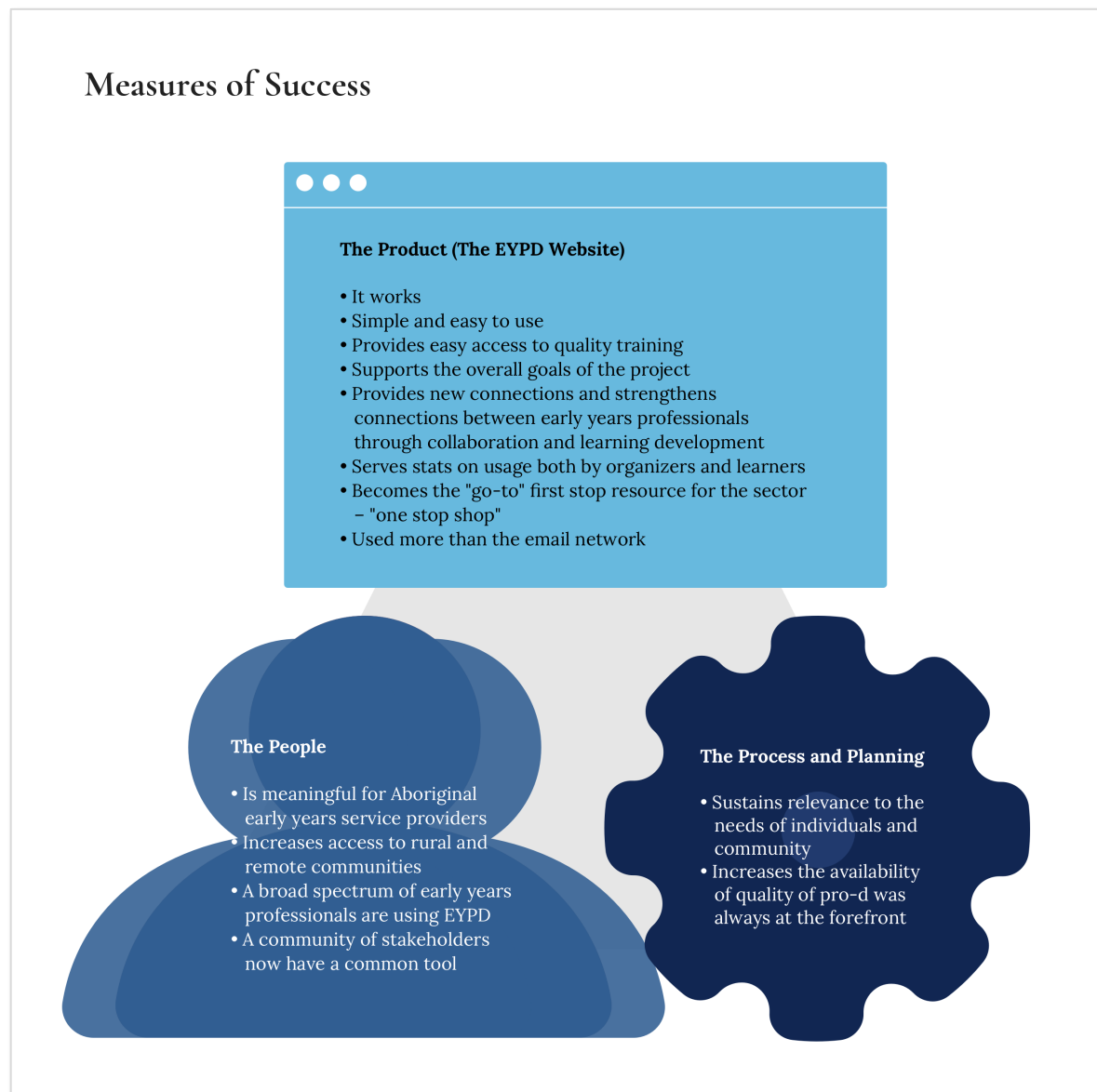


Figure 7: Measures of success articulated by the EYPD project advisory group

The Features and Functions of the EYPD Web Portal

There were 449 designs and functions created for the EYPD web portal over three years. All the code and associated documentation was drafted, revised, and stored on [GitHub](https://github.com/BCcampus/eypd) (<https://github.com/BCcampus/eypd>), which is a free and open online code repository that allows web developers to save, track, and share computer code. Features and functions of the EYPD web portal were created through iterative cycles of development called sprints. These sprint sessions were a defined period of time, usually one to three weeks, in which web developers, support staff, and the EYPD project manager devoted their time exclusively to producing, refining, and testing designs and functions of the EYPD web portal.

Development of the EYPD web portal took place in three phases, as illustrated in Figure 8 below. The first phase focused on designing a unique brand and quickly developing a web portal from concept to launch in six months. The EYPD web portal emphasized basic and easy-to-use functionality for training event coordinators to sign up on the portal in a role called Organizers. Visitors who signed up as Organizers could then post and edit an unlimited number of training events on the EYPD web portal. The second and third phases of the project were dedicated to creating and refining the myEYPD page and engaging potential users to sign up as Learners to save selected training events and use other record-management tools on the myEYPD page.

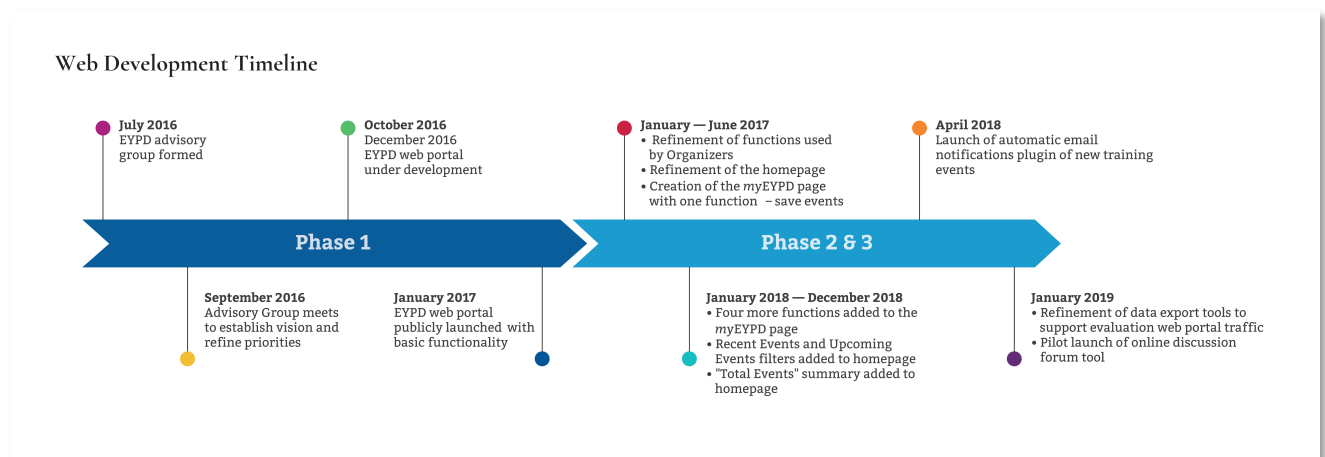


Figure 8: Web development timeline phases of the EYPD web portal

The Promotion of the EYPD Web Portal

Given that the EYPD project was based on a collaborative design process, which included iterative cycles of development that relied on user input, the promotion of the web portal was synchronized with those opportunities to also collect feedback. Promotional activities included participation in face-to-face and online presentations, hosting information tables at conferences, publishing a quarterly EYPD newsletter, and contributing articles about the project to journals distributed to early years sector professionals. Figure 9 illustrates the three major promotional activities. The links to these promotional assets can found in Appendix B. These promotional initiatives were planned and prioritized by the EYPD advisory group and the POE.

