

# At a Glance



## Audit of the classification function at Environment and Climate Change Canada

Classification plays a key role in the Human Resources (HR) cycle as it is the foundation for organizational design, HR planning and management of a department's day-to-day workforce. It acts as a critical enabler in ensuring that employees are in the right roles with the right skills at the right cost, thereby supporting a department's accountability requirements and enabling the department to effectively achieve its mandate.

As a science-based department, Environment and Climate Change Canada's (ECCC) mandate requires highly qualified and specialized personnel with expertise in areas such as meteorological science, data science, scientific and regulatory areas, policy development and transfer payment programs among others. Furthermore, ECCC's expanding agenda has led to an ongoing increased demand for personnel to support program delivery, and this situation has resulted in a consistently high demand for classification services to meet the HR needs of the Department. The timely provision of classification services is critical to successfully deliver on the Department's priorities and operational needs.

Responsibilities for classification and organizational design within ECCC are shared between the Chief Human Resources Management Officer, managers with HR delegation authorities (also named sub-delegated managers) and classification advisors. In keeping with the requirements of the Treasury Board policy instruments on classification, the Deputy Minister has delegated the authority to make and approve classification decisions only to accredited classification advisors who have completed the components of the Treasury Board Secretariat Organization and Classification Learning curriculum.

In August 2021, the Human Resources Branch officially launched the new Centre of Expertise for Organizational Design and Classification, within the Integrated Classification and Staffing Solutions Directorate. The Centre is responsible for establishing the governance framework for all aspects of organizational design and job evaluation services and for delivering classification services to all positions at all levels within the organization. 7 of the staff members are accredited classification advisors. From April 2019 to December 2021, the Integrated Classification and Staffing Solutions Directorate has received approximately about 8,990 non-EX classification requests, out of which 7,211 were complete and 978 were in progress.

### What the audit found

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The audit found that overall, a comprehensive classification function is in place to manage a high volume of classification requests in a context of departmental growth and pressure to implement new ECCC programs. The recent integration of classification resources under the new Centre of Expertise for Organizational Design Classification is expected to increase



efficiencies in managing classification services over time. Clear roles and responsibilities have been defined and documented, and were well understood and discharged by classification staff; and processes and tools were documented and available to support and guide the delivery of classification services.

Several opportunities for improvement remain to build and maintain a resilient classification function that is perceived as client-focused and a strategic partner across the Department, in the following areas:

### Planning and priority setting

Processes have been established for departmental HR planning and priority setting with regard to classification, including a departmental annual HR planning process. Opportunities remain to strengthen strategic planning to support the continued provision of classification services in the context of a growing demand. Particularly, opportunities for improvement were identified with respect to the effectiveness of planning and allocation of resources for classification services, in alignment with departmental priorities, and the need to enhance communication and monitoring of classification activities.

### Classification services delivery and performance

Roles, responsibilities and authorities related to classification have been clearly defined and documented. Some supplementary training is available to classification team members and sub-delegated managers. Opportunities for improvement were identified with respect to: understanding by all stakeholders of their roles and responsibilities in the classification process; the need to enhance 2-way communications between the classification function and branches during both planning of classification activities and throughout individual classifications requests; the need to implement and monitor service standards and to manage the performance of the classification function; and, the need to increase awareness of the impasse resolution process.

### Processes, tools and information management

Comprehensive processes, tools and procedures are in place to guide the processing of classification requests. However, some are outdated and guidance on organizational design is limited. Opportunities were identified to enhance management of information related to the classification function.

## Recommendations and management response

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### Recommendation 1

**The Chief Human Resources Management Officer should, in consultation with Branch Heads, review classification planning processes to ensure that the Human Resources Branch is receiving the right information at the right time to support resource**

**allocations and to manage classification priorities and inform branches on a regular basis of implementation of its plan.**

### **Management response**

The Classification team at all levels will work to strengthen their strategic partnership with client branches. In order to do so, it is imperative that both the classification team and branch management teams are aware of the pressures and priorities that each face.

