

Experimentation & COVID-19

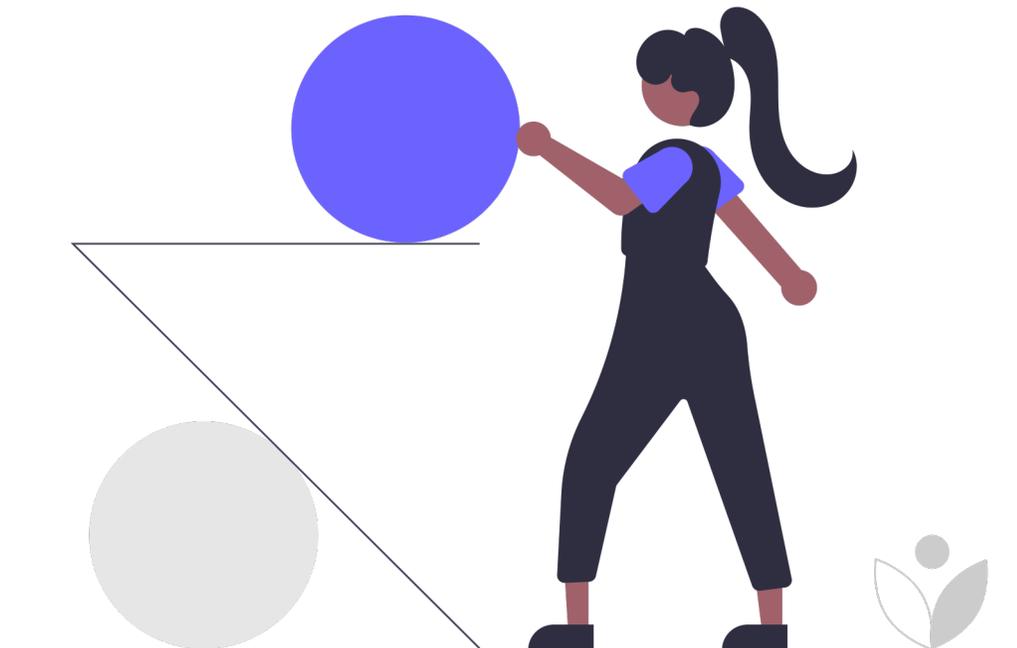
Building Capacity in Your Organization



BC Behavioural Insights Group (BC BIG)

Experimentation Works: Executive Showcase

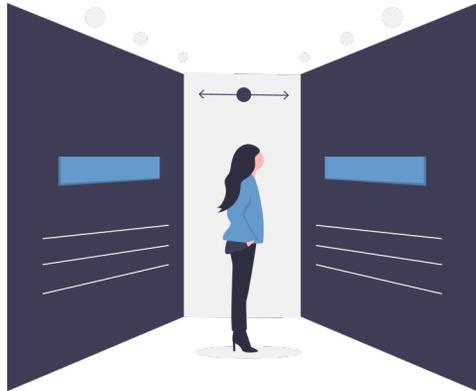
April 8, 2021



Territorial Acknowledgement

Acknowledging with gratitude the traditional territories of the Lekwungen speaking peoples, known today as the Esquimalt and Songhees First Nations, on whose land I live and work.

Problem



You need to make a **decision**



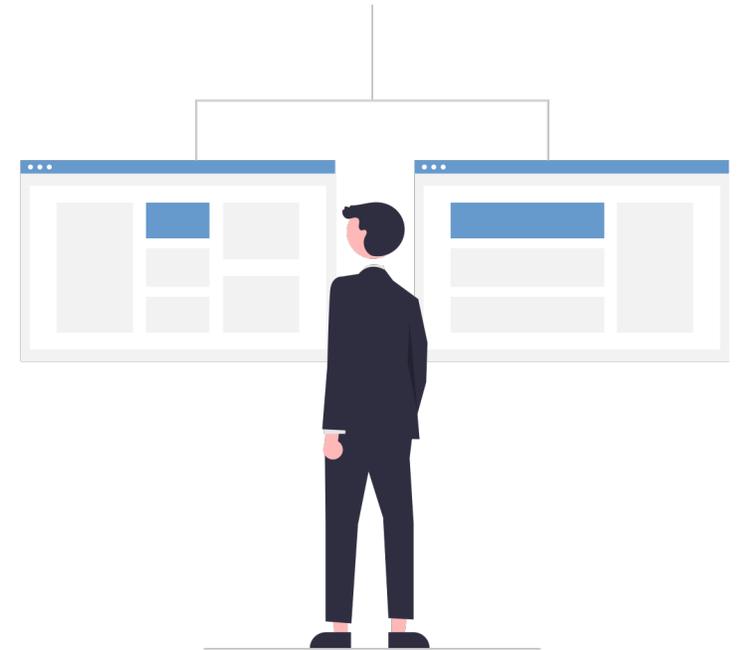
Your decision should be **evidence-based**



You want proof of **positive impact**

Solution

Experiments provide proof our decisions make a positive impact in citizens' lives.





