

## PROJECT TITLES

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Making it work! How to effectively manage maternity leave career transitions:  
An **employer's** guide

Making it work! How to effectively navigate maternity leave career transitions:  
An **employee's** guide

## PROJECT PARTNERS

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Canada Career Counselling (CCC) & CERIC



**ceric**

CANADIAN EDUCATION AND RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR COUNSELLING  
INSTITUT CANADIEN D'ÉDUCATION ET DE RECHERCHE EN ORIENTATION



**Canada Career Counselling**  
*Connecting the pieces*

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**FINAL PROJECT REPORT**

**December 22, 2016**

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## THE PROJECT TEAM

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### Canada Career Counselling Project Team Members

Canada Career Counselling ([www.canadacareercounselling.com](http://www.canadacareercounselling.com)) is based in Calgary, Alberta, and is a team of Registered Psychologists and Coaches specializing in career development.

**Avra Davidoff (Primary project lead)** is a Senior Associate at Canada Career Counselling with over 10 years of experience providing career development services to diverse individuals, including injured workers, adults in transition, youth at risk, post-secondary students, newcomers to Canada, and individuals experiencing mental illness. Avra also has experience designing and facilitating workshops and in creating career counselling resources. Avra was responsible for project coordination, research design and data collection, product development, and marketing and dissemination.

**LinkedIn Profile:**

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/avra-davidoff-a5657221>

**Dr. Laura Hambley** is a Registered Psychologist with 14 years of experience providing career counselling to people of all ages, as well as career development programs and services to organizations. She founded Calgary Career Counselling in 2009, and recently launched Canada Career Counselling. She is also a founding partner of The Leadership Success Group, offering leadership assessments, consulting and training to organizations in Alberta and beyond. She regularly contributes to research and student mentorship as an Adjunct Professor with the Department of Psychology at the University of Calgary. Laura was responsible for overseeing the project and resourcing requirements, ensuring execution and successful delivery of each step.

**LinkedIn Profile:**

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/drlaurahambley>

**The following individuals have been added to the project team. Each of these individuals has played a role in the capacity of research and/or content development.**

**April Dyrda** is pursuing her Master's in Counselling Psychology at the University of Calgary. She currently works as a practicum counsellor at Mount Royal University and serves as a student mentor through the Canadian Psychological Association and the University of Calgary. Her research is based on the career development of post-secondary students.

**LinkedIn Profile:**

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/aprildyrda>

**Julie Choi** is an Industrial/Organizational Psychology Consultant with a broad range of skills. Julie received her MSc in Industrial/Organizational Psychology from the University of Calgary in 2014, and is currently completing her PhD with a focus on understanding the factors that influence how a subordinate views their leader.

**LinkedIn Profile:**

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/julie-choi-b8154194>

**Dr. Colleen Lucas** holds a PhD in Industrial/Organizational Psychology from the University of Calgary. She lives in Calgary and practices in the areas of career counselling, and leadership assessment and development. Her research interests include psychological contract violation in the workplace, organizational learning and change, and career and leadership development.

**LinkedIn Profile:**

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/drcolleenlucas>

**Rebecca Teebay-Webb** is a Registered Provisional Psychologist with the College of Alberta Psychologists. She practices in the areas of career, personal and trauma counselling, and works with both adults and adolescents. Rebecca holds a Master's in Counselling Psychology from Yorkville University, and a BSc from the University of Liverpool.

**LinkedIn Profile:**

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/rebecca-teebay-webb-7513222a>

### **Project Team Members from Outside of Canada Career Counselling**

**Genevieve (Hoffart) Derban** is an MSc candidate in Industrial/Organizational Psychology at the University of Calgary, and research coordinator in the Individual and Team Performance Lab, where she manages key research partnerships. She is passionate about developing applicable tools and workshops to improve the functioning of teams in organizations across North America.

**LinkedIn Profile:**

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/genevieve-derban-563a5144>

**Michelle Cook** has a passion for coaching and assisting clients to achieve career satisfaction. She specializes in career planning, post-secondary education, and professional branding

through powerful resumes, cover letters, networking, and interview coaching. Michelle holds a BA in Psychology from the University of Calgary and is working towards her Certified Career Development Practitioner designation.

**LinkedIn Profile:**

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/michelledcook>

**Travis Schneider** is an Industrial/Organizational Psychology Consultant who leverages his expertise in assessment to guide clients on their career paths. Travis holds an MSc in Industrial/Organizational Psychology from the University of Western Ontario, and is currently completing his PhD on the validity of social media for job selection.

**LinkedIn Profile:**

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/travisschneider14>

**Dr. Stephanie Paquet** is a Senior Associate Consultant with Knightsbridge Leadership Solutions in Calgary. She has consulted with organizations in a variety of industries in the area of talent management, including the design of selection systems, facilitation of leadership development initiatives, succession planning, leadership coaching, 360 feedback, and psychological and behavioural assessments for selection and development. Stephanie is a graduate of McGill University and holds an MSc and PhD in Industrial/Organizational Psychology from the University of Calgary.

**LinkedIn Profile:**

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/stephanie-paquet-6215772>

**The following collaborators have been added to the project team. Each of these individuals has played a role in the capacity of a content reviewer of the guidebooks:**

**Dr. Roberta Neault** is an award-winning leader in career development, in Canada and internationally. Roberta is the President of Life Strategies Ltd., as well as the Associate Dean of the Faculty of Behavioural Sciences at Yorkville University. In both roles Roberta manages predominantly female faculty, staff and students, where navigating maternity leaves is an ongoing reality.

**LinkedIn Profile:**

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/robertaneault>

**Kathleen Johnston** is a Career Strategist who is passionate about facilitating women to live and work in their “unique zone of genius.” She is a counselling therapist, executive coach, stress consultant, career development instructor for over ten years, and contributing writer for the first Canadian colleges/universities career text. Kathleen holds a B.Sc. in Family Studies from the University of Alberta and M.A. in Pastoral Psychology and Counselling from St. Stephen's College.

**LinkedIn Profile:**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The primary objective of the project was to create two unique and valuable career development resources for individuals beginning and/or returning from a maternity leave. One resource targets individual women and the other targets HR/employers. In regards to the resource for women, we recognize the diversity of this group (i.e., marital status, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, geographic location etc.) and as such have created a resource that represents and is sensitive to the diversity of women’s experiences.

To the best of our knowledge, at present, in Canada, there is no singular career development resource that targets either the individual or the employer of those experiencing maternity leave career transitions. Neither are we aware of a singular resource that speaks to the diversity of experiences of women going through a maternity leave transition. For example, maternity leave transition is influenced by a number of factors including age, marital status, education level, culture, and socio-economic status. Consequently there is a gap for an inclusive resource on this topic from both the individual and employer perspective. Most of the Canadian resources related to maternity leave pertain to singular groups or singular topics, such as: employment insurance, employment law, post-partum depression, or work/life balance.

This project includes a comprehensive literature review in addition to both quantitative and qualitative measures for data collection, followed by data analysis, identification of and recommendations for best practices, culminating in the creation of resources for both targeted groups. The specific deliverables for the project include the development of the two career development guidebooks and webinars for employers and employees, as well as a presentation at provincial and national career conferences, including Cannexus and the Alberta Career Development Conference.

The overall timeframe to completion had originally been estimated to be approximately 30 months from receipt of funding. The marketing and dissemination has been a collaborative effort between Canada Career Counselling and CERIC. Both partners have worked to leverage existing networks and build relationships with interested organizations to mobilize knowledge and disseminate information as broadly as possible. The partners have leveraged mainstream

media networks and social media to create awareness. In addition to our formal partnership with CERIC, we have involved a number of other collaborators to recruit participants, disseminate information, and market webinars, including but not limited to the University of Calgary Women's Centre; SPB Organizational Psychology (Montreal), provincial career development and human resource associations (e.g., Career Development Association of Alberta, Human Resource Institute of Alberta); Business Professional Women Canada (BPW Canada), the City of Calgary Public Library, and various public and private organizations.