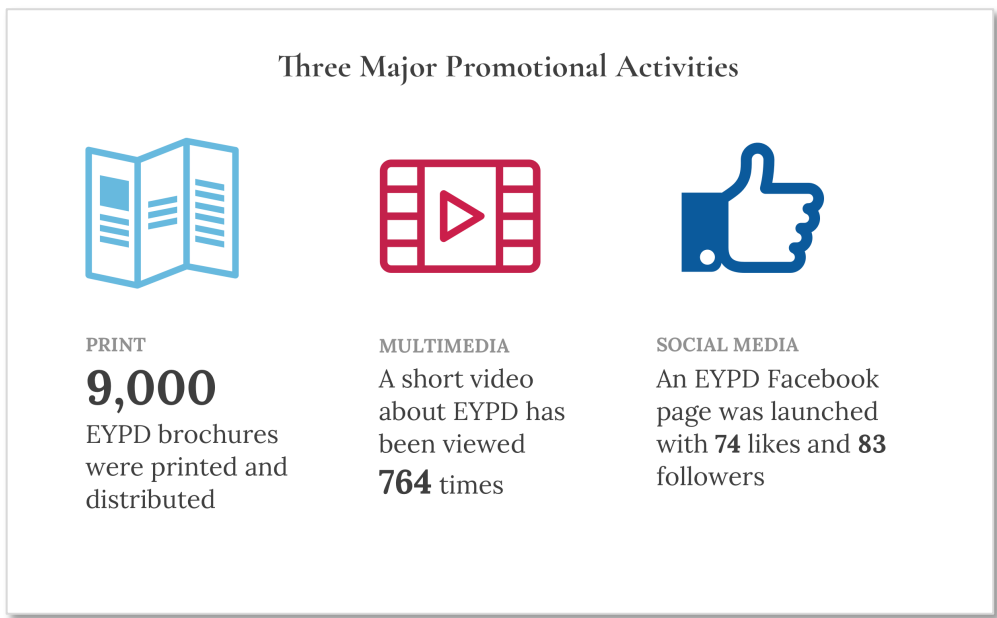
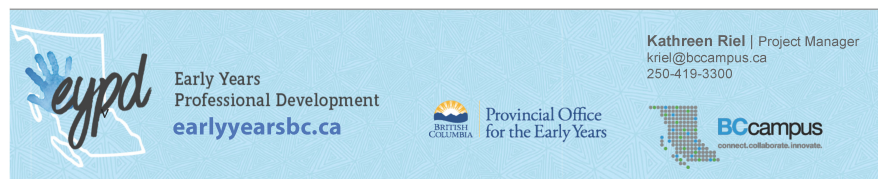


Figure 9: Three major promotional activities

How Did We Measure Our Progress?

The features and functions of the EYPD web portal were developed in stages based on feedback we received from various early years organizations and professionals. We received input from early years professionals by inviting comments and questions during presentations, by gathering feedback from email support inquiries, and by collecting information during user-testing sessions of the web portal.

When giving presentations, we asked the audience to fill out idea forms. Eliciting this immediate feedback helped us to identify the contextual needs of early years professionals, and this feedback was the catalyst for the concept of the myEYPD page, the record-management page for users who signed up for a Learner account on the EYPD web portal.



The Early Years Professional Development Web Portal Pilot Project aims to support the BC Early Years Strategy to promote quality, by hosting, developing and evaluating a professional development web portal for early years sector professionals in British Columbia.






Functions & Features	Elements	 Ideas 	 Questions 
 Post Training Events	Content		
	Layout/Design		
	Ease of Use		
	Overall		
 Save and Calculate Hours for Training Events	Content		
	Layout/Design		
	Ease of Use		
	Overall		
 Search for Training Events	Content		
	Layout/Design		
	Ease of Use		
	Overall		

Figure 10: EYPD audience feedback form

We also gathered feedback from early years professionals by hosting EYPD display tables at several conferences. This provided opportunities to converse with a variety of early years professionals and gain insight about their challenges of keeping informed and staying engaged with professional learning.

Online user testing, and email inquiries also provided user feedback that guided the development and refinement of the EYPD homepage, the record-management tools on the myEYPD page, and the administration tools to evaluate engagement patterns with Learners and Organizers using the EYPD web portal.

User testing provided opportunities to test our assumptions about the ease of navigating the EYPD web portal and allowed us to observe how easily users were able to use its various functions and features. Two books by Steve Krug guided the structure of the user testing: *Rocket Surgery Made Easy* and *Don't Make Me Think*. These books provided guidance in designing the user-testing questions (see Appendix C) and helped us determine how to select candidates to interview and how to effectively observe user interactions with the EYPD web portal. The user testing was conducted in person and online using video-conferencing software. We completed user testing after the release of the EYPD web portal in January 2017 and after the launch of the myEYPD page in June 2017. Feedback from these user-testing sessions helped to guide the design and placement of functions throughout the web portal, particularly with myEYPD page.

The development of the EYPD web portal was also guided by the email inquiries we received. When we identified patterns in the support required by users, we were able to make changes to various pages on the EYPD web portal to enhance the user experience. Figure 11 below shows the most common types of inquiries that we received.

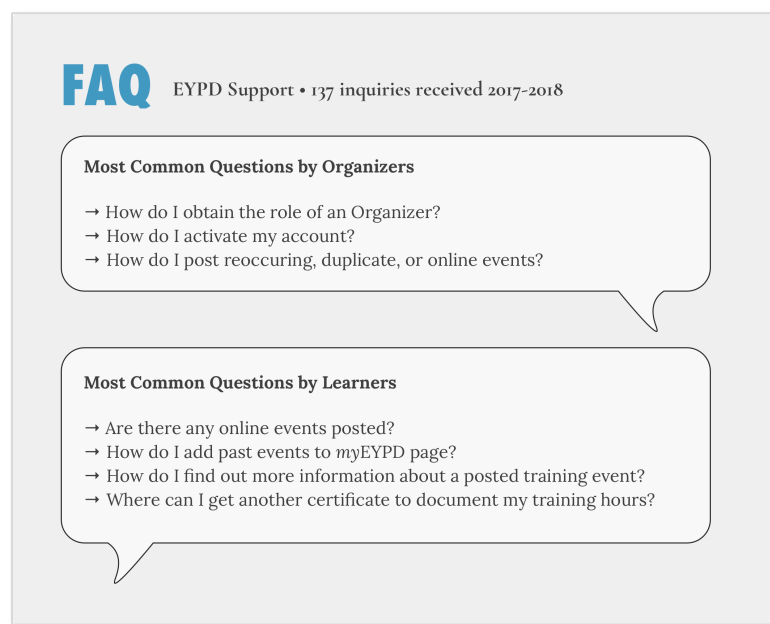


Figure 11: Most common email questions asked about the EYPD web portal

What Have We Learned?

The Uptake of the EYPD Web Portal

This report defines “uptake” as the use of the EYPD web portal by all visitors, whether or not they had an account. We measured uptake based on the patterns identified in the analytics program that tracks visits to the EYPD web portal, the location of those who visited the portal, and the number of people who signed up for an account as either an Organizer to post training events or as a Learner to view and keep track of events.

Intended and Actual Uptake

To guide our interpretation of uptake, we sought to answer the following questions:

- Who is the target audience?
- Who does the web portal actually serve?
- Which communities or service systems did not use EYPD web portal?
- What factors may have influenced the disparity between the target and actual audience?

Who Was The Target Audience?

One of the measures of success defined by the EYPD advisory group was that the EYPD web portal would be one centralized online environment for early years professionals seeking learning opportunities in B.C. The early years sector includes a variety of agencies and organizations representing health, mental health, child and family support, out-of-school child care, Aboriginal organizations and communities, as well as early care and learning. In order to provide a portal in which training events from many different agencies or communities could be posted, the EYPD web portal was built according to a crowdsourcing model. This model relies on registered users to populate the portal with training event content. The content was posted by a group of people (the crowd) whose agencies were pre-approved by the EYPD advisory group. To be granted access to post training events, people were required to represent agencies that operated with community, regional, provincial, or federal public funds. By relying on this crowdsourcing model, the viability of the EYPD web portal depended on people who organize and sponsor training events throughout B.C. to post these events on the EYPD web portal.