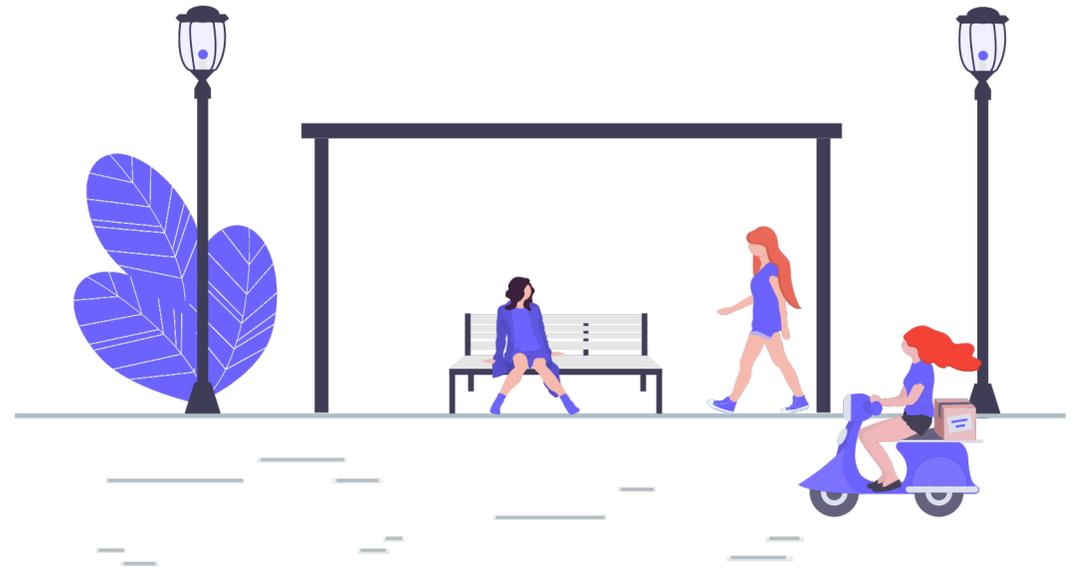
BC Behavioural Insights Group

We are a corporate **behavioural science unit** in the BC Public Service.



What is 'Behavioural Insights'?

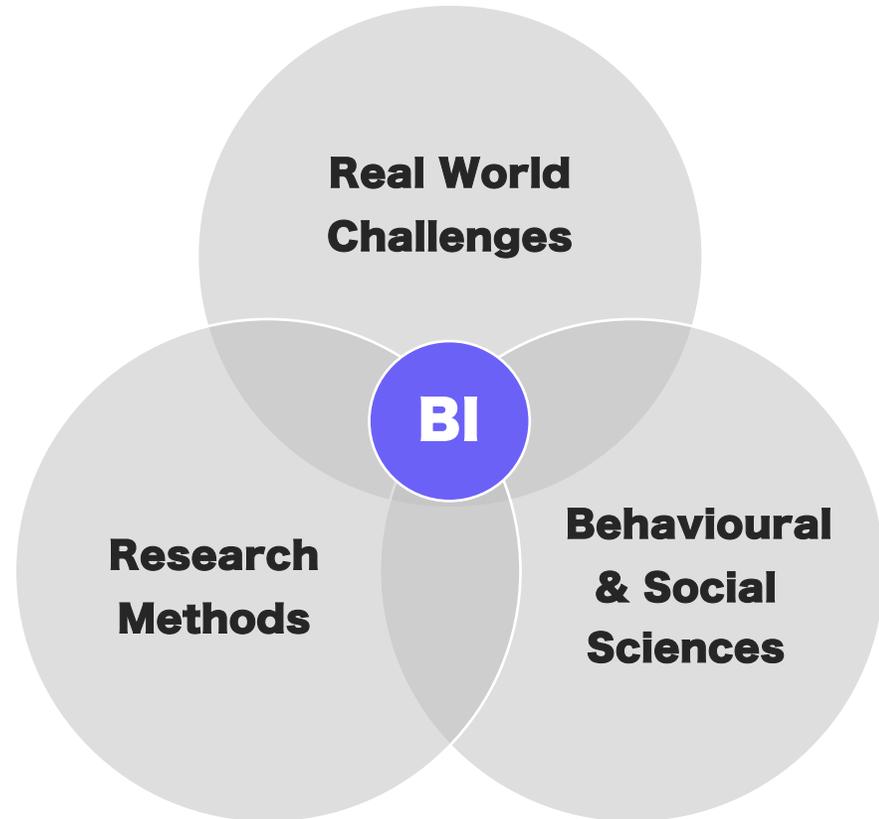
Behavioural Insights (BI) uses **knowledge + methods from the behavioural and social sciences** to help us understand **how people think, behave, and make decisions** in everyday life.



