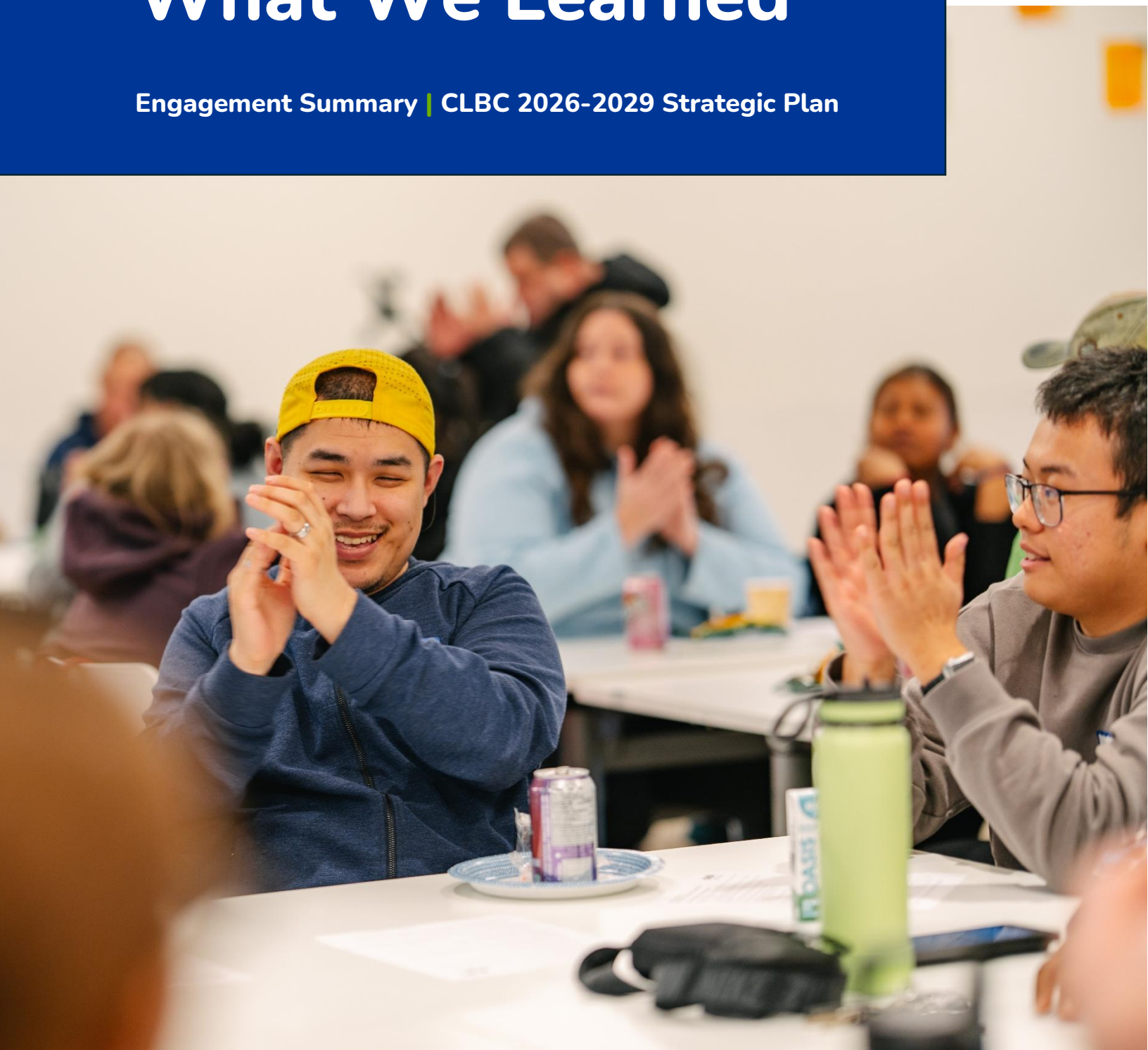
COMMUNITY LIVING
BRITISH COLUMBIA

What We Learned

Engagement Summary | CLBC 2026-2029 Strategic Plan



Introduction

Over the winter of 2025/2026, CLBC asked people with a developmental disability who receive CLBC-funded services, their families, and service providers to share what they think about some big questions to help us write our next strategic plan. A **'strategic plan'** is a high-level document that helps an organization focus and make decisions. This **What We Learned** report shares what CLBC learned from listening to people across British Columbia.

Engagement At-a-Glance

- **More than 1,100 people** across British Columbia shared their thoughts through:
  - **71 community-led toolkit sessions**.
  - A public survey
  - A CLBC staff survey
- **People who receive CLBC-funded services** and **family members** led over 50 toolkit sessions and engaged over 700 people. This means they were **the most engaged group!**
- 7 toolkit sessions were held by and with **Indigenous organizations, Indigenous people who receive CLBC services, and their families.**
- We heard from people all across the province and in every service region.