To initiate this engagement, training coordinators from around the B.C., and particularly from CCRRs, were asked to sign up for an Organizer account and populate the EYPD web portal with training events shortly after the launch of the EYPD web portal in January 2017. To facilitate the publishing of training events, the EYPD web portal included an automated registration function that provided 155 publicly funded agencies throughout B.C. with immediate access to an Organizer account.

The EYPD web portal was built to maximize easy access for people looking for training events around the province. Visitors without an account could visit the EYPD web portal and search for events by keywords or categories, or browse a geographical map to find training events. As Figure 12 illustrates below, this open access to view training events may have influenced the initial uptake of the EYPD web portal, which showed promising trends among training coordinators posting events and general visits to the portal.

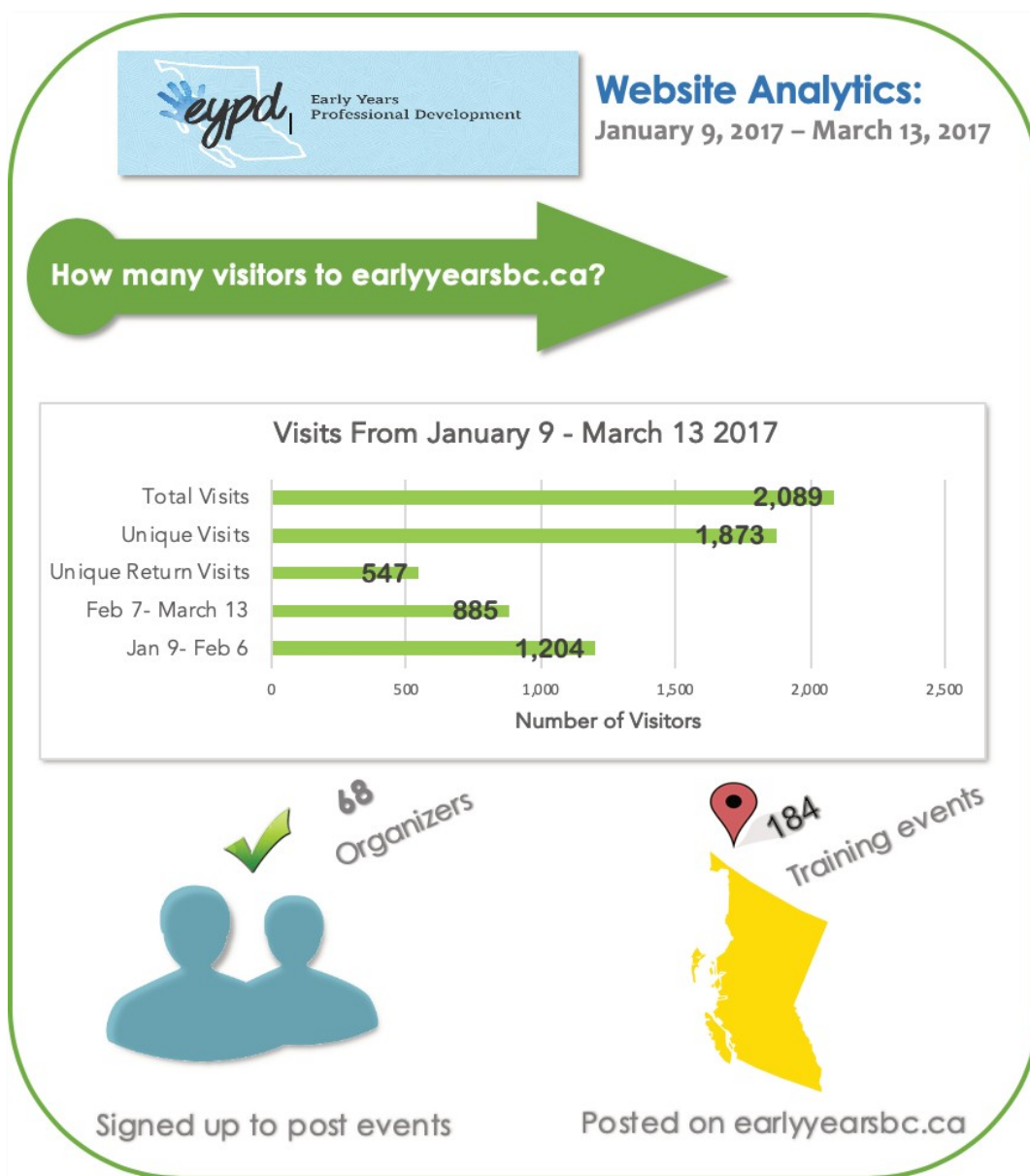


Figure 12: EYPD uptake analytics for first three months

Who Did the EYPD Web Portal Actually Serve?

A closer analysis of who signed up as an Organizer in the first three months after the EYPD web portal was launched, indicates that 61% of the Organizers who posted training events worked predominantly in the early care and learning service system.

Table 1 below illustrates that most Organizer accounts were created by people working for CCRRs, early care and learning agencies (such as the Early Childhood Educators of British Columbia), Success by 6 programs (which were citizen engagement programs for child and family friendly communities), and early years centres that offered a ranged of services and referrals for families.

Service System	Number of Organizer Accounts on EYPD
CCRR	44
Child Support	16
Family Support	3
Health/Mental Health	12
Post -Secondary Institutions	11
Aboriginal Agencies/Communities	8
Early Care and Learning Agencies	7
Community Associations	5
Early Years Centres	4
Public School District	4
Gov't or Provincial Org.	3
Out of School Agencies	3

Table 1: Registered organizers by service system on EYPD web portal

Data showed that 96% percent of those who signed up as Learners identified their place of work in the early care and learning service system. In a review of the 1,144 training events posted in 2017 and 2018 on the EYPD web portal, 90% were published by agencies that predominantly support early care and learning professionals.

Data indicates that 53% of those who signed up for an Organizer account on EYPD did so within three months of the EYPD web portal launch in January 2017. After that time, there was a slight increase in people who signed up as Organizers during the months of May and June of 2017 and during the same timeframe in 2018 (see Figure 13). Registration rates for those who signed up as Learners followed a similar trend to Organizers with the highest sign-up rates in January of 2017 and 2018 as well as June and October in the subsequent two years (see Figure 14).



Figure 13: EYPD Organizer sign-up trends 2017–18

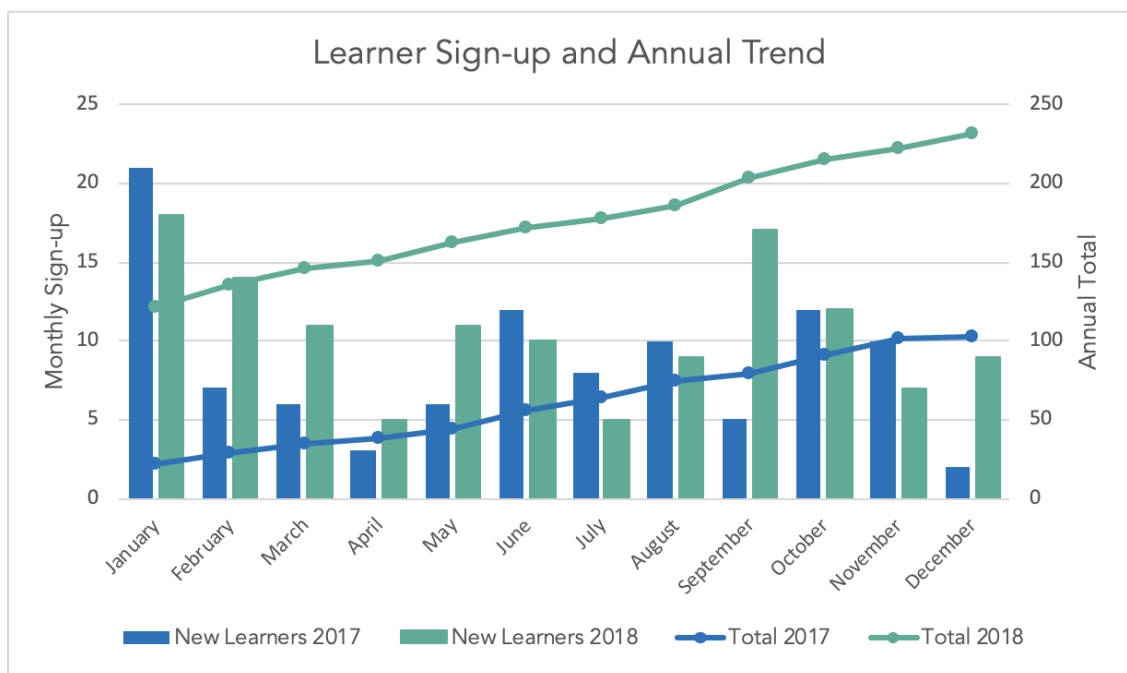


Figure 14: EYPD Learner sign-up trends 2017–18

Which Communities or Service Systems Did Not Use EYPD?