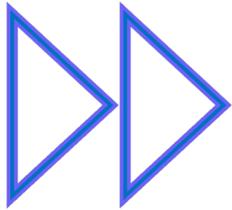
How do we use it?

We use BI to **improve policies, programs, and services** to encourage **positive behaviour change** while preserving **freedom of choice**.

A **nudge** is a **low-cost intervention** where **small tweaks = big impact**



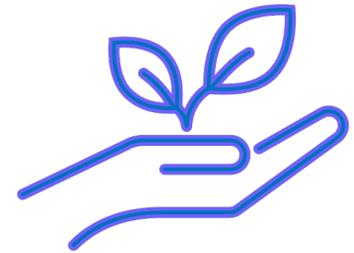
We've used experiments for positive impact across sectors



**Public
sector
hiring**



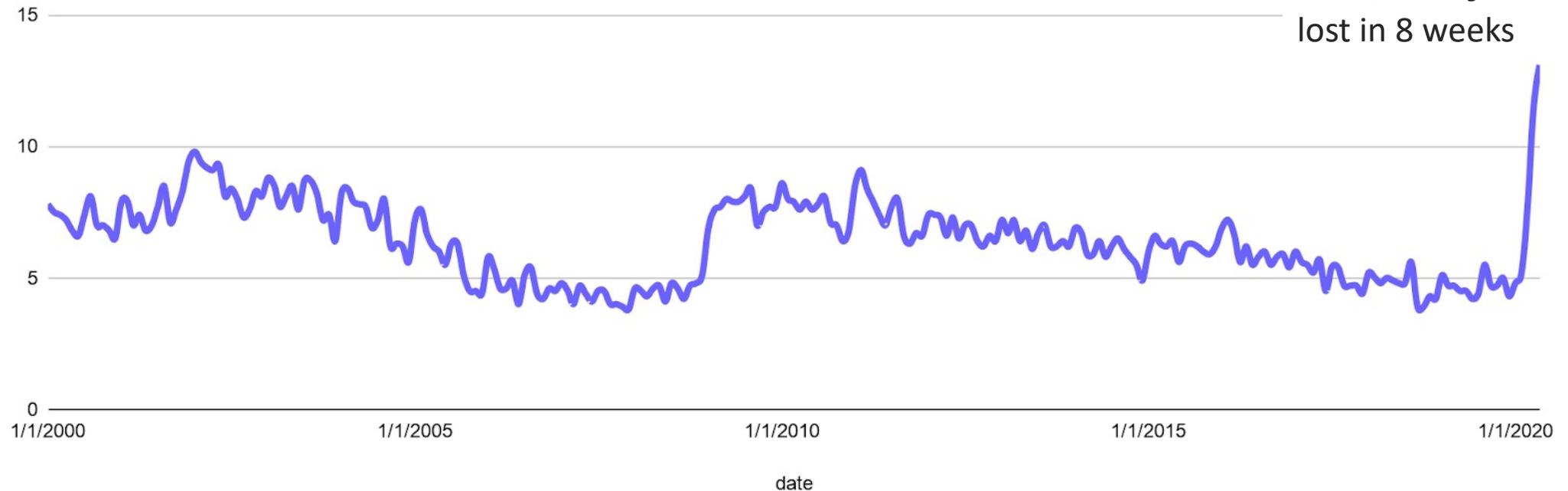
**Water
conservation**



**Sustainable
farming**

COVID-19 Historic economic shock

Unemployment



The challenge

Help recently unemployed British Columbians get **back to work** during COVID-19.



What we did



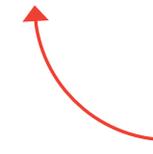
Defined the problem—helping people access job services.



Used qualitative **evidence** to identify barriers to uptake.



Leveraged low-cost, scalable **experimentation**.