What We Learned

Communication was the most important issue raised. Across all groups, people said information from CLBC is sometimes hard to access, unclear, or not in plain language. People want proactive, consistent communication in multiple formats that are easy to understand and use.

People want to understand decision-making that affects them. Clear, plain-language explanations about how CLBC determines eligibility and makes decisions helps people understand who qualifies for services, why decisions are made, and why services are approved. This information supports informed choice, trust, and a stronger sense of fairness.

People want to feel seen and heard. Relationships and presence matter. People want CLBC staff to know them and ask questions to better understand their situation. The experiences that people have with their front-line CLBC workers, called facilitators, has a big impact on their trust, and overall experience, of CLBC.

A lack of role clarity creates confusion. This includes CLBC's role as an organization and the facilitator's role as a main point of contact. People recognize that facilitators manage large and complex workloads but are often unclear about what facilitators can and cannot do. Frequent staff changes are difficult, especially when people must retell their story. Greater clarity, continuity, and communication are needed.

Cultural supports are essential to health and wellbeing. Indigenous participants and others emphasized that cultural identity and connection to culture helps people to feel a sense of belonging, safety, and healing. People called for Indigenous-led, culturally grounded supports to be built into services so the whole person is supported, addressing their cultural, emotional, spiritual, and physical well-being together. . People want CLBC to build connections with more Indigenous organizations and Nations. They want CLBC to provide training to staff to advance culturally safe and trauma informed spaces.

The transition from youth to adulthood is especially challenging. Families and people who receive CLBC services described this period of time as stressful and confusing, with major changes in support offered, system processes, and language used by different agencies. People want earlier, clearer, and more coordinated planning for this transition.

Stronger coordination across government systems is needed. Many people experience gaps between CLBC, health, housing, and other government services. Challenges include inconsistent language, limited plain-language materials, and difficulty navigating multiple systems. People want better coordination of referrals between agencies and supports to help them connect, navigate, and access services.