The primary objective of this project has been the provision of practical information, tools and resources for women experiencing this transition as well as employers and HR personnel supporting employees in this transition. There have been two main impacts from the project. The first is informing and better equipping women with knowledge, skills, and resources to better manage their maternity leave career transition and to have more purposeful conversations regarding their career development with employers and HR personnel. The second impact is better informing and educating employers and HR personnel with knowledge, skills, and resources to assist and support employees in the maternity leave transition process and to have purposeful conversations regarding the employee's career development during these periods of transition. The target audiences for this project are women experiencing maternity leave transitions and employers facilitating these transitions.

#### **Did the nature of any deliverables change over the course of the project?**

In addition to offering the career management guides in an electronic format (i.e., as e-books and downloadable PDFs), both the employer and employee guidebooks will now also be available in a hard copy format. This change has been made in order to appeal to various audiences and to increase the ease of accessibility of these resources. Print on Demand (POD) publishing made it more feasible to consider this option, a change that CERIC provided support to achieve.

#### **Did the timeline change?**

The timeline of this project was extended by approximately 6 months, due in part to unforeseen challenges faced along the way. In particular, the process of data collection took several months longer than originally anticipated as a result of difficulties recruiting HR/employers. Given that it was of utmost importance to the researchers that a representative and varied sample was gathered, it is believed that additional time and care during this process was warranted.

Additionally, considering the vast knowledge and expertise of the project team, the timeline was also extended to allow for additional reviews and collaboration regarding the content, design, and layout phases.

#### **Was the project carried out as intended?**

One component of the project that changed significantly was the collaboration between Canada Career Counselling and a partnering organization. The partnering organization agreed to participate in and provide support with the research, content development, and marketing

and dissemination phases. After the partnering organization missed several key deadlines and neglected to fulfill its agreed upon commitments, Canada Career Counselling and this partner mutually decided to dissolve the partnership in October 2015. This dissolution had a project wide impact that required significant adjustments both in terms of finances and product delivery. Most notably these impacts included: timelines (extra time dedicated to research and to get new reviewers and additional content support once the partnership dissolved), budget (in-kinds previously provided by the partnering organization now had a cost attached), marketing/dissemination (Canada Career Counselling had to take on all project activities, from survey outreach to finished products promotions, without a partnering organization).

**How does the anticipated outcome compare to the actual outcome?**

The research team had originally hoped for a large sample of employees and HR/employers from across the country to inform the development of career management guides that were both inclusive and comprehensive. During the research process, it proved difficult to recruit participants who identified as HR/employers. While rich data was collected from what proved to be a diverse sample, there is still the potential for underrepresentation in certain areas of Canada. We had hoped to interview 20 HR/employers but were only able to interview 14 participants. We interviewed 19 employees. We had also hoped to achieve equal rates of participation between employees and employers on the survey (actual 441 employees, 73 HR/managers). A significant amount of extra time was spent trying to recruit these HR/employer participants from Canada Career Counselling and CERIC's networks as our project partner had originally offered many contacts that did not come to fruition.

**Were there changes to any other components of the project?**

The project deliverables remained the same, however, some changes to the budget did occur. In many instances, there was a shifting of budget across line items as some in-kinds from our project collaborator did not materialize, and after the dissolution of the relationship, additional strain was put on the budget. To compensate for the dissolved relationship, we recruited additional reviewers and broadened the role of many of our team members to address the gaps in project activities. This created extra cost for the project and extended timelines, as more team members were involved in the project.

The originally suggested titles also underwent revisions. The titles were changed from:

*The Mother Of All Career Transitions: An individual's guide to maternity leave and career development*  
*The Mother Of All Career Transitions: An employer's guide to maternity leave and career development*

To

*Making it work! How to effectively manage maternity leave career transitions:  
An **employer's** guide.*

*Making it work! How to effectively navigate maternity leave career transitions:  
An **employee's** guide.*

These title changes were a result of feedback from our project partner who suggested the former could be subject to copyright infringement based on other products in the marketplace. Additionally, the change was made to promote a positive, strengths-based approach to maternity leave career transitions rather than a seemingly negative one as suggested by the original title. Finally, we incorporated the word “manage” for the employer guide and “navigate” for the employee guide to better depict the role of each party in facilitating an effective maternity leave career transition.

### **The Project and CERIC's mission, vision, and strategic priorities**

This project was consistent with CERIC's mission, which is “to encourage and provide education and research programs related to the development, analysis and assessment of the current counselling and career development theories and practices in Canada.” The project involved the gathering and analysis of relevant information to the practice of career development in relation to maternity leave career transitions. This project was consistent with CERIC's vision which is “to increase the economic and social wealth and productivity of Canadians through improved quality, effectiveness and accessibility of counselling programs, especially in the areas of career counselling and career education.” This project's outcomes (i.e., guidebooks and webinars) provide accessible resources (at low or no cost) to assist both employers and employees with accessing relevant information and to empower individuals to make informed career decisions, thereby enhancing their work and life quality.

This project was also consistent with CERIC's objectives of “research and learning, community hub and collaboration, and advocacy and profile,” as the project fills a gap in existing resources, broadens the area of career development, and expands the role of career development practitioners and consultants by helping employers better facilitate maternity leave career transitions. The project outcomes also serve as conversation catalysts and can be used as educational and planning tools for individuals, employers, and the community. Additionally the project was collaborative at all junctures, both within and outside of Canada Career Counselling including the research resource development, marketing, and dissemination phases. This project also fit with the vision, values and mission of Canada Career Counselling, which are

outlined as follows:

### **Canada Career Counselling's Vision**

- Provide exemplary career counselling services to Canadians (both individuals and organizations) based on sound tools and research.
- Be recognized as the leading career counselling firm in Canada, with a team of Master's and Ph.D. level psychology experts.
- Be known as professional yet approachable.

### **Canada Career Counselling's Mission**

- Helping people and organizations achieve their best through comprehensive, collaborative and customized career development services based on a diverse portfolio of psychological expertise.

### **Canada Career Counselling's Values**

Excellence ▪ Integrity ▪ Rigour ▪ Collaboration ▪ Fun

One of our objectives at CCC is to contribute to the community through practical research, including publications and presentations. Our goal is to help improve individuals' career choices and fulfillment, and in doing so create healthier, more effective organizations. This project services all of these purposes by focusing on both individuals (i.e., women experiencing maternity leave transitions) and the organizations employing them.

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## **THE NEED FOR THE PROJECT**

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There are many career development resources for particular groups, such as newcomers to Canada, individuals with disabilities, Aboriginals, and youth. To the best of our knowledge, at present, in Canada, there is no singular career development resource that targets either the individual or the employer of those experiencing maternity leave career transitions. Neither is there a singular resource that speaks to the diversity of experiences of women during the maternity leave transition. For example, maternity leave transition is a unique experience influenced by a number of factors including age, marital status, education level, culture, and socio-economic status to name a few. Consequently there is a gap for an inclusive resource on this topic from both the individual and employer perspective. Most of the Canadian resources related to maternity leave pertain to singular topics, such as: employment insurance, employment law, post-partum depression, or work/life balance.

Some of this information can be found in Human Resource textbooks, government resources and websites, or employee/employer guidebooks. However, the material is not comprehensive (i.e., singularly focused) and is largely policy or legal focused, with little to no content on individual or organizational career development. Additionally, there is an overall paucity of statistical information and career resources for women on maternity leave specific to the

Canadian career development context.