 **proof of impact**

Defining the problem

Several policy instruments to help unemployed people during COVID-19

The screenshot shows the Government of Canada website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the Canadian flag and the text "Government of Canada" and "Gouvernement du Canada". Below this is a "MENU" dropdown. The main content area is titled "Employment Insurance benefits and leave" and includes a sub-section for "COVID-19" with a blue information icon. The text states: "Due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak, there are changes to the Employment Insurance benefits and leave information for workers, families, fishers and sickness, as well as how to apply and submit a report." A bullet point below reads: "Consult the changes to the Employment Insurance benefits and leave information for workers, families, fishers and sickness, as well as how to apply and submit a report."

The screenshot shows the WorkBC website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the WorkBC logo and the text "About Us | Find a WorkBC Centre | Publications | Login | Register". Below this is a red banner that reads: "COVID-19: Service delivery at some WorkBC Centres may have changed". The main content area is titled "HOW TO APPLY" and includes a sub-section for "Financial Assistance" with a blue information icon. The text states: "The Online Employment Services (OES) portal used to apply for WorkBC Apprenticeship Financial Assistance is a simple, confidential way to find services and financial assistance to support your apprenticeship training. Visit apprenticeship training supports online services to:" A list of bullet points follows: "learn what kind of support is available", "assess your eligibility for financial assistance", and "apply for financial support – quickly, easily and securely". A blue button labeled "Apply Here" with a right arrow is at the bottom.

The screenshot shows the My Self Serve website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the British Columbia logo and the text "Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction". Below this is a yellow banner that reads: "T5007 tax slips will be mailed out and available in your MySS account". The main content area is titled "Welcome to My Self Serve" and includes a sub-section for "My Self Serve" with a blue information icon. The text states: "My Self Serve (MySS) provides online access to income and disability assistance for residents of British Columbia. If you are not currently in receipt of income or disability assistance, My Self Serve will guide you through the Application for Assistance. If you need help with your application contact the ministry at 1-866-866-0800. If you are currently in receipt of income or disability assistance, My Self Serve will allow you to securely access your current information online. For example, you can view personal messages from the ministry, submit your monthly report, and upload forms."

Defining the problem

We focused on one

The screenshot shows the Government of Canada website header with the Canadian flag and the text 'Government of Canada' and 'Gouvernement du Canada'. Below the header is a 'MENU' dropdown and a breadcrumb trail 'Canada.ca > Benefits'. The main heading is 'Employment Insurance benefits and leave'. The sub-heading reads: 'Employment Insurance benefits and leave information for workers, families, fishers and sickness, as well as how to apply and submit a report.' A 'COVID-19' section is highlighted with an information icon, containing the text: 'Due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak, there are changes to the Employment Insurance benefits and leave information. Consult the changes to the Employment Insurance benefits and leave information.' A 'COVID-19' icon is visible on the right side of the page.

The screenshot shows the WorkBC website header with the WorkBC logo and the text 'About Us | Find a WorkBC Centre | Publications | Login | Register'. Below the header is a red banner with the text 'COVID-19: Service delivery at some WorkBC Centres may have changed'. The main navigation bar includes 'Jobs & Careers', 'Employment Services', 'Training & Education', and 'Labour Market & Industry'. The breadcrumb trail is 'Home > Employment Services > Apprenticeship Services > How To Apply'. The main heading is 'HOW TO APPLY'. The sub-heading reads: 'The Online Employment Services (OES) portal used to apply for WorkBC Apprenticeship Services Financial Supports is a simple, confidential way to find services and financial assistance to support your apprenticeship training. Visit apprenticeship training supports online services to:'. The list of steps includes: 'learn what kind of support is available', 'assess your eligibility for financial assistance', and 'apply for financial support – quickly, easily and securely'. A blue 'Apply Here' button with a right arrow is located at the bottom of the page.

The screenshot shows the My Self Serve page on the British Columbia website. The header includes the British Columbia logo and the text 'Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction'. Below the header is a yellow banner with the text 'T5007 tax slips will be mailed out and available in your MySS account'. The main heading is 'Welcome to My Self Serve'. The sub-heading reads: 'My Self Serve (MySS) provides online access to income and disability assistance for residents of British Columbia. If you are not currently in receipt of income or disability assistance, My Self Serve will guide you through the Application for Assistance. If you need help with your application contact the ministry at 1-866-866-0800. If you are currently in receipt of income or disability assistance, My Self Serve will allow you to securely access your current information online. For example, you can view personal messages from the ministry, submit your monthly report, and upload forms.'