There were very few training events posted by people who work in and on behalf of Aboriginal communities. Many programs offered by and for those communities are often sponsored and targeted for specific audiences and not open to public registration. Some communities may also have established systems in place that help to promote training events as one advisory group member noted:

“When we do a training event in a specific region, we use community engagement coordinators from that region to send out advertisements to people in the area. We get them to send out the information that is required.”²

EYPD Advisory Group Member

Eighty-four training events were posted and categorized as training for those working with children with extra support needs but many of those training events were hosted by CCRRs. Agencies such as child development centres that support professionals who work with children with extra support needs had limited activity in posting training events on the EYPD web portal. Four people from child development centres in B.C., signed up as Organizers to post on the EYPD web portal.

What Factors May Have Influenced the Disparity Between the Target and Actual Audience?

Several factors may have influenced uptake patterns of the EYPD web portal. Professionals in the early child education field working in licensed facilities are required to participate in ongoing professional development and collect forty hours of training credits over a five-year period in order to maintain their certification. This obligation may have influenced more professionals in early childhood education to sign up for an account on EYPD and use the tools on the myEYPD page. Early childhood educators also make up the most prominent service for the early years sector. CCRRs provide or sponsor most of the profession development for the early years sector in B.C. Consequently, CCRR training events dominate the learning opportunities available for people working in the early years sector. BCcampus promoted the EYPD web portal by conducting several meetings with CCRR training coordinators and their regional coordinators. This direct point of contact with both individual agencies and regional directors may have influenced the predominant uptake and continued engagement with the EYPD web portal by CCRR staff and their communities.

Given that 96% of those who signed up as Learners and 90% of the training events were from the early care and learning service system, the EYPD Web Portal Pilot Project did not meet an identified measure of success articulated by the project advisory group, which was to reach a broad spectrum of early years professionals in B.C.

² Denise Lacerte (Senior Specialist, Children and Youth, First Nations Health Authority), user-testing with author, August 17, 2017.

The Reach of the EYPD Web Portal

The concept of “reach” in this report is defined by the extent to which the EYPD web portal was used by early years professionals in urban and rural regions of British Columbia. The aspects of reach include the consideration of the following questions:

- What was the intended geographic scope of the EYPD project?
- What was the actual geographic reach of the EYPD project?

What Was the Intended Geographic Scope of the EYPD Project?

The original environmental scan for this project, *Professional Learning in the Early Years Sector: An Environmental Scan of Professional Development Opportunities in 2015*, revealed that early years professionals in rural and remote regions found it challenging to find professional development, and even the training event coordinators spent significant amounts of time searching for potential training offerings and presenters that reflected current trends and issues in the early years sector. As one CCRR coordinator in the Interior Region commented:

“We get a lot of newsletters and calendars in our region and we contact agencies to find out the steps needed to get hold of that presenter. It’s like you’re hunting for information constantly. Even our coalition coordinator – she is researching and trying to find presenters and what’s new and what’s happening.”³

In response to these challenges faced by both training coordinators and potential learners, one of the measures of success defined by the EYPD advisory group was to support early years professionals support access to and coordination of early years professional development in rural, remote, and Aboriginal communities as well as urban areas.

³ Kathreen Riel, *Professional Learning In The Early Years Sector, An Environmental Scan of Professional Development Opportunities in 2015*, 24, <https://urls.bccampus.ca/61i>

What Was the Actual Geographic Scope of the EYPD Project?

The analytics program used to track unique visitors to the EYPD web portal showed a slight increase in the number of locations of visitors, from 161 locations in 2017 to 172 locations in 2018. Figure 15 below shows an [online map](https://www.google.com/maps/d/edit?mid=17kNLIqhEqRnf7wevGJ6bJqxBsGbMcAPV&ll=53.17869448470876%2C-123.51342649999998&z=5) (https://www.google.com/maps/d/edit?mid=17kNLIqhEqRnf7wevGJ6bJqxBsGbMcAPV&ll=53.17869448470876%2C-123.51342649999998&z=5) of the locations of unique visitors, to the EYPD web portal in 2017 and 2018.

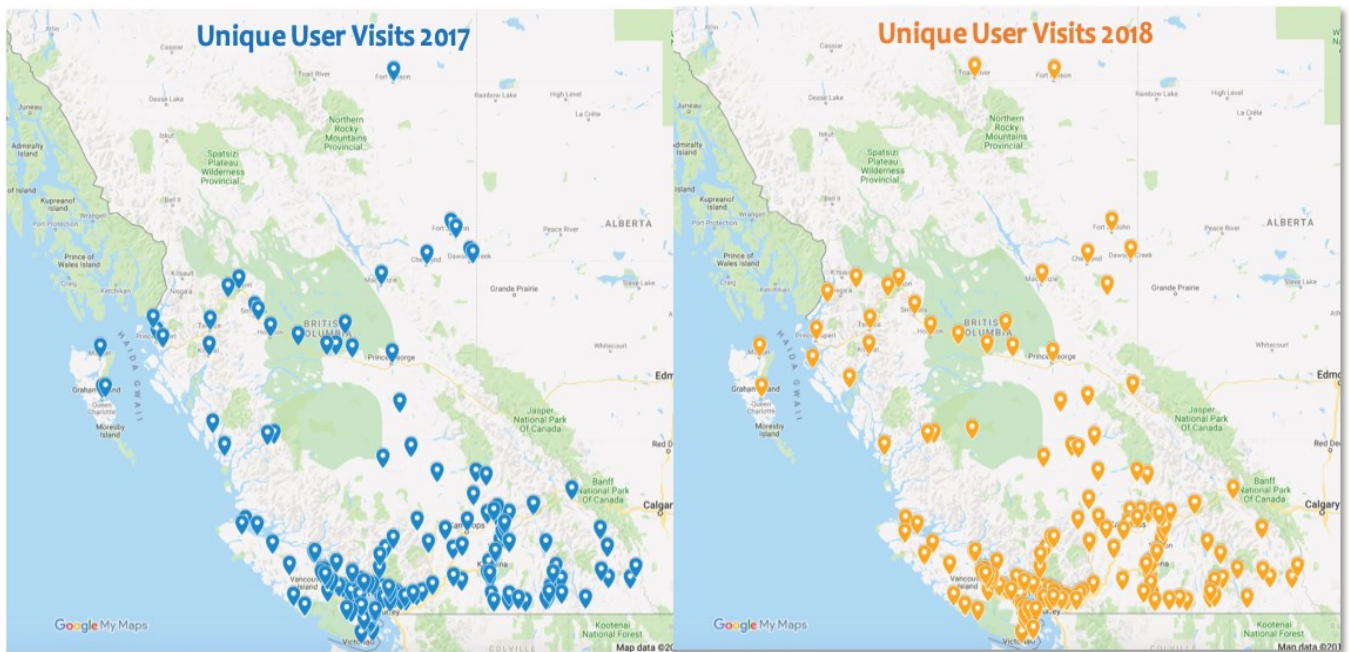


Figure 15: Unique EYPD web portal user visits in 2017 and 2018

To better understand how the web portal served the urban and rural populations, this report used the *Sustainability Trends in B.C.'s Population Size and Distribution*. Figure 16 shows that of the 4.8 million people living in British Columbia, the majority live in the Metro Vancouver Regional District, southern Vancouver Island from Victoria to Courtenay, the Fraser Valley, and the Central Okanagan Regional District. All other regions outside of these areas are considered rural.