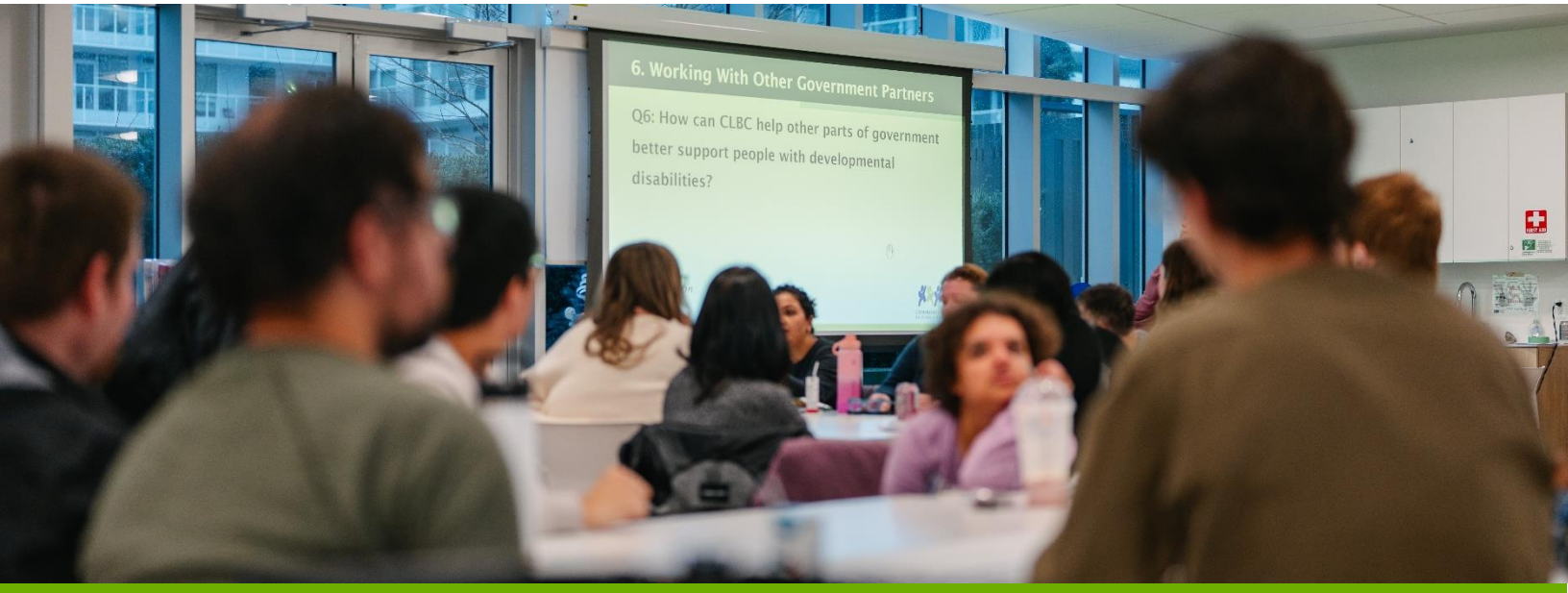


Photo: **Aspire Self Advocacy Group in Richmond, BC**

Acknowledgements

This engagement would not have been possible without the incredible dedication of 5 Self-advocacy groups (Aspire Self-advocates in Richmond, Self-advocates of Semiahmoo in Surrey, Self-advocates of Nanaimo, Speak Up for Self-Advocacy Awareness Group in Kamloops and Self Advocates of the Rockies in Cranbrook), 10 Indigenous organizations and groups (Prince George Friendship Centre, Victoria Friendship Centre, Secwépemc Child & Family Services Agency, Surrounded by Cedar, Island Metis Family and Community Services Society, Esquimalt Nation, Cowichan Tribes, Songhees, Simpcw, Prince George Native Employment and Training Association) and the collective effort of CLBC's 12 Community Councils, Indigenous Advisory Committee and 13 community partners who led toolkit sessions.

Through this process our partners and CLBC community have shown incredible dedication to coming together, uplifting, and amplifying the voices of individuals, families, and service providers. We raise our hands up in gratitude to everyone who shared their time, experiences, and perspectives to help make this strategic plan as inclusive as possible.

The Indigenous engagement process was facilitated by independent third-party consultants, Indigenous Community for Leadership and Development (ICLD). Toolkit design, data analysis, and reporting were completed by consultants Urban Matters.

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Background Info

Community Living British Columbia (CLBC) began in 2005 as a collaboration between self-advocates, families, service providers, and other community and government partners who were passionate about supporting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. For 20 years, CLBC has committed to working with these groups to build inclusive communities and connect people to supports. This report shares conversations with them, to help us understand what is important for our next strategic plan.

The 2026-2029 Strategic Plan

In 2025, CLBC began developing a new strategic plan to guide our work from 2026 to 2029. This plan will help set clear and realistic goals for the next three years.

Engagement Approach

To make sure the new strategic plan reflects the voices and experiences of the people we serve, as well as families and service providers, CLBC used a community-led engagement approach. We did this to make sure that the conversations about this strategic plan were grounded in transparency and collaboration.

To do this, CLBC developed an engagement toolkit and invited organizations and community groups to host their own sessions. **This resulted in the largest engagement campaign ever for a CLBC strategic plan, showing the power of inviting the community to be trusted partners in this work.**

Communication Methods

CLBC used the following approaches to share engagement opportunities from Fall 2025 to Spring 2026:

- CLBC website and social media
- Invitations to Community Councils, Self-Advocacy groups, and Indigenous organizations
- Existing in-person events with service providers and the CLBC Board
- Monthly E-update for people who receive CLBC services and families

The goal was to include as many people, groups, and regions as possible, especially families and people who are eligible for CLBC services.

Engagement Questions

CLBC listened to a lot of feedback before starting the engagement process. This included collecting feedback from CLBC Community Councils, the Provincial and Indigenous Advisory Committees, Self-Advocacy groups, service providers, formal complaints, and other sources.

Based on what we heard initially, CLBC developed a set of questions to guide input for the strategic plan. We did this because the strategic plan only covers the next three years. Starting with topics we already know matter to people helps make sure that feedback can lead to actions right away.

We asked questions about:

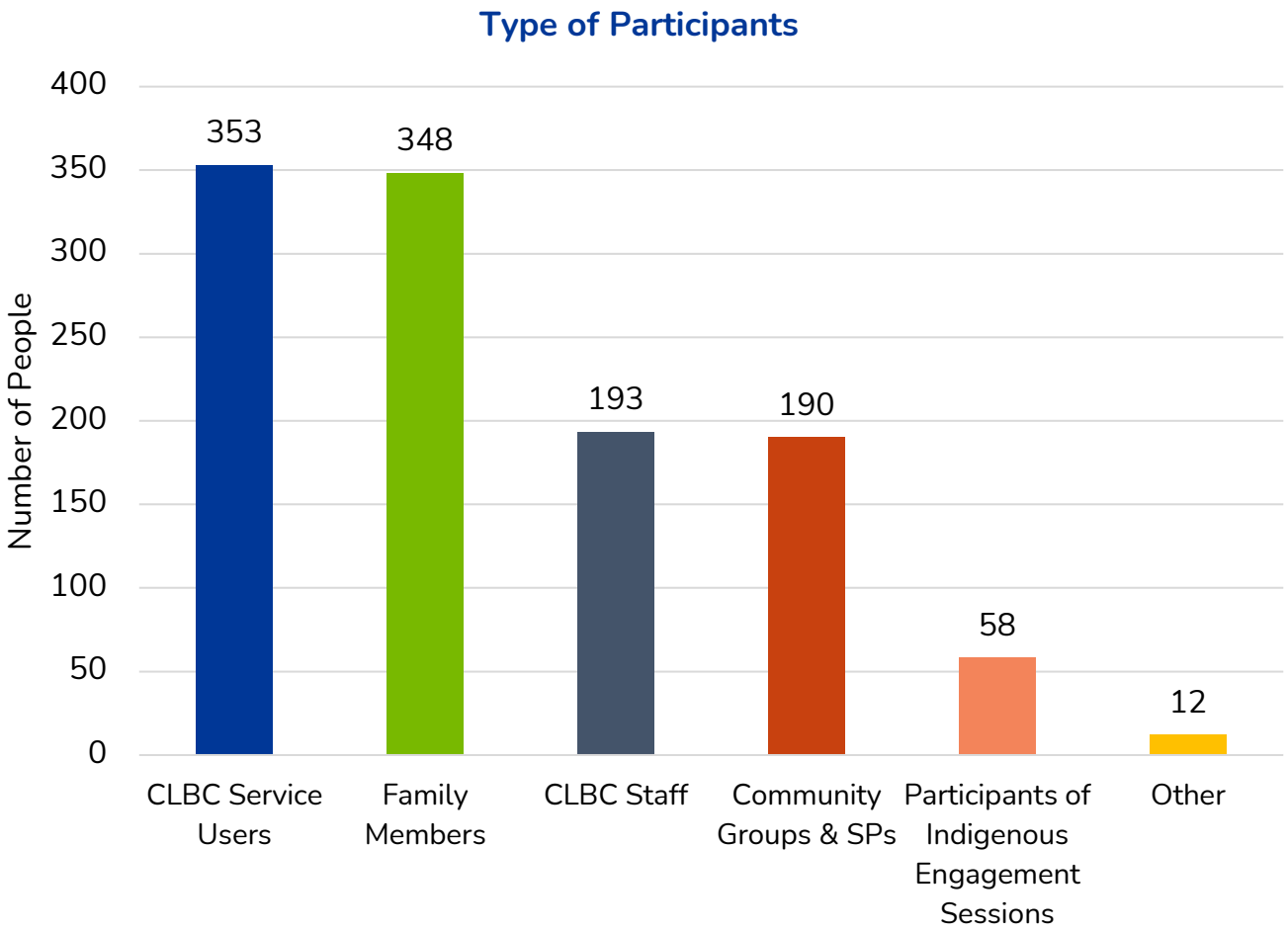
1. **Understanding CLBC**
2. **Communication and Transparency**
3. **Rights and Choices**
4. **Diversity**
5. **Fairness and Funding**
6. **Working with Other Government Partners**

The questions were:

- **What do you think CLBC does?**
- **What information is important for you to get from CLBC?**
- **What advice would you give CLBC about how to respect and listen to individuals' voices, while also recognizing the important role families play?**
- **How can CLBC get better at serving people from diverse backgrounds?**
- **CLBC is exploring ways to improve fairness in how services are provided. What ideas do you have for CLBC?**
- **How can CLBC help other parts of government better support people with developmental disabilities?**
- **What is one thing CLBC should START or STOP doing?**

Who We Engaged

- 350+ people eligible for CLBC services
- 340+ family members
- 50+ people from sessions with Indigenous organizations, Indigenous family members, and people who receive CLBC services
- 190+ CLBC staff members
- 190 service providers and representatives from community groups/organizations
- Others: Government partners, advocates, and community members