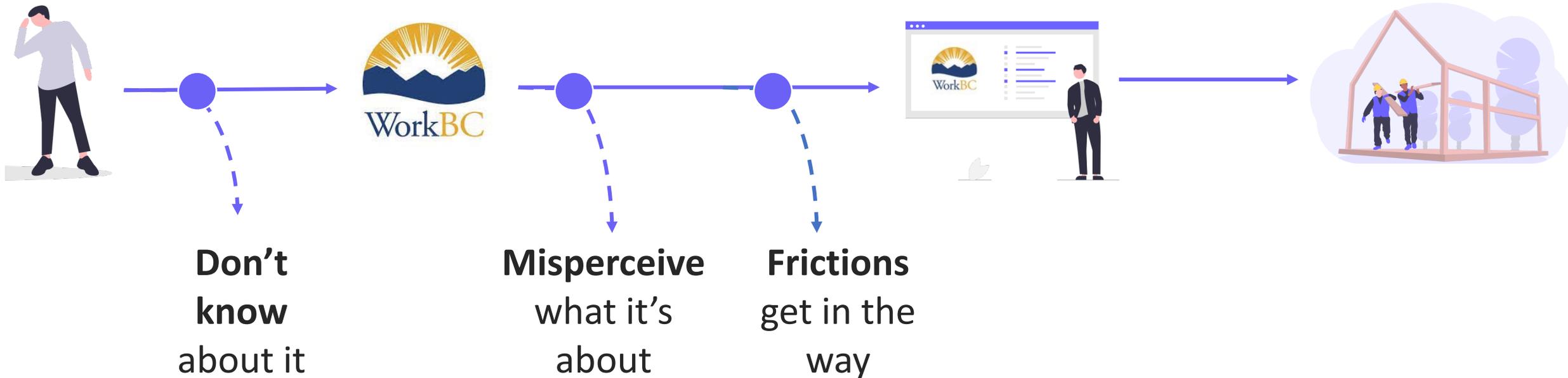
Qualitative evidence

96 **interviews** with frontline staff and citizens



Qualitative evidence

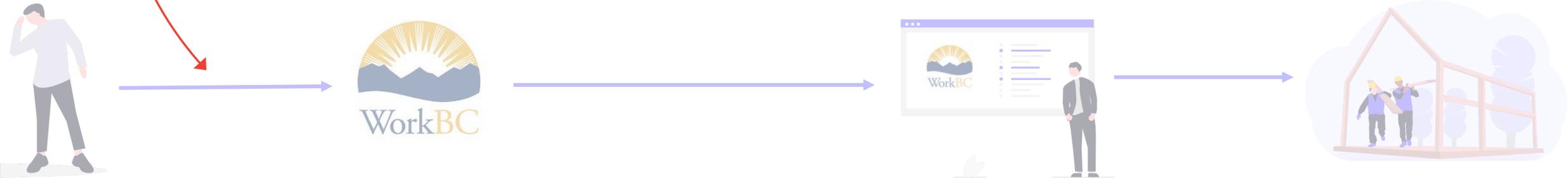
We identified **behavioural barriers** that hinder uptake



Hypothesis

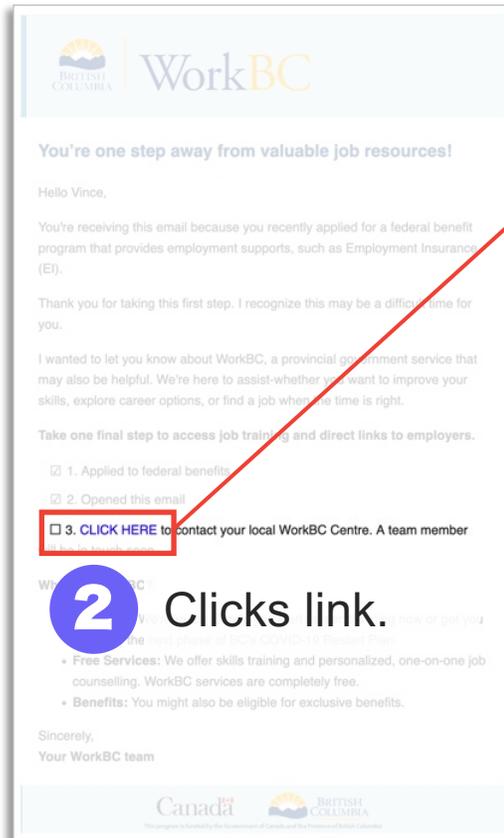


A timely **email**—one that further simplifies the process—could drive applications to WorkBC.



An easier process

1 Client opens email.



2 Clicks link.

3 Lands on a pre-populated form.

Contact WorkBC Centre

* Denotes a required field.

First Name *
Vince

Phone 555-555-5555 or 5551235555
[Empty field]

Email * someone@example.com
Vince.Hopkins@gov.bc.ca

Message
Hello,
I would like to apply for WorkBC.