The needs addressed by this project have been the provision of practical information, tools, and resources for both women experiencing maternity transitions and HR/employers supporting these new and expectant employees. Recognizing the diversity of women and their experiences, these accessible and valuable resources have been made available at no or nominal cost and address several aspects of diversity by creating a resource that resonates with the experiences of a broad range of women in Canada. For instance, sections of these guidebooks specifically address the unique experiences and customized recommendations for women in diverse groups, namely: 1) adoptive parents, 2) young mothers under 25 and first time mothers over 40, 3) immigrant mothers, and 4) Aboriginal mothers (including those living in urban, suburban, exurban and rural, remote and northern communities). Although we attempted to make this resource as inclusive as possible, the scope of this particular project meant that not every type of diverse mother or employer could be addressed in this resource. Canada Career Counselling recognizes this as an opportunity for future projects to expand on this topic by further understanding and creating information targeted to other diverse groups including single mothers, LGBTmothers, mothers with disabilities, or multinational rural employers to name a few.

The information used to determine the existence of a gap and need for this project included: 1) an inability to locate relevant literature, specifically inclusive and user-friendly career development resources targeted to these groups, 2) anecdotal evidence of the lack of appropriate resources from clients, including individual and corporate clients, 3) enthusiasm and support from individuals in the career development and HR fields, 4) the personal experience of colleagues and the project coordinators, 5) the reported difficulty of individuals to pay for career counselling services and/or limited childcare to access community services, and 6) the reported inability of some organizations to afford corporate career development initiatives (i.e., having this resource is a much lower cost than launching an internal women's career development initiative).

The target audiences include: 1) women from diverse groups who are expecting, parenting, or anticipating pregnancy and/or adoption and are employed or considering employment, 2) HR professionals, 3) employers and organizational leaders, 4) career development practitioners, 5) human services workers and corporate consultants supporting women in career transition, and 6) organizations employing pregnant and parenting women.

Current resources are singularly focused (e.g., employment insurance, postpartum depression) and there is an absence of specific Canadian resources regarding this career transition targeted to individuals or employers. Additionally, there is no single resource that speaks to the diversity of women and maternity leave transition experiences in Canada. The project has the ability to inform and suggest best practices and emphasizes a developmental approach versus the current information grounded in policy and focusing on what not to do.

Additionally, although there are a variety of career services, they vary in type and quality with

more resources focused on job search and employment as opposed to career development. Many existing career services have qualifying criteria for access to services such as age, disability, or ethnic identity. Many individuals report being unable to afford fee-for-service career counselling when employed or on maternity leave. Additionally, new mothers can experience difficulty finding time or arranging childcare to access a variety of community-based and fee-for-service career development services. To address these limitations, this project's resources are easily accessible, not restricted to specific ages, ethnicity, relationship or socio-economic status, and are intended to be self-directed.

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## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

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The goal of the project was to provide self-directed, user-friendly career management resources to women experiencing a maternity leave transition including returning to employment, and to HR/employers assisting employees in this transition. Specifically, the goals for the project were as follows:

- To develop a socially inclusive, Canadian specific career management guide for a broad range of Canadian women transitioning to maternity leave and reintegrating to work after maternity leave
- To develop a socially inclusive, Canadian specific career management guide for employers and HR personnel to more effectively assist female employees transitioning to and reintegrating to employment after maternity leave
- To develop a webinar for employers and one for individuals
- To develop presentations for delivery at HR events and the Cannexus conference about the findings from this project

The objectives for the project were as follows:

- To further understand the individual experience of maternity leave on a range of diverse women's career development scenarios
- To further understand the HR/employer perception regarding employees' transition to and from maternity leave
- To provide practical tips, information, and to serve as an inclusive, self-directed career management resource for a diversity of women experiencing this transition
- To serve as a resource for organizations and HR/employers to assist employees in this career transition, thereby contributing to talent retention, employee development, organizational career development, and the creation of best workplace practices (i.e., what organizations can do above and beyond what the law requires in terms of maternity leave practice).

The goals and objectives stated in the proposal have matched the outcomes, except the goal of developing socially inclusive resources. While the resources speak to a range of diverse women, they do not include all types of diversity due to the limits of the project scope.

## PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS

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Although Canada Career Counselling had partnered with another community organization at the outset of the project, the partnership unfortunately did not last the length of the project and was dissolved in October 2015. The partnering organization had agreed to participate in and provide support with the research, content review, and marketing and dissemination phases. After the partnering organization missed several key deadlines and neglected to fulfill its agreed upon commitments, Canada Career Counselling and the partner mutually agreed to dissolve the partnership. This dissolution had a project wide impact that required significant adjustments both in terms of finances and product delivery. Most notably these impacts included: timelines (extra time dedicated to research and to get new reviewers and additional content support once the partnership dissolved), budget (in-kinds previously provided by the partnering organization now had a cost attached), marketing/dissemination (Canada Career Counselling had to take on all of the project activities, from survey outreach to finished products promotions, without a partnering organization). It also required Canada Career Counselling to reach out to community partners to facilitate project outcomes.

Other collaborators include Roberta Kuzyk-Burton, Community Learning Advocate of the Calgary Public Library central location who has agreed to assist in dissemination of the final product, and CCC has agreed to provide a free workshop on maternity leave transition to the Library clientele. Other collaborators involved in developing and/or disseminating this project include the University of Calgary Women's Centre; SPB Organizational Psychology based in Montreal; provincial career development and human resource associations (e.g., Career Development Association of Alberta, Human Resource Institute of Alberta) and various public and private organizations.

The collaborators played a variety of roles over the course of the project including writing letters of support, providing leads for or serving as research participants, giving input on content, contributing endorsements, agreeing to promote the project and resources.

No specific schedule was mandated in connecting with collaborators, rather the project team connected with collaborators when necessary. Connecting with collaborators was heaviest during the following phases: proposal development, research including participant recruitment, and content review phases. We expect the greatest collaboration and community outreach to occur during the marketing and dissemination phase. Although the specific frequency of unique outreach was not recorded, it is estimated that corporate and community outreaches would be in excess of 100 and growing.

### **What non-financial supports did you request and/or receive from CERIC?**

CERIC was actively involved in the process of reviewing the project proposal, recruiting survey and interview participants as well as promoting the project through their networks and social media outlets. The organization provided us with the opportunity to present and promote our project at the Cannexus conference, and provided marketing support such as postcards and

publishing an article from our project team on the topic of maternity leave career transition in the *Careering* magazine. Other forms of valuable support came through periodic check-ins, providing feedback on project content, guidebooks, and informal updates, with the CERIC team being highly responsive to questions and easily accessible to provide assistance (e.g., in obtaining ISBNs).

## ACTIVITIES AND RESEARCH METHODS

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### Research Methods

The project included a comprehensive literature review of existing information and resources related to this topic. The project also employed both qualitative and quantitative measures in the research and data collection phase through the use of surveys, focus groups, and one-on-one interviews to gather information. During the data collection phase, participants included HR/employers and women who were currently on a maternity leave or who recently returned from a maternity leave within the last 24 months. A detailed chronology of activities and events associated with this project can be found in the timeline below. Further details regarding the research (e.g. number of survey respondents, focus groups and interviews) are provided in Appendix B.

### Timeline and Milestones

The anticipated timeframe from receipt of funding to project completion was originally proposed to be 30 months. However, the final timeline was extended several months as a result of unforeseen challenges faced along the way, particularly during the time of data collection and during review/feedback of the content. There were a few key reasons to explain the extended timeline:

1. Our project partner missed several key deadlines and milestones and failed to deliver on key project components they had originally agreed to (e.g., supporting with the recruitment of research participants, especially HR/employer contacts across Canada).
2. Time lags due to multiple feedback rounds during the content development phase.
3. Unfamiliarity with the self-publishing process, which took longer than anticipated.
4. The primary project contact gave birth twice and took one maternity leave during the course of the project, necessitating the transfer and/or re-distribution of responsibilities between team members.

Everyone worked hard to keep things moving, but in hindsight estimating much more time on the second and third phases noted above would have been wise.