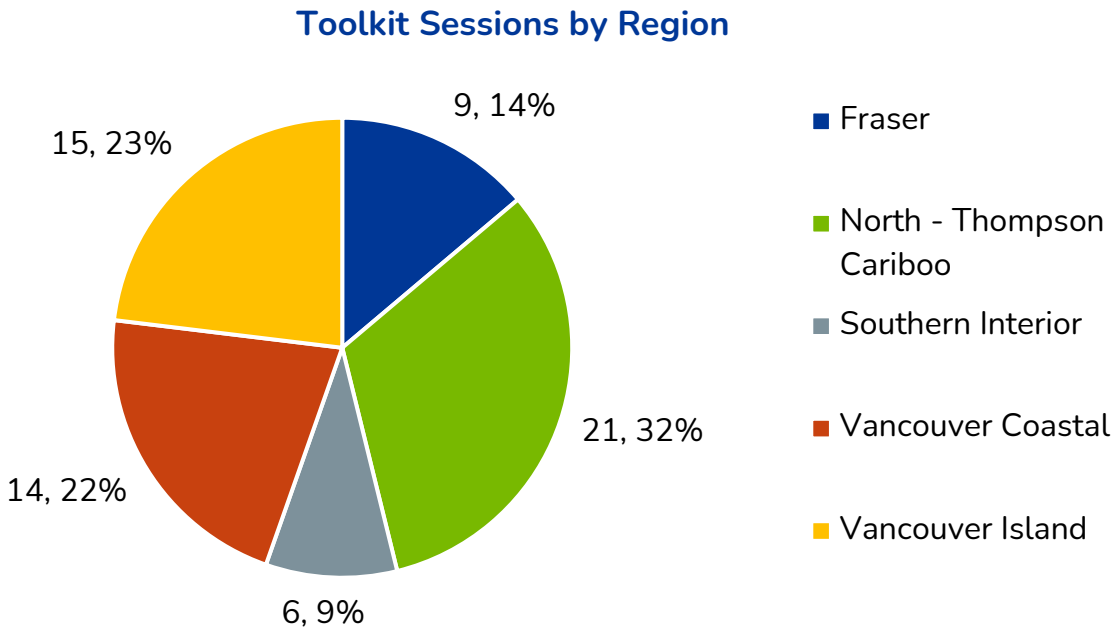
How We Engaged

We talked to people in a few different ways during the engagement process:

- **Community-led engagement toolkit sessions** – 750+ people
- **Indigenous engagement toolkit sessions** – 50+ people
- **Public survey** – 35 people
- **CLBC staff survey** – 193 people
- **'Data Party' validation sessions** – 50+ people
- **Other:** Some feedback was gathered from events with service providers, the CLBC board, and interviews with other government agencies.

Where We Engaged

Engagement for the strategic plan took place across British Columbia in CLBC's five service regions. The North–Thompson Cariboo, Vancouver Island, and Vancouver Coastal regions had the most engagement sessions.



69% (39) of the toolkit engagement sessions were in person and 31% (22) were virtual.

Things to Consider

No process is perfect and CLBC is reflecting on our approach to engagement.

What worked well:

- The questions were focused on areas CLBC can address in their strategic plan.
- We got to hear from a lot of people, the most for any CLBC strategic plan ever.
- People who receive our services and their families were able to participate in ways that work for them, and they were empowered to be leaders in this process.
- There were a mix of in-person and virtual options to suit different schedules and needs.
- Community groups helped us reach many people that would have been hard to engage, including:
    - Culturally safe space for Indigenous self-advocates and families.
    - Urban Indigenous communities.
    - Mandarin speakers, through interpreted sessions.
    - Rural, remote, and northern communities.
    - 1-1 interviews with individuals with complex needs.

The toolkit was adapted for different people and used in different ways so that more people could participate.

Lessons learned:

- We know people have shared their experiences with CLBC before, some people for many years. We are committed to doing more to share how feedback is used. This will help people see how their input is helping make positive changes at CLBC.
- It is hard to make sure that everyone gets heard. That is why we held validation sessions to talk to the people who facilitated toolkit sessions and make sure we understood their notes right.
- People with complex needs can be hard to reach. In future engagement, other types of engagement for this group would capture more of their voices.
- Not everyone knew that they could modify the approach to leading a toolkit session. CLBC can do better next time to make sure that people know.

What We Learned - Summary

Communication was the most important issue raised. Across all groups, people said information from CLBC is often hard to access, unclear, or not in plain language. People want proactive, consistent communication in multiple formats that are easy to understand and use.

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What We Learned – by Question

NOTE: This section shares an overview of the feedback we heard for each question. This is a summary, which means these are the most common ideas from all the people who shared. Sometimes one group shared something that others didn't. To capture this, we put these unique ideas into tables in each section labelled 'What Different Groups Said'.

Question 1: What do you think CLBC does?

CLBC wanted to learn more about **how people understand CLBC** and what it does. This will help us know how we can be **clearer** about our role.

What We Learned:

Overall, people had **mixed and/or uncertain understandings** of CLBC and what it does.

- 15-20% of people who participated were not sure what CLBC does.
- Most participants see CLBC as a connector who connects people with services and resources provided by organizations in the community, which is true.
- Most participants understand that CLBC plans with people and pays for some services and lets other parts of government help people with housing, health, and Persons With Disability (PWD) supports, which is also true.
- Some people are confused by the similar name of CLBC (the provincial agency) and local Community Living organizations, especially in the North.
- Some people are confused about the role of the facilitator and what level of support is available within their role. Something that adds to this confusion is when it varies from facilitator to facilitator or region to region.

- There are many agencies involved in providing support for people. We learned that people don't always know which agencies do what, or which agencies pay for what.

What Different Groups Said:

Self-advocates and people who receive CLBC services	• 36% of people who receive CLBC services believe that CLBC pays for all services, which is not true. • People who receive CLBC services want to understand CLBC better so they can make informed choices and control their own life.
Family members and councils	• Family members are the least confident group regarding what CLBC does.
Service providers and community groups	• Across audiences, service providers have the most accurate understanding of CLBC's role and mandate but still note confusion.

Question 2: What information is important for you to get from CLBC?

CLBC wanted to learn more about **what information people want** from CLBC. This will help us communicate better and know what type of materials will make information easier to understand.