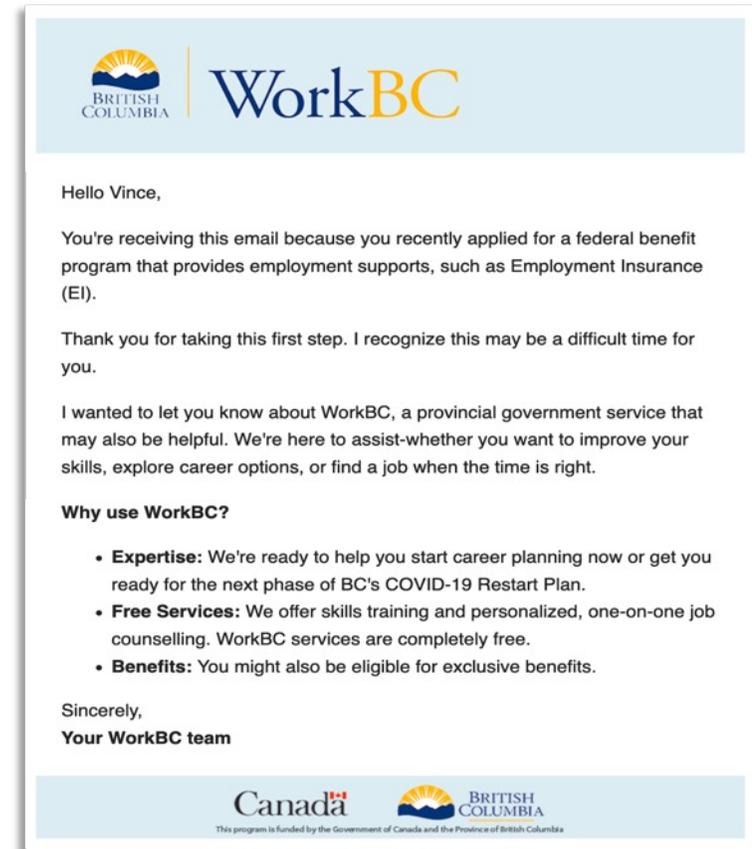
* I acknowledge and understand that by clicking the "submit" icon, I am attaching my electronic signature to this form, and that by doing so, I am providing the same consent as I would by manually signing a physical copy of this form to be contacted by a WorkBC Centre.

Submit

4 Submits expression of interest to the nearest job centre.

But what's the right email?

- Raise awareness
- Correct misperceptions
- Encourage action



Experimentation - Interventions

Email #1 – Checklist



You're one step away from valuable job resources!

Hello Vince,

You're receiving this email because you recently applied for a federal benefit program that provides employment supports, such as Employment Insurance (EI).

Thank you for taking this first step. I recognize this may be a difficult time for you.

I wanted to let you know about WorkBC, a provincial government service that may also be helpful. We're here to assist-whether you want to improve your skills, explore career options, or find a job when the time is right.

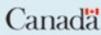
Take one final step to access job training and direct links to employers.

- 1. Applied to federal benefits
- 2. Opened this email
- 3. [CLICK HERE](#) to contact your local WorkBC Centre. A team member will be in touch soon.

Why use WorkBC?

- **Expertise:** We're ready to help you start career planning now or get you ready for the next phase of BC's COVID-19 Restart Plan.
- **Free Services:** We offer skills training and personalized, one-on-one job counselling. WorkBC services are completely free.
- **Benefits:** You might also be eligible for exclusive benefits.

Sincerely,
Your WorkBC team

 
This program is funded by the Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia.

Email #2 – Social Norms



Join 1000s of British Columbians accessing WorkBC services!

Hello Vince,

You're receiving this email because you recently applied for a federal benefit program that provides employment supports, such as Employment Insurance (EI).

Thank you for taking this first step. I recognize this may be a difficult time for you.

I wanted to let you know about WorkBC, a provincial government service that may also be helpful. We're here to assist-whether you want to improve your skills, explore career options, or find a job when the time is right.

I invite you to join the thousands of British Columbians who are turning to WorkBC in these uncertain times. Every year, 20,000 people successfully get back into work after accessing our support.

Let's start the conversation

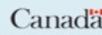
Step 1: [CLICK HERE](#) to contact your local WorkBC Centre.

Step 2: A team member will be in touch soon. No further action is required.

Why use WorkBC?

- **Expertise:** We're ready to help you start career planning now or get you ready for the next phase of BC's COVID-19 Restart Plan.
- **Free Services:** We offer skills training and personalized, one-on-one job counselling. WorkBC services are completely free.
- **Benefits:** You might also be eligible for exclusive benefits.