A detailed breakdown of the final timeline for the project is as follows:

June 2013	Letter of intent submitted to CERIC
October-December 2013	Project Proposal submitted to CERIC and contract finalized; Ethics approval from the University of Calgary; article published in Career Magazine <a href="http://calgarycareer counselling.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/ArticlePDF.pdf">http://calgarycareer counselling.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/ArticlePDF.pdf</a>  <a href="http://contactpoint.ca/2013/10/the-mother-of-all-career-transitions/">http://contactpoint.ca/2013/10/the-mother-of-all-career-transitions/</a>
January 2014 – February 2014	Focus group sessions with employees and HR/employers conducted and analyzed
February 2014	Interview development and recruitment
March 2014– July 2014	Interview sessions with employees and HR/employers conducted and analyzed
June 2014 – August 2014	Survey content design
August 2014 – March 2015	Survey data collection from employees and HR/employers; CERIC plays a key role in the marketing and recruitment of participants; recruiting HR/employers and individuals from Eastern Canada proves to be a challenge for the project
December 2014	Project featured through CERIC’s website <a href="http://ceric.ca/resource/making-work-effectively-manage-maternity-leave-career-transitions-employers-guide/">http://ceric.ca/resource/making-work-effectively-manage-maternity-leave-career-transitions-employers-guide/</a>
January 2015	Article featuring the project and project team published in the Globe and Mail <a href="http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/careers/career-advice/life-at-work/youre-huge-are-you-having-twins/article22424518/">http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/careers/career-advice/life-at-work/youre-huge-are-you-having-twins/article22424518/</a>
April 2015	Survey data analysis
May 2015	Attended and presented at the Alberta Career Development conference in Edmonton, AB

May 2015 – July 2015	Literature review and content development conducted for employer guidebook
August 2015 – January 2016	Literature review and content development conducted for employee guidebook
January 2016	Attended and presented at the Cannexus Conference in Ottawa, ON; promotional material for the guidebooks distributed through CERICs exhibitor booth
February 2016	Designer completes cover design and first draft of interior layout for employer guidebook
April 2016	Interviewed by Today's Parent on the topic of pregnancy and employment. Article will likely be out this summer (2016), pending editor approval, and mention project
April 2016	Employer guidebook finalized. Employee guidebook sent for design and layout. Employee guidebook expected to be available July 2016.
June 2016	Employer Webinar completed and provided live as well as recorded for future viewing. <a href="https://vimeo.com/170993415">https://vimeo.com/170993415</a>
August 2016	Employee guidebook finalized.
September 2016	Employee Webinar completed and provided live as well as recorded for future viewing. <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJ0npvbpG9I">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJ0npvbpG9I</a>

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## DELIVERABLES

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Impacts for this project include:

1. Informing and effectively equipping women with knowledge, skills, and resources to better manage their maternity leave career transitions and to have more effective, purposeful conversations regarding their career development with employers and HR personnel.
2. Informing and equipping employers as well as HR personnel with knowledge, skills, and resources to better assist and support employees through the maternity leave transition process and to have purposeful conversations regarding employees' career development.

In order to achieve these impacts, the following project deliverables have been designed: (details of project deliverables, data collection, and ethical considerations in the appendices)

1. The development of the two career development guidebooks for employees and employers, available as an e-book, downloadable PDF or in hard copy format (<http://ceric.ca/project/making-it-work-managing-successful-maternity-leave-career-transitions/>)
2. The development of the two career development webinars for employees and employers. The webinars will provide an overview of the project research as well as practical strategies to manage maternity leave career transitions.  
Employer webinar <https://vimeo.com/170993415>  
Employee webinar <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJ0npvbpG9I>
3. A presentation at the Cannexus conference in Ottawa, ON (January 2016) (<http://cannexus.ca/download/april-dyrda-laura-hambley-making-it-work-managing-maternity-leave-career-transitions-pdf/>)

Although these are the main impacts, we have noted many more potential impacts of the project, as outlined below. However, it should be noted that some of these other impacts are within and some go beyond the scope of the project specifically in terms of measuring and evaluating outcomes:

- Encouraging individuals and organizations to take a proactive versus reactive approach to women's career development
- Encouraging organizations to act in a socially responsible manner. Improving organizational talent retention and employee engagement, and thereby organizations' competitiveness and success in the marketplace
- Highlighting the inherent complexity and uniqueness of women's career development, emphasizing the intersection of personal and career roles
- Acting as a source of support, validating the experiences of diverse women who have had similar experiences
- Broadening the area of career development research and highlighting the expanding role of career development counsellors and practitioners
- Facilitating discussion and collaboration within and between industries and professionals
- Developing best practices both within the career development and HR fields
- Serving as a benchmark resource for organizations supporting pregnant and parenting employees
- Encouraging future research related to this topic and the development of additional resources to specific parent subgroups (e.g., fathers, same sex couples)

**If you had an opportunity to do this project again, are there things you would do differently?**

1. **Ensure that your project partners are a good fit** – It was important to the research team that our work was informed by expert input, and national partners were therefore sought out. While these partnerships offered promise in the early stages of the project,

the logistics of maintaining these contacts (e.g., limited time and availability of contacts) and previous project commitments of our partner proved to present a challenge. Regretfully, this partner was unable to fulfill agreed upon commitments.

2. **Give yourself enough time** – Many project tasks take longer than anticipated (e.g., back and forth with the publisher of the guidebooks), and there are often unforeseen circumstances that might interrupt the regular flow of work. If given the opportunity to conduct this project again, we would ensure that our timelines reflected these additional considerations. For example, we would have added more time during the data collection, writing and reviewing, and design and publishing stages. Given that all of our core project team members were employed full-time and/or engaged in multiple roles (e.g., contractor, graduate student), team members had to be creative in fitting their project commitments into their already busy schedules.
3. **Consider hidden costs** – When creating your proposed budget at the outset of a project it can be difficult to imagine hidden or additional costs that might present themselves. For example, over the course of a 30-month project, temporal costs associated with e-mail correspondence, administration, scheduling, interviewing participants, compensating reviewers and attending meetings can be easy to misjudge or even overlook. Rather than focus on the big picture and outputs of the project, it's important to also consider the daily or "behind-the-scenes" costs associated with conducting a project of this magnitude, including project management time. We would recommend a project coordination fee that equates to a percent of the overall project. Further, since the last 10% is not paid out until final report is submitted and approved, making sure to budget for this delay from a cash flow perspective is important.

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## MARKETING AND DISSEMINATION

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The audiences for promoting and marketing included new and expectant mothers, HR professionals and practitioners, employers, career development professionals and other related services. Canada Career Counselling has deep and trusted relationships with individuals, community, and corporations that will be leveraged to facilitate knowledge mobilization and product dissemination. The resources associated with this project are primarily available for download as e-resources. Additionally, each guidebook is accessible in the form of a downloadable PDF and in hardcopy print. Webinars were an hour in length and were offered for free to both employers and women. Some organizations have agreed to link the resources to their website, carry promotional materials, and promote the resources to relevant networks including clients, business partners, employees and colleagues. The marketing and dissemination plan also required Canada Career Counselling Associates to attend relevant functions (e.g., conferences, lunch and learns, networking events, and meet with community agencies). As an organization, we have also employed the use of social media (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn) and leveraged connections with the media to reach a larger audience. Recognizing that specific audiences require different dissemination strategies, we have focused

on 3 dissemination tactics (outlined below) to maximize the project's reach.

### **Dissemination Strategies**

- Dissemination for Awareness: Targeting audiences that may not necessarily use the resource but can promote the resource to their networks, clients, or customers (e.g., media, colleagues, community agencies, daycare providers).
- Dissemination for Understanding: Targeting audiences that can benefit from having a deeper understanding of our work (e.g., provincial and national career development and HR organizations).
- Dissemination for Action: Targeting audiences that have the capacity to change practices, policies, and/or behaviours as a result of the learnings made available through our project guidebooks and webinars (e.g., employers, pregnant and parenting working mothers, and career development professionals).

