

BEN

The Black Executives Network

REN

Le Réseau des exécutifs noirs

ANNUAL REPORT

2023 – 2024



PREPARED BY

THE BLACK EXECUTIVES NETWORK SECRETARIAT

**The Black Executives Network
Le Réseau des exécutifs noirs (BEN/REN)**

Second Annual Report

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MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAMPIONS

In our role as the Deputy Minister Co-champions for the Black Executives Network / Le Réseau des exécutifs noirs (BEN/REN), we are pleased to partake in BEN/REN's journey, achievements, the strides and positive impact made over the past year, as outlined in this BEN/REN Second Annual Report.

Looking back on the past year, we are deeply grateful for the commitment of the BEN/REN Steering Committee, the Secretariat, and the Working Groups in advancing priorities and driving organizations forward. We also appreciate the unwavering support of Deputy Minister Ally Champions, colleagues, and partners, that have broadened BEN/REN's scope and supported financially, and of course, the invaluable contribution and trust of BEN/REN's members which has been fundamental.

Some of BEN/REN's notable accomplishments include the inaugural 'Study on the Black Executive Community in the Federal Public Service', first of its kind and commissioned by BEN/REN to examine the barriers encountered by Black executives during their careers in the federal public service. Additionally, BEN/REN organized and hosted events such as its third Deputy Minister Panel in partnership with the Canada School of Public Service, its second Annual Black History Month Event in partnership with APEX, and BEN/REN's first Black Mental Health Panel, along with other learning events and initiatives highlighted in this annual report.

BEN/REN remains pivotal in addressing anti-Black racism, fostering collaboration among departments, agencies and other employee networks, promoting excellence, committing to continuous improvement, and empowering employees by 'lifting others as they lead' through career advancement and mobility. As a result of these collective efforts, we saw improvements in the composition of the Black executive community with the appointment of 35 more Black executives to leadership positions, for a total of 203 Black executives in the federal public service as of March 31, 2024.

As a Network, BEN/REN continues to actively engage with senior management and contributes to shaping, addressing, and implementing management policy responses to ensure that perspectives from the Black federal community are integral to decision-making processes. This distinctive role not only defines BEN/REN's operations, initiatives, and partnerships but also provides valuable insights into developing inclusive policies, programming, and initiatives to address the unique challenges faced by Black federal executives and employees.

Moving forward, BEN/REN remains dedicated to raising awareness with a focus on actively seeking solutions to address anti-Black racism while supporting executives, as well as aspiring Black executives, to address representation gaps in the federal public service and create the conditions for success. Because a truly effective public service is one where our collective voices and experiences reflect the rich diversity of Canada's population that we serve, thereby fostering inclusivity for all.

Sincerely,

Shalene & Caroline



SHALENE CURTIS-MICALLEF

Deputy Minister and Deputy
Attorney General, Justice Canada



CAROLINE XAVIER

Chief, Canadian Security
Establishment

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Black Executive Network Secretariat is honoured to present The Black Executives Network/ Réseau des exécutifs noirs (BEN/REN) Second Annual Report, covering the period from April 1, 2023, to March 31, 2024.

This annual report offers a comprehensive overview of BEN/REN's ongoing priorities and achievements, while also highlighting our efforts to combat systemic anti-Black racism. This year, our network has seen remarkable growth, with the number of our membership increasing by 34.4%. This growth reflects our continued commitment to fostering a strong and vibrant community of Black leaders within the federal public service.

In addition to expanding our membership, we are proud to announce the launch of a new BEN/REN award recognizing outstanding commitment to addressing issues of systemic and anti-Black racism in the federal public service. This award underscores our dedication to acknowledging and uplifting those who demonstrate leadership in building a public service that is truly anti-racist, equitable, and just, both now and in the future. We also hosted our third annual Deputy Ministers (DM) panel, a flagship event for the network, bringing together senior leadership to discuss and address the unique challenges and opportunities faced by Black executives. This event has become a cornerstone of our efforts to influence policy with a focus on actionable strategies, such as increasing accountability of leaders, implementing targeted actions, addressing mental health impacts, and enhancing organizational culture and wellbeing. Furthermore, we have invested in local and regional events designed to support and mentor the next generation of Black executives. These initiatives aim to empower aspiring leaders in support of the Clerk's Call to Action to eliminate anti-Black racism and the government's commitment to sponsor Black employees and support career mobility.

BEN/REN also works with other networks, agencies, organizations, and senior leadership to cultivate a public service that is inclusive of Black executives and employees. By embracing equity and Black inclusion, we can collectively yield positive outcomes and move closer to our goal of a public service where no talent is left behind.

We extend our gratitude to our BEN/REN community, champions, partners, allies, and contributors for their ongoing support as we continue to affect positive change and strengthen our impact in the federal public service.