Sincerely,
Your WorkBC team

 
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Questions

We need an experiment to show proof of positive impact!



- 1 Which email is most effective?
- 2 Is email an effective way to support job seekers during COVID-19?

Notify



- Privacy preserving
- Scalable
- 100% free

How do we know if it works?

Sample



Random assignment



Key outcome measures



People who lost their job due to COVID-19



Email #1 – Checklist
(N=4624)



Email #2 – Social Norms
(N=4619)



Control (no email for 30 days)
(N=4765)

Important for ethics!



- Email opens
- Clicks
- Online submissions

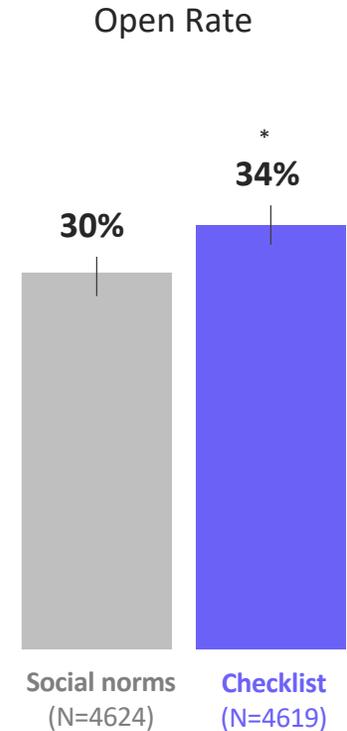


- Enrollments in WorkBC



Engagement

The **checklist** email outperformed the **social norms** email, driving engagement with WorkBC communications.



* $p < 0.05$

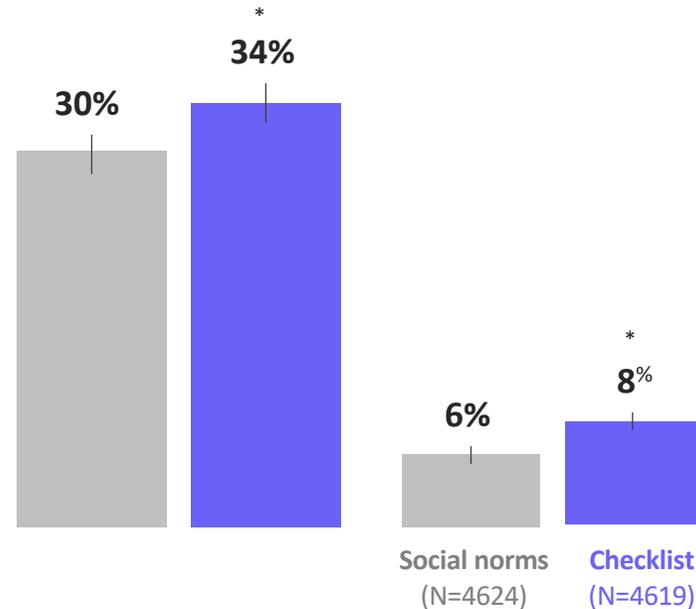


Engagement

The **checklist** email outperformed the **social norms** email, driving engagement with WorkBC communications.