What We Learned:

Communication and transparency are very important. This was the **largest theme** during the entire engagement process.

- Being a person with disabilities or a family member of a person with disabilities can be hard. It is even harder when the system feels confusing or unclear.
- Many people feel that information from CLBC can be hard to access, incomplete, and/or not in plain language.
- Some people are experiencing communication gaps, such as inconsistent communication with their facilitator or not knowing about service/staff changes. That affects their understanding of current supports and processes. This means it is hard to know what is going on and why.
- Some people want consistency in the information they receive from CLBC, and find it sometimes changes from one person to the next.
- Some people want proactive communication. This means that people don't have to ask CLBC for information – it is available to them quickly and somewhere easy to find.
- Some people want more regular check-in points with their CLBC contact.
- The role of the facilitator isn't always clear. This causes confusion related to expectations of case management, which is not part of the role.

What Different Groups Said:

Self-advocates and people who receive CLBC services	• Want to understand what is going on and why. • Changing facilitators is a point of confusion and frustration. • Are tired of telling their story again to new people. • Need information so they can make their own choices.
Family members and councils	• Are overwhelmed by multiple service systems. • Request earlier and ongoing planning for the transition from youth to adulthood. • Sometimes feel they have to 'fight' for information.

	• Recognize that facilitators have a hard job and worry about their capacity.
Indigenous participants	• Note specific challenges for families without strong advocates and/or with less resources. • Suggest to have more Welcome Workshops in community. • For CLBC to make early connections with schools and health departments in First Nations and Indigenous communities.
Service providers and community groups	• Would like more information before accepting individuals, what services other agencies offer, and eligibility information.

Overall, we learned that people want clear, complete, and plain language information (in a variety of formats) about:

- What supports and services exist, and when they change.
- Who qualifies for services and why (eligibility).
- How decisions are made (assessment, funding allocation – the use of the Guide to Support Allocation tool).
- The transition to CLBC, possibly starting at a younger age.
- What to expect over time (the long-term process and expected timelines for services).
- Why facilitators change and what their role is.
- Service provider/facilitator information and accountability.
- Stories, examples, and guides to make it easier to know what's happening and why.
- The structure of CLBC and its role among other government agencies.

Services change. They are different from the time I started.
I'd like to be aware of these changes.

- Person who receives CLBC services

Question 3: What advice would you give CLBC about how to respect and listen to individuals' voices, while also recognizing the important role families play?

CLBC wanted to hear people's perspective on **individual choice and the role of family.** Under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, all Canadians over the age of 19, regardless of intellectual disability, have the right to make decisions about their lives. CLBC must listen to and respect choices that individuals make for their lives. This can be challenging, because sometimes people who receive CLBC funded services and their family disagree about what is the right choice.

What We Learned:

Overall, people agreed that...

- **Individuals have the right to make their own choices.**
- **Families play a very important role** in supporting their loved ones.
- Some individuals need more support than others with decision-making and may rely on their families or someone else they trust to help.
- CLBC, family members, and other helpers, like service providers, should support the individual's personal goals and also be involved if there is a health or safety concern.
- Some people who have diverse communication styles, including those who are non-speaking, may rely on family members who understand them to support their decision-making. This role played by family members should be respected and valued.
- The role of family should be respected and considered by CLBC.
- Individuals may need help understanding their adult rights and responsibilities.

What Different Groups Said:

Self-advocates and people who receive CLBC services	• Note that not everyone has family and some have older family members, so individuals should get help with life skills and independence. • Individuals have the right to make the ultimate decisions about their lives.
Indigenous participants	• Highlighted complex situations like homelessness or abuse. In these cases, bringing multiple supports together, including cultural supports, is important to keep the individual safe.

	• Note that 'family' can mean chosen family too. Also consider the importance of kinship ties.
Service providers and community groups	• Agree with individual choice but shared that individuals might need help to make safe, informed choices.

If I can make the choice, I would like to make it **with the right supports.**

- *Person who receives CLBC services*

Question 4: How can CLBC get better at serving people from diverse backgrounds?

CLBC wants to hear what is important to people when it comes to **diversity and inclusion.** This will help us make sure that people from all backgrounds are supported in a way that works for them.

What We Learned:

People agree that **getting to know people** is the best way to understand their individual needs. This includes cultural needs, dietary needs, faith needs, accessibility needs, language needs, and more.

- A common suggestion was to strengthen relationships with cultural organizations so CLBC can connect people with the right supports.
- Another suggestion was more cultural and diversity training for CLBC staff and that CLBC should hire diverse people.
- Respect is connected to being informed and involved, returning to the theme of communication.
- People want CLBC to know them and their situation better. This was a common theme related to a desire for **relationship-building** and **presence** between CLBC staff and service users and their families.