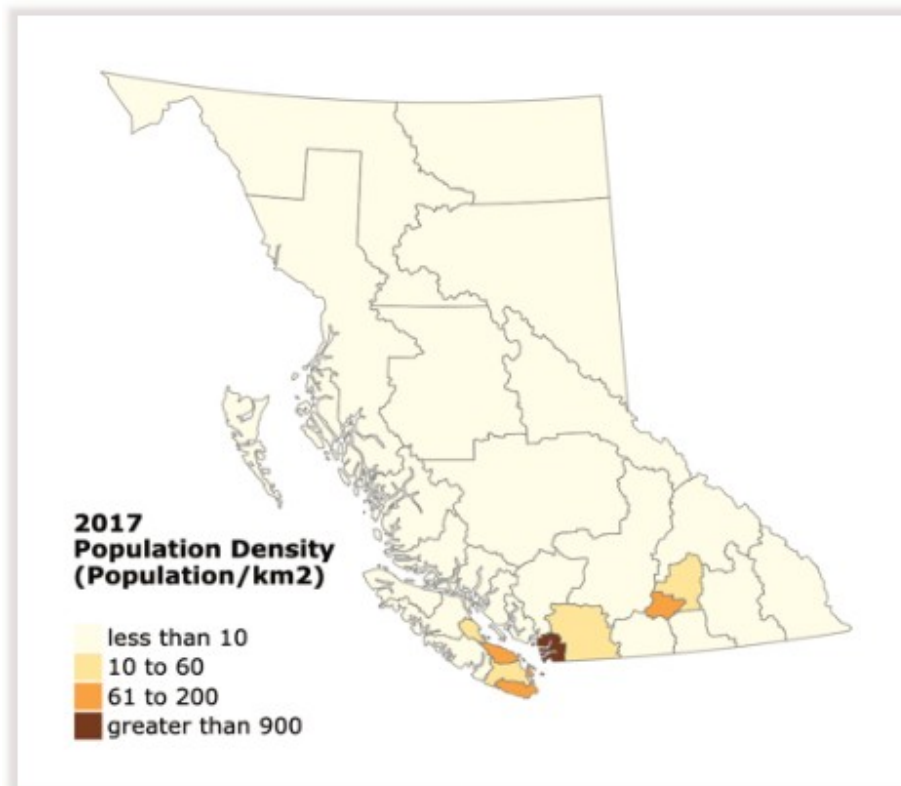


Figure 16: 2017 Population density of British Columbia⁴

To track the geographic location of visitors, we collected the IP addresses of the computer and mobile device they used to visit to the EYPD web portal. In urban areas, the number of locations increased just slightly in 2018 and the number of visitors from those urban locations also increased by 25% (see Figure 17). For rural populations, while the number total number of rural locations indicated a small decrease between 2017 and 2018, the number of people actually visiting the EYPD web portal in those rural locations increased (see Figure 18).

⁴ British Columbia, *Environmental Reporting BC*. 2018. *Sustainability Trends in B.C.'s Population Size and Distribution*, <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/soe/indicators/sustainability/bc-population.html>, accessed May 10, 2019.

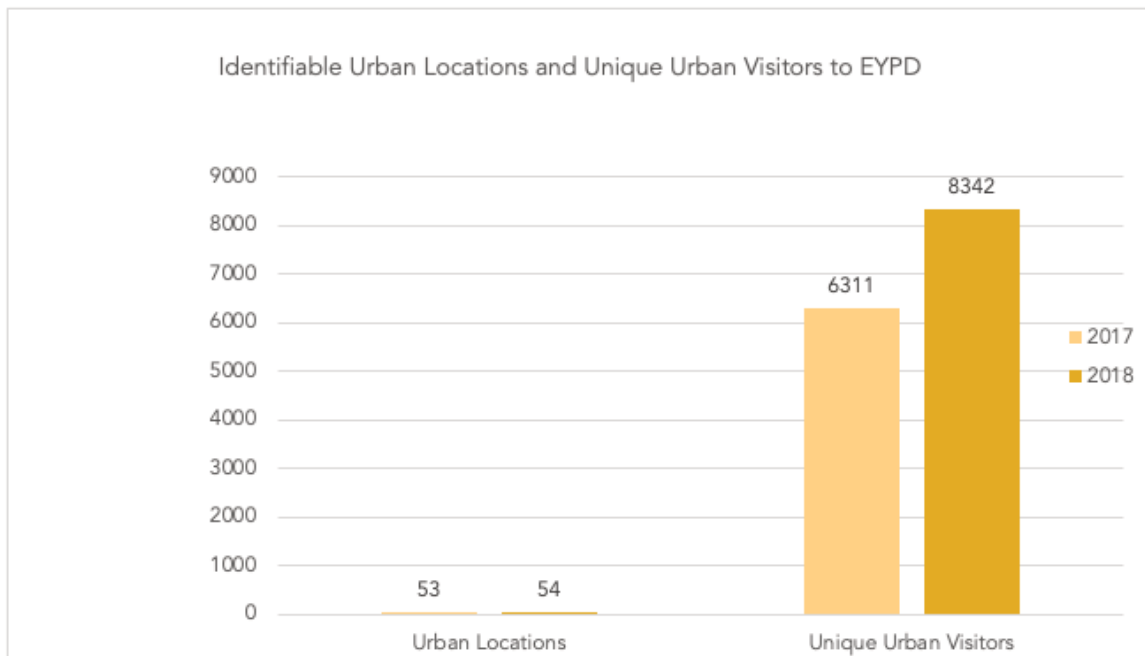


Figure 17: EYPD web portal visits from urban locations and visitors

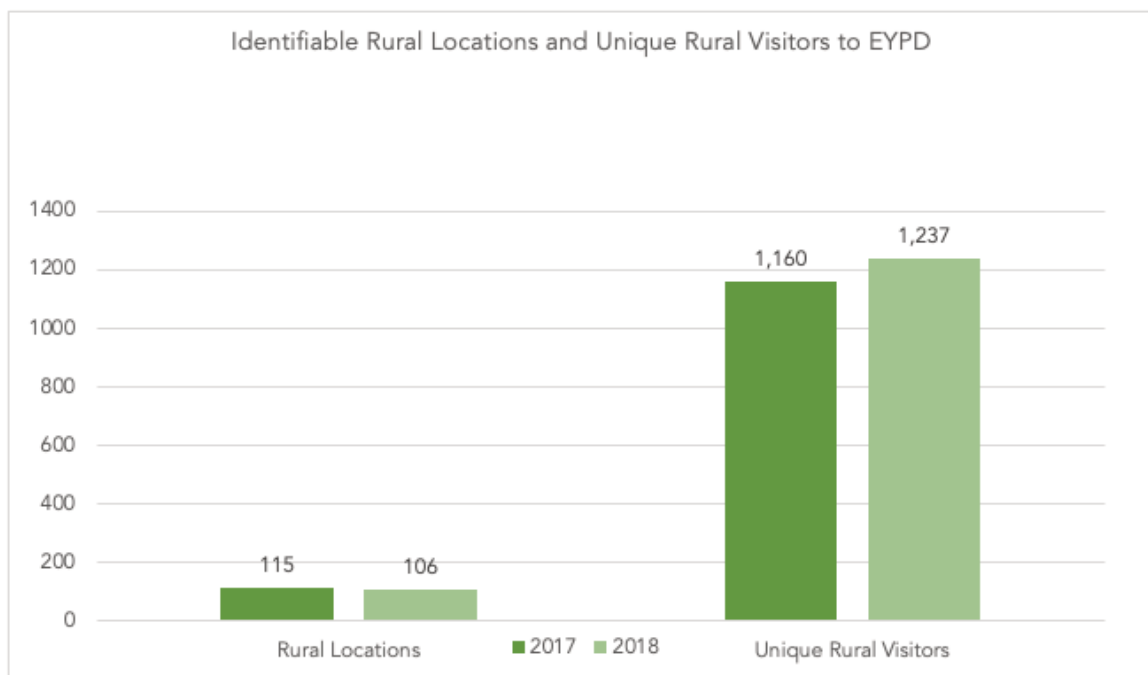


Figure 18: EYPD web portal visits from rural locations and visitors

A closer look at visitor patterns in rural locations between 2017 and 2018 also revealed increasing and decreasing trends (see Figure 19). Forty-two new locations were detected as visiting the EYPD web portal in 2018. Thirty-two rural locations identified in 2017 increased their number of visits in 2018; however, twenty-nine rural locations that visited the EYPD in 2017 did not return in 2018.