Further, knowledge mobilization included operationalizing the above strategies through the following channels:

- CERIC (website for promotion, and assistance with ISBN process), Careering Magazine
- Attendance, networking, and presentation at Cannexus in Ottawa, ON and the Alberta Career Development Conference in Edmonton, AB
- Relevant media (e.g., Today's Parent, Globe and Mail, CTV news Calgary and Winnipeg, Global TV Winnipeg, Yummy Mummy Blog).
- Tellent
- College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta
- National, provincial and local Human Resource Associations and Career Development Associations (e.g., Canadian Council of Human Resources Associations-CCHRA, Human Resource Institute of Alberta [HRIA], Career Development Association of Alberta, British Columbia Human Resources Management Association [BCHRMA], and Human Resources Professional Association [HRPA], and Strategic Capability Network [SCN])
- Canada Career Counselling website and social media channels
- The Leadership Success Group websites and social media channels
- The University of Calgary Women's Resource Centre
- Deloitte Canada
- Enerflex
- Life Strategies
- Alberta Treasury Branch
- ABC Engineering
- Status of Women Canada
- Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses
- Labour market information centres, employment insurance offices, career development service providers
- Public libraries and community centres

- Professional Associations (e.g., Accountants, Teachers)
- Newcomers and immigrant programs (e.g., Calgary Catholic Immigrant Services)
- Gay and Lesbian Community Services Association
- Aboriginal HR Council, Aboriginal Futures and Career Training Centre
- The City of Calgary
- Calgary Family Services
- Adoption Council Canada and Adoption Options
- Calgary Immigrant Services

Note that some organizations outlined above have been added or dropped from the original proposal due to shifting project support.

**Was the dissemination successful?**

The dissemination of this project has been met with a high level of enthusiasm and support from community members and partners. Conference presentations have generated a great deal of discussion and interest among delegates.

Canada Career Counselling has been invited to speak on a variety of topics and/or host webinars related to Maternity leave career transitions by a variety of community agencies and career development practitioners across Canada. Canada Career Counselling also continues to receive requests for media contributions on related topics and received requests for collaboration on related projects and associations.

**What were critical factors that impacted the successful implementation of your plan?**

Having community partners involved in the marketing of this project has been a critical source of support. Positive endorsements from organizations such as Deloitte Canada, ATB Financial and CERIC, as well as support from partners who have agreed to be involved in the dissemination of the project, has promoted our work to a level of national recognition. Additionally, ensuring that connections and partnerships were made with collaborators employed in a diversity of public and private work environments located across the country allowed our team to maximize the marketing of this project to as expansive an audience as possible.

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**REVENUE GENERATION/COST RECOVERY**

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The webinars and guidebooks for both employees and employers will be available at no cost online (free PDF), and can be purchased in the form of a hardcopy guidebook for \$19.99 or as an e-book for \$13.99. As CERIC currently has the online infrastructure to sell and distribute career development resources, CERIC will be responsible for managing the sales of the resource and webinar, with the project partner, Canada Career Counselling receiving a royalty of 30% per resource sold, after CERIC’s cost have been recovered. The decision to make the webinars free

of charge and to charge the above noted prices for the resources was determined after receiving feedback from project partners, including feedback obtained from CERIC. The cost structure of the resources was implemented to be in line with other career development products, especially those found on CERIC's website.

As of December 8, 2016, CERIC reported a total of \$60 in sales from the guidebooks.

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## MONITORING AND EVALUATION

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CERIC will be monitoring the number of downloads and purchases of the guidebooks/webinars.

### Employer Resource

As of December 8, 2016, 479 copies of the free employer resource have been downloaded and 67 participants registered for the employer webinar in June 2016. Since the webinar was made available as a free recording, it has been viewed 270 times (Vimeo) and viewed 62 times on YouTube. Two print copies of the employer guide have been purchased

In answering the webinar evaluation, 66.7% of respondents *strongly agreed* that the webinar provided relevant information and 33.3% *agreed* with this statement. In response to the question, "How will the webinar content be of use to you in your work?" one participant noted that "This was useful information for myself as a career counsellor and my clients who are experiencing their own transition back to work after mat leave. This is also useful to share this with my career development association in my province."

### Employee Resource

As of December 8, 2016, 511 copies of the free employer resource have been downloaded and 51 participants registered for the employee webinar in September 2016. Since the webinar was made available as a recording, it has been viewed 26 times (Vimeo) and viewed 36 times on YouTube. One print copy of the employee guide has been purchased.

In answering the webinar evaluation, 66.7% of respondents *strongly agreed* that the webinar provided relevant information and 33.3% *agreed* with this statement. In response to the question, "How will the webinar content be of use to you in your work?" one participant noted "Examine policy and strategies that could be put in place to support working mum e.g. mentoring program for returning employees, training & development, raising awareness of potential bias and prejudices, building culture of inclusivity and fairness for all workers or specific groups.

In reviewing Canada Career Counselling's Google Analytics, the most frequently viewed page is the projects page which features the *Making It Work!* Project. Additionally, since making the employer guidebook and webinar available on Canada Career Counselling's site in June, page

visits increased from 2.88% in May to 13.14% in June. Also the most unique visits to the project page occurred during the month of September and October of 2016, with 99 and 93 page views.

Initial anecdotal feedback on the guides has been positive with comments indicating the necessity of the resource and the ability of the guide user to select strategies that are most appropriate to their organization.

**Session feedback from the 2015 Alberta Career Development Conference are provided below.**

### **Avra Davidoff - Managing Successful Maternity Leaves**

Average score (out of 5) from survey of 6 individuals

Overall quality of presenter(s): **4.6**

Overall knowledge of the presenter(s): **4.8**

Ability of presenter(s) to meet your learning needs: **4.6**

Overall quality of presentation: **4.83**

Overall relevance of presentation to Career development: **4.6**

#### **Comments:**

- Well done
- Great - insightful
- Very informative. Brought forward interesting topic - really makes me think about what role I have in contributing or not to the problem
- Great topic and great presenter

### **Session feedback from Making It Work! Presentation at the City of Calgary Public Library August 2016. Facilitated by Avra Davidoff**

Average score (out of 5) from survey of 8 individuals

The workshop increased my understanding of the maternity leave career transition **4.33**

I learned some strategies to better support maternity leave career transitions: **4.5**

The workshop provided useful and applicable information **4.5**

The facilitator held my interest: **4.83**

The facilitator was knowledgeable about the topic: **4.83**

#### **Most interesting aspect of the workshop**

- Communication plan - Return to work plans and comeback coaching
- Potential strategies regarding setting up a communication strategy for training, job

- opportunities, and company updates
- Differences between employer and employee assumptions
- Discussing strategies to support career transitions: communication plans and buddy systems
- Communication plan (buddy system)
- Tips on how to communicate with employees on maternity leave

Also the facilitator received two emails from participants, excerpts below:

“I just wanted to send you a quick thank you note for your presentation yesterday and for the insights on maternity leave both for employers and employees. We’ve already identified a few steps we can include to make mat leave more inclusive and supportive for our employees.”

“Thanks so much for the presentation today. I thought you did a great job in a short time presenting on an important topic, and am glad I attended your session.”

Finally, a presentation was made at the Cannexus 2016 conference in Ottawa, which went well and generated some great questions, discussion, and national interest in the project. We did not receive evaluations from Cannexus regarding this presentation, however, delegates who attended the session did indicate that the project was timely and served to fill a major gap in the area of career development. Canada Career Counselling will also be presenting on the project at both Cannexus and at the Alberta Career Development Conference in 2017.

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## IMPACT ASSESSMENT/OUTCOMES

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Outcomes from the project will be measured as follows:

- Number of downloads of resources
- Testimonials stemming from the use of resources from organizations and individuals
- Pre-post surveys with HR professionals and individuals regarding utility of the career development resources and webinars
- Evaluations from those attending information sessions and webinars

### **What were the actual outcomes of the project?**

Many organizations and individuals have showed enthusiasm for the project and resource guide content, and have anecdotally noted making adjustments in their personal life and professional practice, based on information in the resources (e.g., establishing and enacting a communication plan). However, long term change is likely to materialize over several more months and years, the monitoring of which is beyond the scope of this project.