NETWORK OVERVIEW

Our Vision

The Black Executives Network/ le Réseau des exécutifs noirs (BEN/REN) is a horizontal community established in July 2020 to support and amplify the voices of Black executives in the federal public service, while working with other networks, organizations, and senior leaders to actively address issues of systemic and anti-Black racism.



BEN/REN provides a forum for Black executives to connect, share experiences, and support each other in their professional development. The Network also serves as an active partner and catalyst for change, advocating for an equitable and inclusive federal public service that is representative at all levels, as well, recognizes and enables talent to reach their full potential to better serve all Canadians.

Our Mission

1. **Build and sustain a strong, inclusive and influential network of Black executives** who are committed to public service excellence, sound stewardship and positive outcomes for all Canadians
2. **Promote talent management** by supporting, mentoring, and sponsoring Black executives and aspiring executives
3. **Exemplify the changes we want to affect** in the federal public service
4. **Support the mental health and well-being of Black executives** in the federal public service.



NETWORK OVERVIEW

Our **Priorities**

The following priorities aim to advance and support BEN/REN's mission:

- **Talent Management**
- **Partnership & Stakeholder Engagement**
- **Research & Data**
- **Mental Health**
- **Leadership & Learning**
- **Communications**

How **it's done**

- Establishing leadership and accountability with Members.
- Supporting Career Progression for Members and Aspiring Members.
- Advocating for Mental Health Support for Members and Aspiring Members.
- Promoting Analytics Capabilities & Insights that drive Black-related Policy.
- Strengthening Membership Engagement.

Support and Funding

Since its inception in 2020, BEN/REN continues to receive strong support from Deputy Ministers, Associates and Assistant Deputy Minister Allies who are committed to advancing the objectives of the Clerk 'Call to Action and forward direction.

Senior leadership support includes financial contributions (both salary and non-salary). In 2023, BEN/REN Secretariat found a home and is officially hosted at Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED), marking a significant milestone in our progress and a notable achievement.

BEN/REN also acquired 10 interdepartmental memoranda of understandings, 5 secondment agreements to staff full-time employees working in the BEN/REN Secretariat, and in-kind donations aimed to bolster BEN/REN's ongoing operations and program delivery. The investments made to provide support to BEN/REN are highly appreciated and are instrumental for capacity building in ensuring sustainable growth, stability, and enhanced efficiency.



NETWORK OVERVIEW

Champions

BEN/REN is championed by senior leaders at the deputy minister (DM) level who serve as DM champions and DM ally champions. They act as strong advocates and ambassadors for the Network.

Their role entails championing talent management of Black executives within their Deputy Ministers and Assistant Deputy Ministers communities, leading by example, encouraging senior leadership commitment and action to address systemic racism government-wide and reinforcing the need for greater accountability.



BEN/REN Champions

Shalene Curtis-Micallef

Deputy Minister of Justice and Deputy Attorney General of Canada

Caroline Xavier

Chief, Communications Security Establishment Canada and Deputy Minister Champion for Racialized Employees

DM Ally Champions

Simon Kennedy

Deputy Minister, Innovation, Science and Economic Development (retired in September 2024)

Isabelle Mondou

Deputy Minister of Canadian Heritage (joined in December 2023)

Bill Matthews

Treasury Board Secretary Former Deputy Minister of National Defence and DM Ally for the UNDPAD

Jody Thomas

National Security and Intelligence Advisor to the Prime Minister (retired in January 2024)



NETWORK STRUCTURE

The BEN/REN Steering Committee

BEN/REN is primarily led by a Steering Committee composed of seven members that provides direction on initiatives to be undertaken by the Network and Working Groups, policy responses and implementation, engagement with senior leadership, functional communities, and other employee networks.



Hantz Prosper
Co-Chair

Director General, Innovation
Science & Economic Development



Tahanee McKnight
Co-Chair

Executive Director,
Royal Canadian Mounted Police



Kentia Dazulma

Executive Director, Employment
& Social Development Canada



Paula Folkes-Dallaire

Associate Assistant Deputy Minister,
Public Services and Procurement
Canada



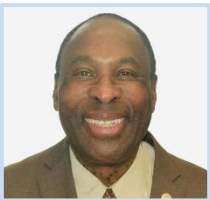
Kevin Petit-Frère

Director General,
Privy Council Office



Trudy Samuel

Director General, Canadian
Institutes of Health Research



Albert Tshimanga

Senior Director,
Shared Services Canada

NETWORK STRUCTURE



The BEN/REN Secretariat

The Steering Committee is supported by a Secretariat responsible for delivering programs and providing the support services required for the daily operation of an effective and efficient network. This includes conducting data research and policy analysis, information, planning and communication management, leading events, serving as the main point of contact for the BEN/REN membership, and providing strategic advice and recommendations for decision-making.