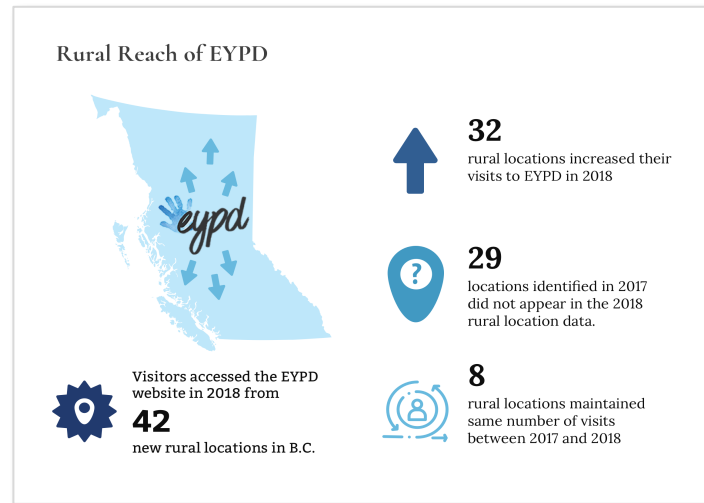


Figure 19: Rural visitor patterns to the EYPD web portal

Locations of EYPD Web Portal Users Who Signed Up as a Learner or Organizer

In 2017, people from forty identified locations signed up on the EYPD web portal as an Organizer. Sixteen of those locations identified in this [online map](https://drive.google.com/open?id=17YT5z9JHCZNx1c7nDPNawdLDqj36Qy4T&usp=sharing) (<https://drive.google.com/open?id=17YT5z9JHCZNx1c7nDPNawdLDqj36Qy4T&usp=sharing>) were in the Lower Mainland or in southern Vancouver Island area (see Figure 20). In 2018, an additional fifteen locations were identified as places where people signed up as an Organizer.

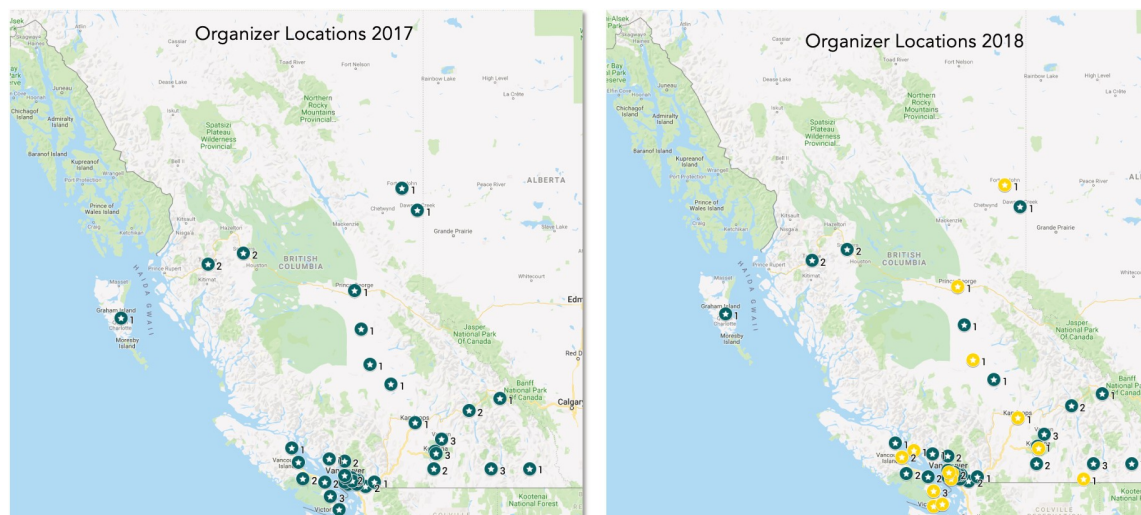


Figure 20: Locations of users who signed up as Organizers 2017 and 2018

Figure 21 depicts of the locations of users who signed up as Learners in this [map](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1UWltdUcsL8OpPqdOoaRauqwlapOSZKR8&usp=sharing) (https://drive.google.com/open?id=1UWltdUcsL8OpPqdOoaRauqwlapOSZKR8&usp=sharing). In 2017, Learners came from fifty locations in B.C. and seventeen of those locations were in the Lower Mainland or southern Vancouver Island. In 2018, Learners came from thirty additional locations and five of those locations were identified as living in the Lower Mainland or southern Vancouver Island.

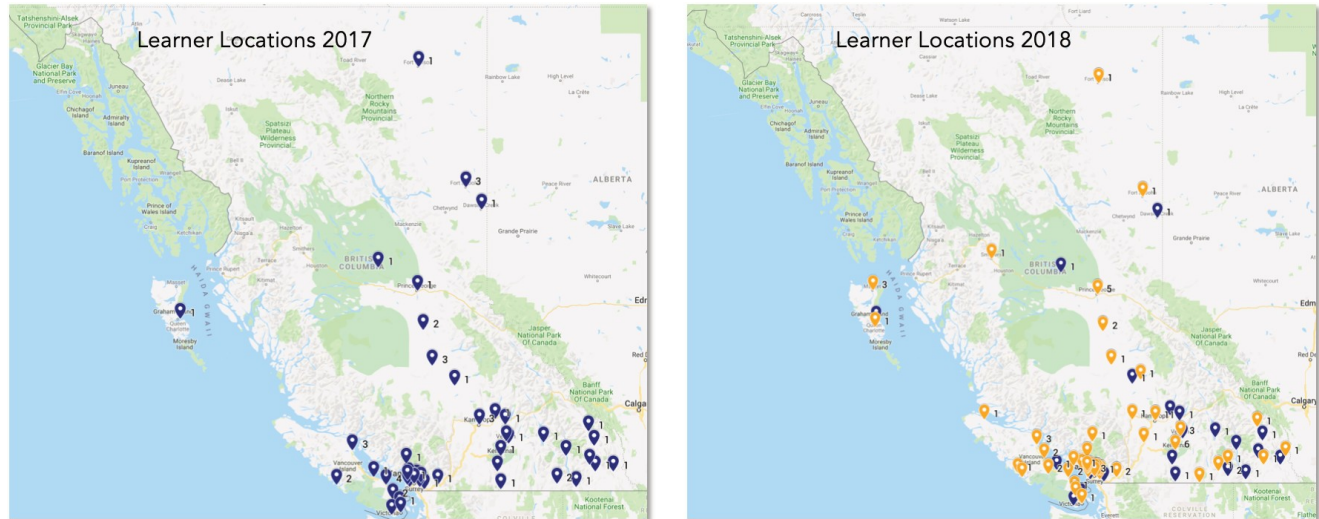


Figure 21: Locations of users who signed up as Learners in 2017 and 2018

The EYPD web portal analytics indicate that the geographic reach of the EYPD project was achieved. People from all over the province, in both urban centres and rural regions, visited the EYPD web portal and also registered as Organizers and Learners.

The Engagement with the EYPD Web Portal

“Engagement” is defined in this report as visitors who signed up for a Learner or Organizer account and returned to the portal to use the features available to them as a registered user. A measure of success articulated by the EYPD advisory group was that the EYPD web portal would be the first choice resource or tool for the early years sector and a centralized online location to find or organize professional development. One way we measured whether the EYPD web portal was the most favourable option for those coordinating or looking for professional development was by tracking engagement. This involved using an analytics program to review the patterns of visitors who signed up for either an Organizer or Learner account and then returned to the EYPD web portal to use its features and functions. As Figure 22 shows below, there was limited engagement with the EYPD web portal among registered Learners and Organizers after their initial sign-up.