Open Rate

Click Rate

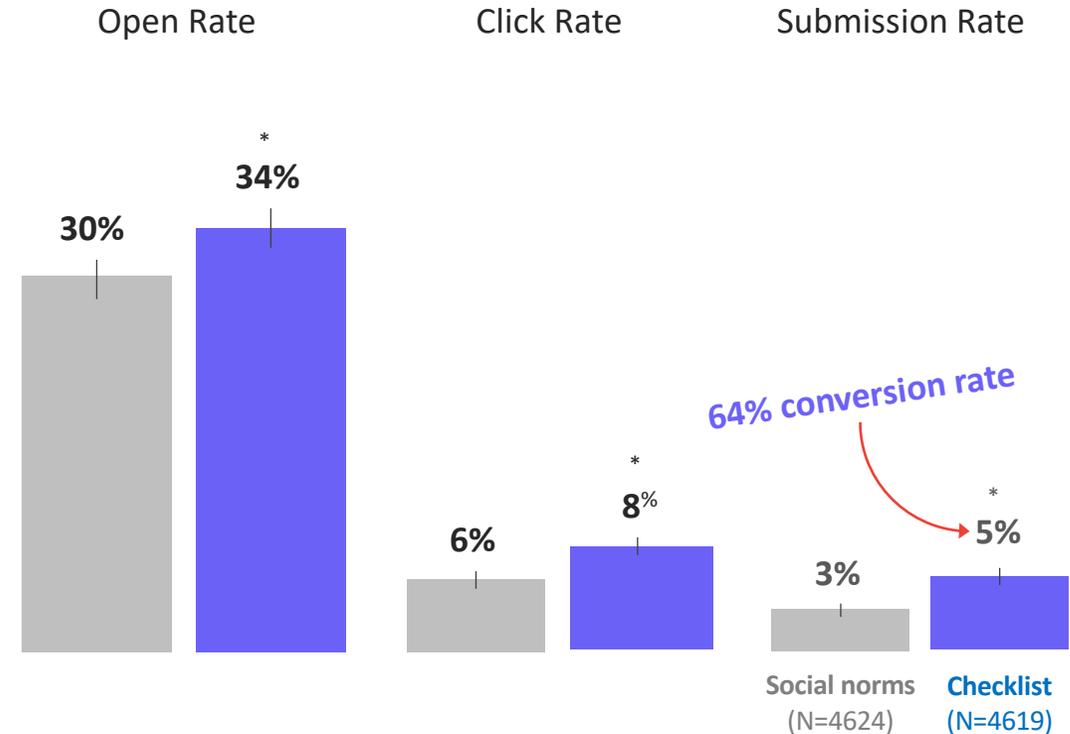


* p < 0.05



Engagement

The **checklist** email outperformed the **social norms** email, driving engagement with WorkBC communications.



* p < 0.05



Engagement

Higher than typical campaigns.

	Industry Average	Our Project
Open Rate	18%	34%
Click-Through Rate	2%	8%
Conversion Rate	25%	64%

Source: Mailchimp



Enrollments

3x

After just 30 days,
sending an email
tripled enrollments
in WorkBC.

Social norms
(N=4624)



Checklist
(N=4619)



1

3

5

Odds Ratio
(relative to control group)

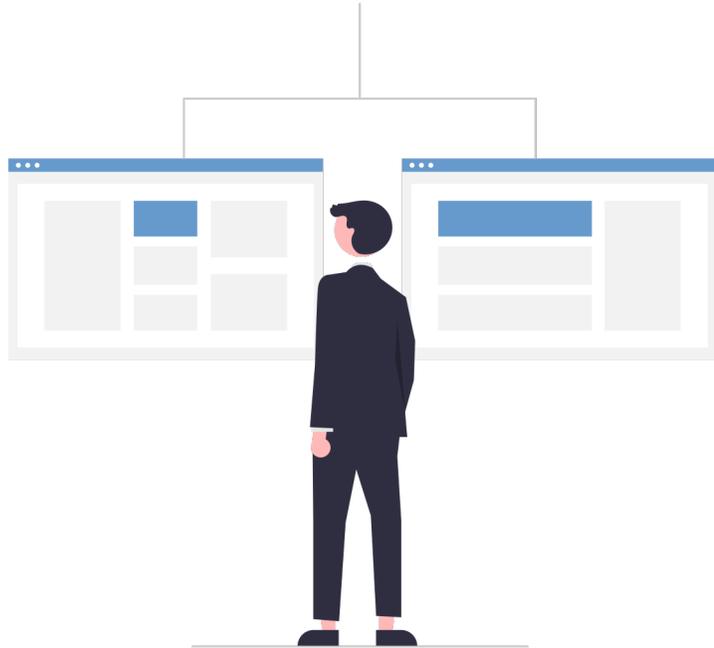
95% confidence intervals. Relative to control/waitlist group (N=4765) that received no email.

Additional findings

- Engagement was strongest among women and people w/ post-secondary education.
- No difference in treatment effects across subgroups.
- Our ethical “waitlist” approach worked.

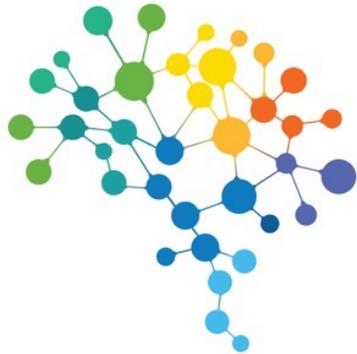
In conclusion

Experiments are a powerful solution when:



- 1 You need to make a decision.
- 2 Your decision should be evidence-based.
- 3 You want proof of positive impact.

Stay in touch and keep learning!



BC BEHAVIOURAL
INSIGHTS GROUP | Nudge for good
and with humility

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Mikayla.Ford@gov.bc.ca

A BIG Difference for BC Conference

Learn more: bigdifferencebc.ca

BIG's annual conference is on Nov 5, 2021.
This year it's free and fully digital.

BI Advanced Professional Certificate

Reach out: BIG@gov.bc.ca

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