The CHRO will leverage existing committees (that is, EMC, HRMC) to provide information and solicit input into classification initiatives and priorities from the departmental senior management team.

The classification team will develop a formal process for branch management teams to provide clear prioritization of their classification needs/requests, which will be reviewed and adjusted regularly as needed.

### **Recommendation 2**

**The Chief Human Resources Management Officer should develop, promote and offer supplementary in-house training and guidance to sub-delegated managers on classification themes.**

### **Management response**

The classification team will develop a communication campaign, which will include classification tools and information documents that will educate management on the classification process and need for communication and consultations with classification regarding organizational needs.

The classification team will develop and present a session titled Classification 101, which will augment the CSPA Introduction to Classification (P930) for sub-delegated managers and will introduce classification to employees and managers not required to take the P930.

### **Recommendation 3**

**The Chief Human Resources Management Officer, in collaboration with Branch Heads, should put in place mechanisms to improve the level of communications and interactions between sub-delegated managers and the classification team throughout the life-cycle of classification requests, including frequency of status updates.**

### **Management response**

The classification team will develop a dashboard that clearly reflects the status of classification requests. Managers will have access to this dashboard in order to ascertain the status of their particular requests.

Classification activity reports will be developed and distributed to clients. The reports will include all active requests on-hand as well as the service standard date for completion.

A procedure will be developed to follow-up regarding requests outstanding after 6 months, to determine if they are still required or should be cancelled.

#### **Recommendation 4**

**The Chief Human Resources Management Officer should develop, implement, monitor and report on service standards and performance metrics for the classification function.**

#### **Management response**

The classification team will develop, implement, and report on service delivery standards for all classification actions. These service standards will define the length of time required to process actions and enhance communication between classification and client branches.

These performance indicators will also facilitate an assessment to determine to what degree classification is assisting branch clients achieve their strategic objectives as well as provide important data to facilitate classification program enhancements.

#### **Recommendation 5**

**The Chief Human Resources Management Officer should reinstate the impasse resolution process and communicate its existence and how it may be used to all branch heads.**

#### **Management response**

In keeping with the Directive on Classification (2021), a new impasse resolution process is being developed. The classification team will finalize the associated communication material and disseminate the new process to ADMs and their branch management teams.

The classification team will report on the number of actions referred to this new process to the DM on a quarterly basis. In addition, year-end statistics will be presented to EMC via the annual Health of Staffing and Classification presentation.

#### **Recommendation 6**

**The Chief Human Resources Management Officer should ensure that classification procedures and guidance available to classification staff are kept up-to date to improve consistency of the processing of classification requests.**

#### **Management response**

The classification team recognizes the need to review existing procedures and is committed to completing a total process review. This review will be conducted from the optic of ensuring all

required procedures are available and that they are as efficient as possible, eliminating any duplication of effort.

Efforts are already underway to simplify the e-filing process and additional priorities include reviewing all templates, checklists and standardized communications.

### **Recommendation 7**

**The Chief Human Resources Management Officer should proceed to the reorganization of existing data repositories to clarify the content of each data repository.**

### **Management response**

The classification team recognizes the need to review information holdings. With the creation of the new Centre of Expertise, information holdings from what were separate organizations must now be amalgamated.

To this end, all information holdings will be reviewed for completeness, ease of access, and to address any duplication of documentation.

## **About the audit**

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The audit was conducted during FY 2021 to 2022 and covered the period from April 1, 2019 to the completion of the examination phase of the audit in December 2021. The audit objective was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of the classification function in enabling the Department to meet its organizational objectives and needs. The audit focused on the end-to-end life cycle of classification activities and related processes, from planning and intake of classification requests to rendering of classification decisions. The scope excluded assessment of classification decisions, classification grievances and EX classification and Treasury Board led conversion initiatives, assessment of classification IT systems (My GCHR) and the accreditation program.