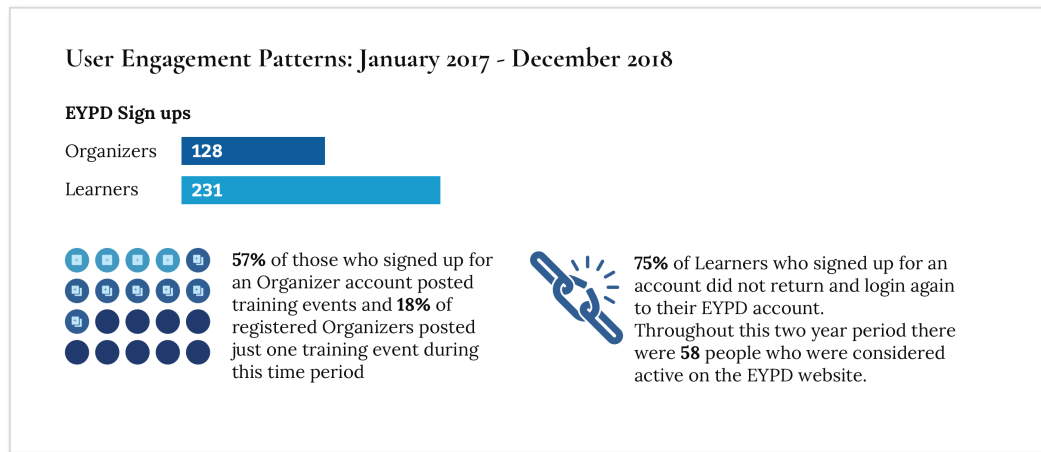


Figure 22: User engagement patterns of Learners and Organizers on the EYPD web portal

From January 10, 2017 to December 31, 2018, there were 128 Organizers who signed up for an account on the EYPD web portal; however, only 57% of those who signed up for an Organizer account posted training events, and 18% of registered Organizers posted just one training event during this time period. A possible explanation for this posting pattern may be due in part to the fact that not every person who signed up as an Organizer on the EYPD web portal had multiple training events to promote. People not affiliated with a CCRR may have posted only one annual training event, such as a conference. Also in some situations multiple people from one agency signed up for an Organizer account but only one person from the affiliated agency posted training events.

In 2017 and 2018, 231 people signed up for a Learner account on the EYPD web portal, but 75% of those who signed up for an account did not return to login again to their account. Throughout this two-year period there were fifty-eight people who were actively using the functions associated with their Learner account on the EYPD web portal. This was indicated by evidence that these active Learners used the record-management features on the myEYPD page. EYPD advisory group members suggested that the lower return rate may be because most of the registered Learners self-identified as working in the early care and learning field and a segment of these Learners, who work as licensed early childhood educators, may wait until the last minute to obtain the professional development hours necessary to re-certify their certificate to practice. Thus, continued engagement with the EYPD web portal may only occur for some registered Learners in a limited timeframe that corresponds with when they need to collect the mandatory number of professional development hours. The low return rate for registered Learners also suggests that more reminders and information about the useful record-management features and new training events posted on the EYPD web portal may increase the return rate of Learners to the web portal after their initial registration.

The evidence gathered from the EYPD web portal analytics for 2017 and 2018 suggests low engagement rates among a broad spectrum of Organizers and Learners. Promotional activities that inform Learners about the value of signing up and maintaining professional development records on the EYPD web portal may help to improve engagement rates for those who sign up for an account. Email reminders to Organizers about the benefits of promoting training events on the EYPD web portal and how it can be used to reach more visitors may enhance engagement rates among Organizers as well.

Recommendations for the Future of the EYPD Web Portal

There were five key recommendations made for the future of the EYPD Web Portal. These recommendations are based on the framework developed by Darcy Riddell and Michele-Lee Moore in the report, *Scaling Out, Scaling Up, Scaling Deep: Advancing Systemic Social Innovation and the Learning Processes to Support it*. Their research considered three types of scaling that are required to influence change in large complex systems (see Figure 23 below).



Figure 23: Three approaches for scaling⁵

Scaling Up: Change Policies or Institutions

Recommendation 1. Improve Coordination Between EYPD and the Provincial ECE Registry

There could be greater reach and engagement with early years professionals if the current record-management functions on the EYPD web portal were more closely aligned with the policies and processes of provincial policy and regulatory branches, particularly with the ECE Registry. Currently, those who sign up as Learners can record the hours they are accumulating based on training events posted on the EYPD web portal; however, there is no verification system integrated with the current provincial ECE Registry. Professionals required to complete a set number of training hours must collect and submit paper documentation to the ECE Registry to verify their completion of training.

⁵ Moore, Michele-Lee, Darcy Riddell, and Dana Vocisano. (2015). *Scaling Out, Scaling Up, Scaling Deep: Strategies of Non-Profits in Advancing Systemic Social Innovation*, https://mccconnellfoundation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/ScalingOut_Nov27A_AV_BrandedBleed.pdf, accessed May 8, 2019.

Synchronizing the EYPD web portal and the ECE Registry could reduce the laborious paper-based record management processes for early years professionals seeking professional development validation. An integrated validation system would also support the goal of making the EYPD web portal the “go-to” resource envisioned by the EYPD advisory group.

Recommendation 2. Create Stronger Connections Between the EYPD Web Portal and the Revised Early Learning Framework

Currently, the search categories and professional development interests on the EYPD web portal are defined by program services available in the early years sector. The EYPD advisory group recommends that future iterations of the EYPD web portal offer search terms and professional interests that also align with the revised British Columbia Early Learning Framework (ELF). For example, categories could reflect “living inquiries” – the term now used to describe evolving learning and reflective questions in the revised ELF. The forum feature on the EYPD web portal may also be an effective tool to implement the Early Learning Framework’s recommended pedagogical narration practice, which allows early years professionals to “record moments of play to make learning visible, invite others (colleagues, children, families) to share their perspectives, and consider different theories.”⁶ Integrating the ELF with the EYPD search and forum functions would reflect current professional learning practices that may increase engagement of Learners with the EYPD web portal.

Scaling Out: Increase the Number of People or Communities Impacted

Recommendation 3. Continue Working Within the Collaborative Leadership Framework

While “one-stop shop” was a prominent expression used to describe the potential of the EYPD web portal, the EYPD web portal analytics indicate that the portal did not become a first choice centralized resource for all early years professionals, particularly for those not working in early care and learning systems. In Aboriginal communities, diverse social and cultural customs influence the communication and promotion of training events. Awareness of and engagement with professional development appears to be influenced by how these social connections are fostered and valued. The cultivation of social connections that support continual professional learning appears to be unique to certain cultural, geographic, and professional communities. Continued dialogue with Aboriginal communities and agencies outside of early care and learning may be required to increase broader use of the EYPD web portal.

Recommendation 4. Establish Stronger Connections with Post-Secondary Institutions

If post-secondary institutions adopted the EYPD web portal to promote their pre-service programs and courses, this could establish continued engagement with post-secondary students and professionals as they start and advance through all stages of their career in the early years sector. The record-management features on the myEYPD page could be used as a professional portfolio for Learners to track their formal and informal learning. Currently, professional portfolios have been used by pre-service classroom teachers in the Kindergarten to Grade 12 system for over ten years and continue to be a popular tool for classroom teachers to engage in reflective practice. The EYPD web portal could provide functionality so that post-secondary students could initiate a professional portfolio while in school to inform their learning throughout all phases of their career.

⁶ British Columbia’s Ministry of Education (2008). *British Columbia Early Learning Framework*, https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/early-learning/teach/earlylearning/draft_early_learning_framework_2018.pdf. Accessed May 11, 2019.

Uptake of the EYPD web portal by post-secondary institutions to promote their courses would expand access to a wide variety of formal and informal learning opportunities. Use of the EYPD web portal by post-secondary students would support a continuum of learning capacity throughout each stage of their professional career.