### **What are your plans for the use of the resources?**

We are excited about the potential for these resources as they serve as a unique source of information regarding maternity leave career transition within the Canadian context. While other resources tend to focus exclusively on legal (e.g., employment insurance) or health-related topics (e.g., postpartum depression), this project is the first of its kind to sufficiently integrate the career development perspective.

The employee guidebook and webinar have been designed to support and encourage women in developing promising career management strategies not only in navigating their maternity leave career transition, but other career decisions they will experience in the future. It is expected that these resources will serve to empower women to become and/or maintain the role of an active agent in their career development process. By equipping women with skills and knowledge to manage their career more effectively, it is our hope that they will become an agent of influence so that others recognize the opportunities in attracting, retaining, and developing working mothers.

The employer guidebook and webinar provides HR/managers with the opportunity to stimulate discussion and collaboration both within and between organizations, industries, and professionals to begin to determine leading and promising practices not only in relation to maternity leave career transitions, but also for women's career development as a whole. Employers learn that through commitment and collaboration, they can establish benchmarks, build capacities, and develop competencies in their organization by understanding and addressing existing or potential obstacles that prevent both themselves and working mothers from realizing their potential.

#### **Were there any unexpected outcomes or unintended consequences?**

There were 2 notable unexpected/unintended outcomes:

1. Canada Career Counselling has been able to expand its corporate network and establish relationships with similar and likeminded professionals and expand our service offerings to complement the expertise gained from the project.
2. Continued interest from community stakeholders in seeing similar resources developed for working fathers (e.g., resources on paternity leave).

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## **KEY FINDINGS/INSIGHTS**

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**Doing research in a stigmatized area can be difficult** – starting this project we expected that many mothers and employers would be open and willing to speak to their experiences of the maternity leave career transition process, however, this was not always the case. While those who came forward were adamant that this research was needed, we ran into difficulty when recruiting employers, presumably as a result of this stigmatization. This also meant that many of the HR/managers that we were able to recruit tended to come from organizations where maternity leaves were managed well, or there was an evidenced culture of learning and improvement. Unfortunately, we believe we were left with an underrepresentation of

perspectives that we believe are likely to be closer to the norm of every day practice. As the objective was to share best practices regarding maternity leave career transitions, it is likely that a comprehensive understanding of organizational and individual challenges and opportunities was not fully captured and thus not all best practices have been discovered.

**Consider your audience** – when deciding how to disseminate your knowledge and collect your data, it is important to consider who your target audience is and what the best way to reach them might be. Given that we are marketing to women experiencing maternity leave transition, we were cognizant throughout this process about what would be the best way to reach and recruit these individuals. With many new mothers quite literally ‘in transition,’ much of our data collection was done virtually, with interviews being conducted over the phone and surveys completed online. In order to stay flexible, we also decided to make our resources available in a variety of formats so as to maximize the ease with which they could be accessed. Also, given the difficulty of engaging employers, particularly in the data collection phase, it would have been an added benefit to provide more time for this phase of the project and include a larger budget to reach this group such as through advertisements, as many provincial professional associations charge for advertising to their members.

**Collaborations are key** – looking back on the project it is evident that we would not be where we are today without the support of our many collaborators and community partners. Whether it be through connections that allowed us to tap into networks of people across Canada during the process of data collection, individuals who made themselves available to assist with the editing and design of our resources, or members of the community who generously provided us with endorsements or dissemination support, the outpouring of encouragement and assistance has been fundamental to the success of this project. To better determine fit of partnership between collaborators in the future, we would consider factors such as shared interest in the project topic, common values, and references from other community partners who have previously worked with the candidate organization specifically and are able to speak to the accessibility and availability of the potential partner to deliver on their commitments.

**Did the project partnership funding lead to any capacity building within your organization?**

During the course of this project, an employee of Canada Career Counselling took 1 maternity leave and the company will experience another maternity leave career transition this fall. Both employees were project team members and having relevant information from the guidebook to facilitate and support the transition as well as an opportunity to implement some of the suggested strategies outlined has been beneficial to both Canada Career Counselling and its employees/contractors. Implementing suggested strategies from the guidebook (e.g., communication and reintegration plan) has had positive impacts not only on the individuals experiencing the transition (e.g., clearer expectations, feeling supported, sense of belonging), but has been equally impactful on colleagues (e.g., knowing what to expect, creating a sense of team and support network). This resource has been distributed to our entire team to allow us to better serve our clients (both individuals and organizations) in managing maternity leave career transitions. The guidebooks and webinars serve as important artifacts and sources of

pride not just for project members but for all those affiliated with Canada Career Counselling.

**Did the project partnership funding lead to any capacity-building within your community stakeholders?**

Some of our project supporters have disclosed their intention to examine their organization's policies and processes regarding maternity leave with some piloting increased support for pregnant and parenting women (e.g., comeback coaching).

**How might the learnings from the project impact your service, methods and future thinking?**

The guidebooks and webinars are valuable resources that can be used to complement our work with clients and serve as a reminder to be watchful of trends in our work that could necessitate another resource creation (e.g., paternity leave career transition). We can also use the learnings and outcomes of this project to encourage others with interest in the career development field to take on a similar initiative.

**Did you undertake any anticipated or unanticipated political activities with funds provided for this project partnership?**

No anticipated or unanticipated political activities were undertaken with the funds provided.

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## **NEXT STEPS/RECOMMENDATIONS**

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In order to enhance the work done through the project, the following next steps have been considered:

- **Translating the materials into French** – Given that this was a national project, it will be important to consider the significance of translating the guidebooks and webinars into French so as to support its national scope. While the project team had ensured that a bilingual researcher was available to conduct interviews during the data collection process so as to allow for the perspectives of French speaking Canadians to be captured, the same level of inclusivity has not been realized in other parts of the project. Given the additional temporal and financial resources that would be required to translate these materials, it has been deemed outside the scope of the present project but could be considered by CERIC at a later date.
- **On-going evaluation of the project** – Of utmost important to this project was to inform and effectively equip both employed mothers and HR/managers with the knowledge, skills, and resources to better manage the maternity leave career transition process, inviting purposeful conversations regarding career development so as to ensure the progression of both women's careers and the places where they work. To determine whether the resources developed through this project had the anticipated impact, evaluations will be conducted with HR professionals regarding the utility of the career development resources and webinars, as well as with those attending conference presentations and project webinars. Additionally, follow-up conversations with community stakeholders who were involved in this project will detail the potential of this project and the real-world influence it has had. Other, informal methods of

evaluation will include testimonials from those using the resources, as well as the number of project downloads and purchases made.

It has been recommended that future projects in this area consider the following opportunities for enhancing work done through the present project:

- **Paternity leave career transitions** – Throughout the course of this project we have been asked about perspectives on paternity leave career transitions and the impacts that having children has on the careers of men. While we strongly agree that this is an essential topic of research, it was decided early on in this process that to truly do justice and speak accurately to the unique experiences faced by men who are taking paternity leave, an entirely different project would be necessary.
- **Incorporating additional diverse groups** – A number of diverse groups not highlighted in the present project were identified over the course of data collection, including single mothers, same sex couples, racial and ethnical minority groups, as well as persons with disabilities. Although the purpose of this project was to be inclusive of all women and therefore discussion based on the unique experiences of particular social or cultural groups was not emphasized, a consideration of the exceptional needs of these populations is warranted.

## Appendix A RELEVANT DEFINITIONS

**Career:** The sum of all the paid and unpaid roles an individual has held in his or her lifetime.

**Career development:** The ongoing acquisition or refinement of knowledge, skills, and abilities.

**Career progression:** The movement towards a particular career goal(s). These goals are determined by the individual as important and worthwhile to pursue, and may or may not include a change in title, responsibility, status, pay, flexibility, influence, etc. (also referred to as 'career advancement').