What Different Groups Said:

Self-advocates and people who receive CLBC services	• Would like stronger relationships so their diversity can be understood. Many people said something along the lines of "just ask me", and "don't assume."
Indigenous participants	• Noted that assessments can feel culturally unsafe. • Suggested trauma-informed supports and proactive outreach to street-entrenched youth. • Hire Indigenous staff who can support cultural safety, traditional protocols, and teachings.

Q4b: What would strengthen cultural supports for the people CLBC serves?

CLBC also gathered feedback about what would strengthen cultural supports for Indigenous individuals we serve. We heard:

- Cultural needs are a core component of health and wellbeing and should not be seen as optional.
- It is important to not assume and recognize the cultural diversity among Indigenous peoples and across regions.
- Building culturally appropriate supports takes time and sustained effort. It is important to create this space for ongoing dialogue and feedback.
- Individuals may have varying connection to family, community, or identity. Recognize that providing cultural supports is complex and may look different from one person to the next.
- Document discussions about cultural needs so it doesn't need to be repeated.
- Cultural knowledge resources such as Elders or cultural navigators are important supports that can help individuals to be connected to their culture.
- When staff are equipped with cultural awareness training, they can better support individuals. It is also important to involve families and communities where possible. It is important to maintain consistent connections, move with the speed of trust and not make assumptions.
- Recognize that cultural participation may have sensory and accessibility needs, such as large and/or loud community gatherings.
- Increased outreach to rural/and remote communities would support limited resources in these locations.

> Hire staff who reflect the **cultural diversity** of the communities [CLBC] serves**.**
>
> *- Family Member*

Indigenous cultural supports (Elders, circles, cultural guidance) need resourcing.

- Indigenous engagement participant

Question 5: CLBC is exploring ways to improve fairness in how services are provided. What ideas do you have for CLBC?

What We Learned:

Fairness is tied to trust and transparency. Clear communication about eligibility, assessments, and other important decisions would improve people's sense of fairness at CLBC.

- Most groups agree that choices about CLBC services should be made on individual need (and current risk). Not one-size fits-all or first-come-first-served.
- During engagement, people noted some groups that may need extra or different services:
    - Older adults
    - People without family support
    - Youth transitioning into adulthood
    - People with multiple complex needs
    - People who are in unsafe situations might need more supports
- Families who advocate more vocally are sometimes seen as getting more services or support, and this is hard for everyone, including families.
- Families are often very involved with their loved one across the lifespan. Families who take on a primary caregiving role may not always have enough support. For many, this can lead to burnout and/or financial strain. Acknowledging the commitment and barriers faced by families is important.

What Different Groups Said:

Self-advocates, people who receive CLBC services, and family members	• Want reassessment to be easier. • Want more connection to community supports when services needs can't be met.
Indigenous participants	• Shared that the CLBC Guide to Support Allocation tool, home share, and funding choices fail to reflect real world complexity. • Also shared that diagnosis can be a structural barrier to eligibility.

Service providers and community groups	• Agree about reassessments and note that CLBC funding has changed over time causing service allocation to be uneven. This means different people get different amounts depending on when they were assessed.

Fairness comes from being **proactive** and not reactive.

- Person who receives CLBC services

Question 6: How can CLBC help other parts of government better support people with developmental disabilities?

There are **many agencies involved** in helping people in British Columbia. CLBC wanted to know what would help other government partners support people with disabilities.

What We Learned:

Everyone agrees that more **communication, coordination, and information sharing** between agencies and government ministries would be a good thing. This means different service providers are talking to each other about cases and/or service offerings.

- It is hard when other service providers and organizations do not use plain language.
- It is hard when other service providers and organizations use *different* language than CLBC, but it means the same thing.
- Other government agencies aren't always accessible, and some people describe experiencing ableism when trying to access support from other agencies. This makes 'navigating' the system even harder.
- In the past CLBC has helped in areas outside our mandate. This has caused confusion.
- Health, mental health, and housing were mentioned often as areas where more support is needed.
- People's experience with their front line worker has a lot of influence on how they perceive CLBC and their level of trust.
- It is harder for individuals, families, and service providers in remote, rural, or northern areas where there are very limited supports and resources.
- It can be hard to know what other services are available outside of CLBC.
- The transition from **youth to adulthood** is very challenging due to:
    - Transitioning from Ministry of Child and Family Development (MCFD) or Indigenous Child and Family services to CLBC services
    - Leaving the supports provided in the K-12 education system
    - Differences in services and language
    - New processes to navigate
    - The type and amount of support available

What Different Groups Said:

Service providers and community groups	• Specifically noted health and housing systems as areas that would benefit from more collaboration and coordination.
People who receive CLBC services and families, including Indigenous participants	• See a need for support with system navigation, such as a **liaison role** who helps make connections to other agencies (warm referrals). People said this does not necessarily need to be a CLBC staff member. • This is connected to **confusion about the role of the facilitator**, which is outlined under Q2.
Indigenous participants	• Shared the essential need for cultural safety and trauma-informed training for staff who work with Indigenous people who are eligible for CLBC services and their families.