Scaling Deep: Influence People’s Beliefs, Values, Cultural Practices, and Quality of Relationships

Recommendation 5. Explore What Motivates Early Years Professionals to Engage in Professional Development

While the purpose of the EYPD project was to build professional capacity for those who work in the early years sector, professional capacity in this sector has also been historically influenced by economic and political issues, which may have had an impact on the motivation of early years professionals to engage with professional development. For example, early childhood educators, the largest population of professionals that work in the early years sector, earn approximately 42% less than classroom teachers in the Kindergarten to Grade 12 school system.⁷ While earning significantly lower wages than school teachers, most early childhood educators have been expected to personally finance their professional development. Several government-led initiatives, such as the ECE Workforce Strategy (<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2018CFD0057-001707>), have sought to support early years professionals by providing financial incentives through wage enhancements and on-site professional development. These types of government-led strategies may help to shift perceptions of early years services as not only a public benefit but also a public priority. Further investigation may be needed to validate these assumptions that pay equity and public priorities significantly influence professional efficacy and personal motivation for continued professional growth. While the EYPD web portal can provide easier access to and coordination of ongoing professional development, there may be other economic, political, and social factors that also influence how frequently early years professionals seek learning opportunities not only as a professional obligation but as a professional right in order to sustain the highest quality service and support for young children and their families.

⁷ Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 2014, *Early Childhood Education Report 2014*, <http://ecereport.ca/media/uploads/pdfs/early-childhood-education-report2014-eng.pdf>. Accessed, May 12, 2019..

Conclusion

The EYPD Web Portal Pilot Project sought to support workforce capacity by improving access to and coordination of ongoing training opportunities for early years professionals. Measures of success for this project were established by the project's advisory group and analyzed according to the target population's uptake, reach, and engagement of the web portal from 2017–18.

Increasing the uptake, reach, and engagement of the EYPD web portal may require further investigation into the broader economic, individual, and social factors that support and limit early years professionals' continuous learning. Ongoing dialogue with Aboriginal communities and other organizations outside the early care and learning service system will also inform the next stages of the EYPD web portal beyond this pilot stage. This report suggests that creating stronger connections with post-secondary institutions and provincial regulatory systems, and integrating evolving provincial policies with the EYPD web portal's functions may influence greater uptake, reach, and engagement by the early years sector.

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- Riel, Kathreen. *The Early Years Professional Development Web Solution Proposal*. Victoria: BCcampus, 2016. <http://solr.bccampus.ca:8001/bcc/file/8c282169-708d-478f-873f-648a7d340712/1/2.%20EY%20Pro-d%20Web-Solution%20Proposal-final.pdf>.

Appendices

Appendix A – EYPD Advisory Group Members

Member	Sector	Term
Mary Burgaretta	Aboriginal Services	2017–18
Annie Charker	Early Childhood Educators of British Columbia	2018–19
Kim Chernenkoff	Prince George Native Friendship Centre	2016–19
Joseph Dunn	BC Council For Families	2016–19
Sana Fakih	ChildHealth BC	2017–19
Darla Faulkner	BC ECE Registry	2016–17
Michelle Gilmour	Ministry of Children and Families	2016–19
Cindy Grewal-Blaison	Public Health Agency of Canada	2016–17
Nicole Gibbons	First Nations Health Authority	2016–17
Erica Henderson	South Cariboo Early Years Centre	2016–17
Gisele Haines	Surrey Options CCRR	2016–19
Emily Horton	BC Office For The Early Years	2016–19
Sue Irwin	Vancouver Coastal Regional Coordinator, CCRR Programs	2017–19
Crystal Janes	Westcoast CCRR	2017–18
Denise Lacerte	First Nations Health Authority	2017
Sally McBride	Human Early Learning Partnership, UBC	2017
Erin Mirau De Vera	ECE Registry	2018–19
Emily Gawlick	Early Childhood Educators of British Columbia	2016–19
Jamie Penner	V3 Media	2016–17
Pam Preston	Westcoast CCRR	2016–19
Pippa Rowcliffe	Human Early Learning Partnership, UBC	2016–17
Jennifer Scarr	ChildHealth BC	2016–17
Tyler Summers	School Age Association of BC	2016–19
Heather Todd	North Okanagan Neurological Association	2016–18
Fionn Yaxley	BC Aboriginal Childcare Society	2017–19

Appendix B – Promotional Activities, Proposals and Reports

Promotional Activities

EYPD Brochure

<https://earlyyearsbc.ca/eypd-promotional-resources/>

EYPD Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/BCEYPD/>

EYPD Video

<https://vimeo.com/211567638>

EYPD Proposals and Reports

British Columbia Early Years Professional Development Environmental Scan Reports (2015)

<https://urls.bccampus.ca/61i>

Early Years Professional Development Web Solution Proposal

<https://urls.bccampus.ca/6jr>

Year 1 Report: Early Years Professional Development Web Portal Pilot Project

<https://urls.bccampus.ca/67t>

Year 2 Report: Early Years Professional Development Web Portal Pilot Project

<https://urls.bccampus.ca/6lk>

Appendix C – User-Testing Questions

Background Questions

1. What is your occupation?
2. How many hours during a week would you estimate using the internet both web browsing and email at work and home?
 - In that time what is the split between email and web browsing?
3. When you are web browsing what sites do you predominantly visit or use?
4. Do you have favourite websites? Ones that you choose to visit regularly.

First Impressions

1. First take a look at this page and tell me what are your initial impressions are? What strikes you about it? Scroll down and narrate your first impressions about the layout and purpose?
 - Graphics
 - Colours
 - Type
2. Without clicking on anything yet, please describe the options you see on the home page and what you think they do?
3. Without clicking on anything yet, if you were just exploring, what would you click on first? Why?

Usability Tasks

I am going to ask you to complete two tasks while on this EYPD site. Here's the scenario.

You would like to search for workshop or training event on a specific topic of interest. How would you go about looking for this workshop?

Ask tester to login, track efficiency errors (hesitations, redundant clicking, retracing clicks).

Post and View Event to the web portal First Posting:

1. *Learnability – how easy is it for users to do basic tasks*

How would you rate the process of looking for a training event in terms of ease of use?

- ☐ 1 Very Easy
- ☐ 2 Easy
- ☐ 3 Neutral
- ☐ 4 Not Easy
- ☐ 5 Not Very Easy

2. *Efficiency – how quickly are users performing tasks?*
3. *Errors – how many errors and how severe are the errors?*

4. Satisfaction – how pleasant is this experience on a scale of 1-5 with 1 being very pleasant to 5 being very unpleasant

- ☐ 1 Very pleasant
- ☐ 2 Pleasant
- ☐ 3 Neutral
- ☐ 4 Not Pleasant
- ☐ 5 Not Very Pleasant

2. Any recommendations for the process of searching for a training events?

Plan to attend button

Now that you have found something you are interested in you would like to save this to your myEYPD through the plan to attend button

1. *Learnability – how easy is it for users to do basic tasks*
2. *Efficiency – how quickly are users performing tasks?*
3. *Errors – how many errors and how severe are the errors?*

Memorability How easy it this process to complete?

- ☐ 1 Very Easy
- ☐ 2 Easy
- ☐ 3 Neutral
- ☐ 4 Not Easy
- ☐ 5 Not Very Easy

Satisfaction How pleasant is this experience on a scale of 1-5 ?

- ☐ 1 Very pleasant
- ☐ 2 Pleasant
- ☐ 3 Neutral
- ☐ 4 Not Pleasant
- ☐ 5 Not Very Pleasant

2. Any recommendations for recording events that you are interested in attending?

Context Questions:

If you were to use this web portal where would you typically use this site to post training opportunities?

- At home
- In your office - Other

What tool would you use to post training events on this site?

- ☐ A computer

- o A tablet

- o A mobile device

Top 3 Usability Issues

- 1.

- 2.

- 3.

Themes to consider while testing Learnability

Efficiency

Memorability

Errors Satisfaction