**Maternity leave:** The term inclusive of maternity, parental and adoption leave, as well as any extended care and nurturing leave following the birth or adoption of a child, taken by a new/expectant mother.

## Appendix B PROJECT DELIVERABLES

### DOCUMENTS AND LEARNING MATERIAL

**Employee & Employer Guidebooks** – These resources have been developed to serve as self-directed tools that can help mothers and their employers better manage the maternity leave career transition process (each resource will be approximately 100 pages).

The employee guide works to both support and encourage new and expectant mothers to develop promising career management strategies to not only navigate the maternity leave career transition, but also other career decisions that many women experience throughout their careers. It is believed that by equipping these women with the skills and knowledge to successfully manage their careers that they will become an agent of influence in their work, developing opportunities to realize their full potential.

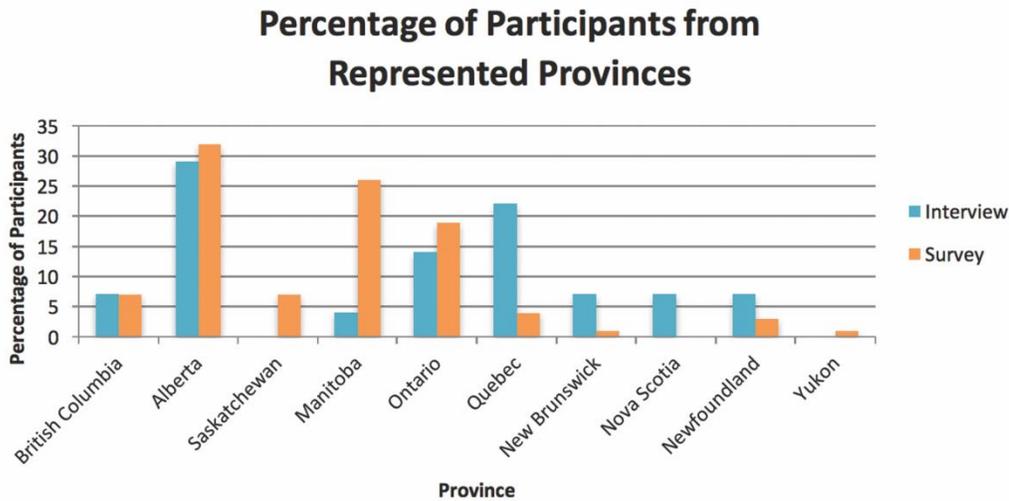
The employer guide has been designed for anyone who employs, leads, manages, trains, coaches, or otherwise supports mothers in the workplace. This resource provides employers with tools to tailor specific strategies to meet the needs of their organization and employees from more than just a legal position. The resource has been designed to stimulate discussion and collaboration with employees to encourage the development of leading and promising practices in relation to not only maternity leave career transitions, but also for women's career development as a whole.

### Demographics

Two focus groups were conducted with ten employers working in the province of Alberta who had personal experience with staff taking maternity leave(s). Key themes and findings from

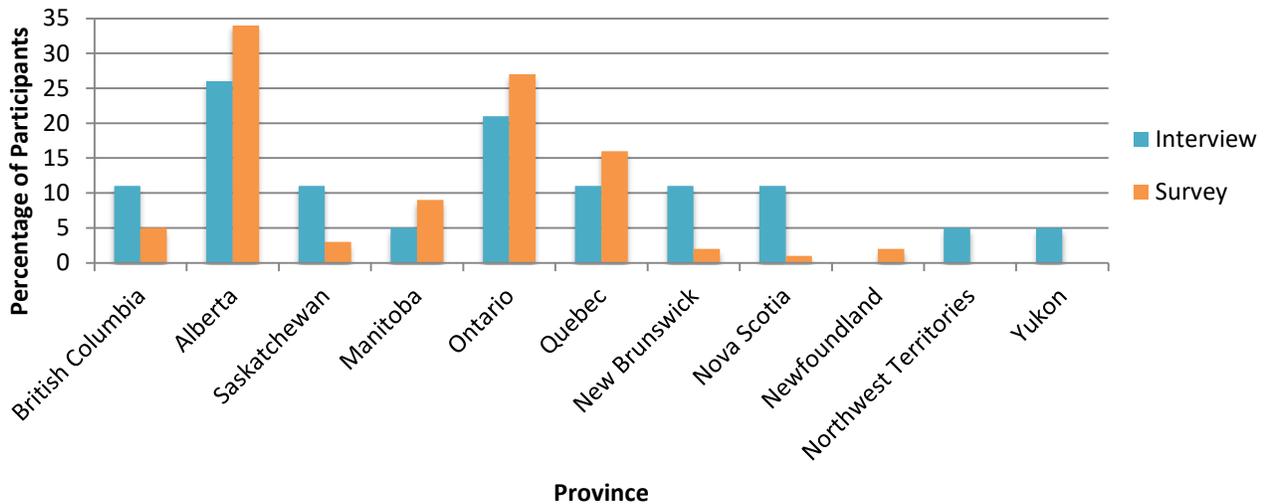
these sessions were used to guide interview and survey questions. One-on-one interviews were held with fourteen employers from across Canada working in the nonprofit (29%), public (21%), and private (50%) sectors. A total of seventy-three employers completed the survey portion of this research study (six males, sixty-seven females). Surveyed employers most commonly represented the private sector (45%), as well as the public sector (32%), followed by those in nonprofit (20%), and other industries (3%). Participants included individuals across Canada from a wide array of positions, including HR specialists (31%), leaders (24%), managers and supervisors (24%), executives (6%), business owners (7%), and other employers (8%), such as consultants, directors, and advisors.

The majority of employers resided in Eastern Canada and Alberta and Manitoba as depicted in table below



Two focus groups were conducted with a total of 10 employees working in the province of Alberta who had personal experience taking maternity leave(s). Key themes and findings from this session were used to guide interview and survey questions. One-on-one interviews were held with nineteen employees from across Canada working in the nonprofit (21%), public (63%), and private (16%) sectors. A total of four hundred and forty-one employees completed the survey portion of this research study. Surveyed employees most commonly represented the public sector (50%), as well as the private sector (27%), followed by those in nonprofit (20%) and other industries (2%). Participants included individuals across Canada from a wide array of positions, including front line staff (51%), middle management (30%), executives (4%), contractors (4%), and other forms of employment (11%), such as consultants, advisors, research associates, and students. Provincial representation of both interview and survey participants is outlined below

## Percentage of Participants from Represented Provinces



### Ethics Review

With the affiliation of project team members to the University of Calgary, the project received ethical approval from the institution's Conjoint Faculty Research Ethics Board (CFREB) for the duration of the data collection phase. This was to ensure that the research being conducted met ethical standards as outlined by the University of Calgary. As part of this process, the submission also required confirmation of completing the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans Course on Research Ethics offered by the Government of Canada. Following data collection, a final report was submitted and approved by the CFREB at the University of Calgary and the project successfully closed.

## Table of Contents

<u>Employer Guidebook</u>	<u>Employee Guidebook</u>
1. Acknowledgments	1. Acknowledgments
2. Project team	2. Project team
3. Introduction	3. Introduction
4. Making it work: A Canadian perspective	4. Making it work: A Canadian perspective
5. Mothers in the modern workplace: The business case	5. Understanding modern working mothers
6. Understanding change and transition: Maternity leave career transition	6. Understanding modern employers
7. Before the maternity leave	7. Mothers in the modern workplace: The business case
8. During the maternity leave	8. Before the maternity leave
9. Post-maternity leave/reintegration	9. During the maternity leave
10. Customization of career path: Alternative/flexible work arrangements	10. Post-maternity leave/reintegration
11. Considerations for diverse populations	11. Customization of career path: Alternative/flexible work arrangements
12. Glossary	12. Elevating your career development
	13. Considerations for diverse populations
	14. Glossary

**Webinars** – A separate webinar for employees and employers are offered. The webinars included a brief overview of some of the key findings from the research as well as strategies to manage maternity leave career transitions. Webinars are offered live and recorded for future free viewing. The employer webinar was offered in June 2016 and the employee webinar will be offered in September 2016.