If **everybody comes to the table,** how much easier it would be to support our families.

- Family Member

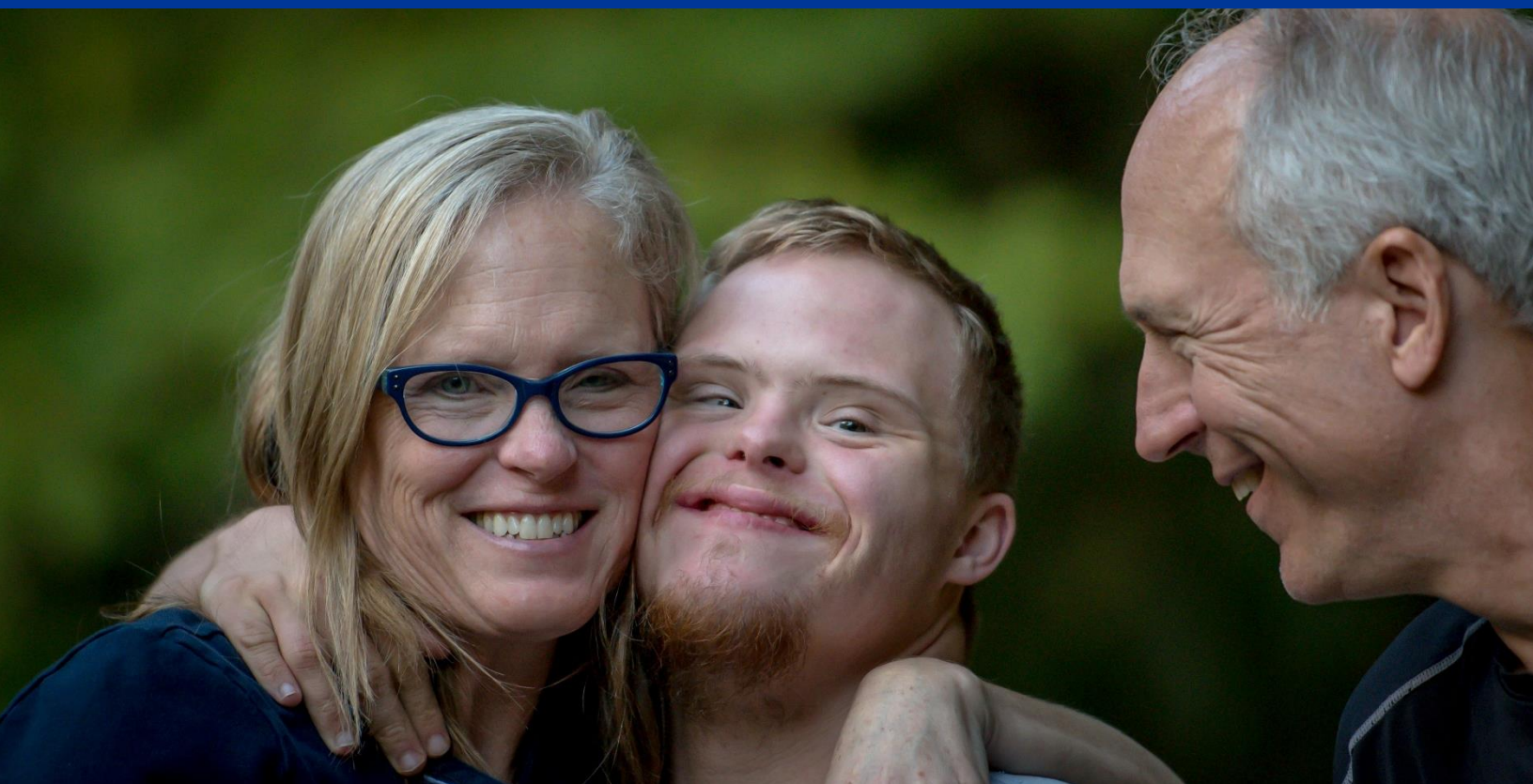
Question 7: What should CLBC start/stop doing?

We also asked what CLBC should start/stop doing. What we learned is that feedback from this question repeated the same points heard in questions above. The top answers were related to communication, transparency, relationship-building and connection opportunities, plain language materials, cultural supports, support during youth transition to adulthood, and improved coordination/liaison support for navigating other government agencies.

Next Steps

CLBC is committed to using the findings from this engagement process to help inform the new 2026-2029 Strategic Plan, making sure the goals are achievable and grounded in community voices.

Thanks to the more than 1,100 people who participated, the engagement component of this work is now complete. The strategic plan will be drafted in Summer 2026 and released to the public in Fall 2026.

For more information about this process, please visit the **Strategic Planning** page on CLBC's website. You can also contact the strategic planning team at **CLBC.StrategicPlan@gov.bc.ca**.

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