**Presentations** – This project was promoted and presented at the Alberta Career Development Conference in Calgary, AB (April 2015) as well as the Cannexus Conference in Ottawa, ON (January 2016). Each of these presentations have also been made available online through the websites of the host organizations. Additionally, the project was promoted at Cannexus through CERICs exhibitor booth, with postcards being made available to delegates that provided information about the guidebooks and their release dates. The project was also promoted using postcards provided by CERIC at the Alberta Career Development Conference in Calgary, AB (January, 2016).

### **DATA COLLECTION**

This project employed both qualitative and quantitative measures in the research and data collection phases in order to gather accurate information on the topic. It was essential that real-world concerns and perspectives of both employees and employers informed the deliverables from this project so as to ensure the credibility and utility of these outputs.

### **Focus groups – 4 employee groups (10 employees), 2 HR/manager groups (10 employers)**

This phase of data collection was implemented exclusively within Alberta (to save travel costs) and for the purpose of generating a general idea about the climate of maternity leave in Canada. From the focus group sessions, it was identified that there are three phases of maternity leave (i.e., before, during, and after). These findings and other key themes were used to inform interview questions, which made up phase two of the data collection process.

Sample focus group questions included:

1. How has your maternity leave(s) impacted your career? (Employee)
2. How could organizations better retain women after maternity leave? (Employee)
3. What do you think are some concerns of your employees in transition? (HR/employer)
4. What types of career development supports do you provide employees during this transition? (HR/employer)

### **Individual Interviews – 19 employees, 14 HR/managers**

Interviews were conducted more broadly, with employees and HR/managers from across Canada participating. From the interview sessions, specific experiences that participants identified as relating to maternity leave were identified. These key themes and findings were used to inform survey questions, which made up phase three of the data collection process. Quotes from interview participants have also been used to supplement material throughout the guidebooks.

Sample interview questions included:

1. What was positive and/or negative about your experience before, during, and after maternity leave? (Employee)
2. What specifically did your direct manager/supervisor do well in supporting your maternity leave transition? (Employee)
3. What are organizations doing well to support women before, during, and after their maternity leaves? (HR/employer)
4. What are some flexible work arrangements that organizations offer to employees who do not want to come back to regular or full-time positions? (HR/employer)

### **Surveys – 441 employees, 73 HR/managers**

The third and final phase of data collection was again conducted across Canada, with key themes and findings from these surveys being used to inform the content of the guidebooks, webinars, and conference presentations produced. Specifically, key areas of concern and identified best practices were brought forward as areas for investigation during the literature review and content development process. Quotes from survey participants have also been used to supplement material throughout the guidebooks produced.

Sample survey questions include:

1. What impact does maternity leave have on the following aspects of women's careers?  
(Employee and HR/employer)
  - a. Promotional opportunities
  - b. Career development opportunities
  - c. Position or seniority within the organization
  - d. Being exposed to challenging work projects upon return
  - e. Career progression (e.g., more responsibility)
2. What impact does maternity leave have on the following aspects of a woman's work?  
(Employee and HR/manager)
  - a. Engagement (i.e., investment of an individual's complete self in their work role)
  - b. Desire to be on the leadership track
  - c. Career-orientation (i.e., how much a woman values her career)
  - d. Effectiveness at work
  - e. Available hours to work (e.g., work commitment)
  - f. Amount of energy for work

### **ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Data collected as part of the present project has been presented in aggregate form to protect the privacy of participants. Additionally, any and all direct quotes from participants are anonymous. Those participants who were audio-recorded (i.e., focus group and interview) as part of their involvement in this project were made fully aware of the researcher's intentions for doing so and provided their full and informed consent prior to participating. At no point over the course of this project were any participants asked to provide identifying or personal information as part of the data being collected in order to maintain privacy and anonymity as best as possible. Data from the interviews and focus groups was stored electronically on password protected computer accounts of the researchers involved. Only by signing a confidentiality agreement was any third-party authorized to access this research. Given that surveys were distributed using a survey tool designed in the U.S., relevant information about the Patriot Act was provided to participants during the initial consent process.

### Appendix C

#### MEDIA COVERAGE AND TESTIMONIALS

Fall 2013	Avra Davidoff wrote <i>The Mother of all Career Transitions</i> , published in <a href="#">Careering Magazine</a>
December 2014	Canada Career Counselling was featured as the <i>Making it Work! Managing Successful Maternity Leave Career Transitions</i> project featured on the <a href="#">CERIC</a> website
January 2015	Avra Davidoff was interviewed in the article <i>Pregnant</i>

	<i>Colleague? Here's What Not to Say</i> published in the <a href="#">Globe and Mail</a>
May 2015	<i>Making it Work: Managing Successful Maternity Leave Career Transitions</i> was presented Presentation given at the <a href="#">Alberta Career Development Conference</a> in Edmonton, AB
January 2016	<i>Making it Work: Managing Successful Maternity Leave Career Transitions</i> was presented at <a href="#">Cannexus</a> in Ottawa, ON
September 2016	Laura Hambley Interviewed on the topic of maternity leave career transition by <a href="#">CBC Radio One Vancouver</a> – (25min into episode)
October 2016	Project featured in <a href="#">HR Professional Magazine</a> – <i>Baby and Back: Can Canadian Employers Do Better When it Comes to Maternity Leave Career Transitions?</i>
October 2016	Avra Davidoff and Laura Hambley speak on Transitioning Back to Work After Maternity Leave. <a href="#">Breakfast Television</a>
October 2016	Avra Davidoff interviewed on maternity leave career transitions by <a href="#">Career Buzz Radio Show</a> (36min into episode)
October 2016	Avra Davidoff appeared and project featured on <a href="#">CTV News Calgary</a> , <i>New Resource to Help New Moms and Employers Navigate Maternity Leave</i>
October 2016	Project featured in <a href="#">HR Voice: Maternity Career Transitioning: Before the Leave</a>
November 2016	<i>How to Effectively Navigate Maternity Leave Career Transitions</i> featured on blog <a href="#">Yummy Mummy Club</a>
November 2016	Avra Davidoff interviewed on strategies for moms returning to work by Edmonton child (to appear in January 2017)
November 2016	Avra Davidoff facilitated an employee webinar for UBC's Alumni Association,

<https://www.alumni.ubc.ca/careers/alumni-speak-webinars/>

- November 2016 Roadshows hosted in Toronto, Halifax and Vancouver
- November 2016 Laura Hambley appeared and project featured on [Global News Winnipeg](#) *How to Better Navigate Maternity Leave Careers*
- November 2016 Laura Hambley appeared and project featured on [CTV News Winnipeg](#) *Maternity Leave Advice and Resources*
- January 2017 A promo of the project with a link to the resources will be featured in the College of Alberta's Physicians and Surgeon's monthly newsletter

## Endorsements

"What has long been a taboo topic between employer and employee, and an often angst ridden journey for expectant mothers and employers alike, now for the first time has a playbook. Not only that, it hits on every note. You need not look any further for how to handle a maternity leave and run your human capital, with the best information out there. This is progress."

- Carolyn Lawrence  
*Leader of Gender Diversity and Inclusion*  
*Deloitte Canada*

"After reading through *Making It Work!* I wish I could have read this before I went through my own maternity leaves a few years ago. It's a well- researched, well written guide not only for employers to consider but also for women taking maternity leave. This is an excellent resource for any leave, not just maternity leave. The helpful checklists and definitions are going to provide much needed support for any organization hoping to do better in how maternity leaves, or any leave, is managed."

- Michelle Beck,  
*VP People & Culture*  
*ATB Financial*