Meet the Secretariat Team!



Kimberley Beals
Program Manager



Sonia Bizimana
Program Coordinator



Jhannell Edwards
Strategic Communication
Advisor



Maria McKay
Interim Executive
Director *(until Nov. 2023)*



Adeola Onafuwa
Policy Analyst



Chuks Onwuachi
Senior Policy Analyst
and A/Deputy Director



Christopher K. Scipio
Deputy Director
(until Aug. 2023)



Tineka Simmons
Talent Manager

The Executive Director and Deputy Director joined in spring 2024



Sandra DiGnagbo
Deputy Director



Seyi Okuribido-Malcom
Executive Director



WORKING GROUPS

The Working Groups lead targeted initiatives under the priority areas directed by the Steering Committee. The Working Groups' accomplishments for 2023-24 are as follows:



Partnership & Stakeholder Engagement

Co-chairs: **Albert Tshimanga & Ray Edwards**

The BEN/REN Partnership and Stakeholder Engagement Working Group continues to make strides in fostering dialogue, garnering senior leadership support, and creating pathways for tangible actions on addressing systemic anti-Black racism within the federal public service.

- Met with the Clerk of the Privy Council and Deputy Clerk to discuss advancing Black executives' inclusion with a renewed focus on values and ethics and the Call-to-Action self-assessment tool for senior leaders.
- Conducted meetings with Canadian Heritage (HC), Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) and Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) to explore strategies for addressing systemic anti-Black racism and improving policy development to better serve the needs of Black public servants within their organizations and across the government.



Research & Data

Co-chair: **Paula Folkes-Dallaire**

This working group proactively supports initiatives aimed at increasing the representation, development and advancement of Black talent throughout the federal public service, by ensuring the availability of accurate qualitative and quantitative data and relevant insights for informed decision-making. This year, the Working Group:

- Met monthly with StatCan to harness their data and statistical expertise in developing alternative solutions to use the 2016 Workforce Availability (WFA)¹ as the recommended benchmark for representation of Black employees in the federal public service. However, relying on this outdated information (now 8 years old) poses significant challenges in accurately assessing EE workforce gaps, particularly for Black and other racialized groups, amidst a rapidly growing workforce that is increasingly comprised of Black and racialized employees.
- Led the development of the Disproportionality Index, which uncovered disparities in the representation and distribution of Black employees across Occupational Groups. This work revealed a disturbing trend that Black employees are significantly over-represented at lower salary bands across all occupations, and significantly underrepresented at the highest salary bands.
- Continues to advocate for the discontinuation of using WFA as the recommended representation benchmark and proposes adopting more contemporary measures such as the 2021 WFA, adjusted WFA using Statistics Canada's DEMOSIM tool, or Labour Force Availability (LFA). These efforts aim to ensure a more accurate and equitable representation of diverse groups within the federal public service.

WORKING GROUPS



Talent Management

Co-chairs: **Farahldine Boisclair & Trudy Samuel**

The BEN/REN Talent Management and Mental Health Working Group operate as one and remains committed to building effective talent management processes for Black executives to support efforts to close the representation gap at all levels.

Accomplishments in Talent Management:

- Worked closely with the Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer (OCHRO) at Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS) to launch and promote an inventory of Black executive professional profiles to support career advancement and mobility, as part of the performance and talent management process, and support more equitable representation of Black leaders in the senior executive rank.
- Continues to work with the Public Service Commission and central agencies to develop a curated list of Black and racialized professional executive coaches that meet a defined set of criteria and standards including cultural competency. This initiative intends to provide Black executives with access to coaches who can bring a cultural perspective to coaching conversations, fostering a safe and supportive space.
- Continued engagement with Treasury Board Secretariat on the Government of Canada's Action Plan to support Black Public Servants, ensuring initiatives such as the Executives Leadership Development Program (ELDP) for Black Leaders, Mosaic Leadership Development Program, Mentorship Plus Program, and new programs are effectively achieving their intended goals to increase opportunities for career mobility and improve the psychological health and safety of Black public servants.



Mental Health, Leadership and Learning

Co-chairs: **Trudy Samuel & Farahldine Boisclair**

The Mental Health Working Group advances efforts to support members and address barriers facing Black executives. The mental health of Black executives is often impacted by microaggressions, racism, discrimination, and inequities experienced in the workplace which increase the risk of mental illness and adversely affect psychological well-being.

Accomplishments in Mental Health:

- Created a Mental Health Resource Tip Sheet to reduce stigma among Black executives, increase awareness about available mental health services provided by Black professionals, and overcome barriers to accessing culturally sensitive professional care.
- Continued engagement on Health Canada's Black-Centric Enhancements to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). Significant progress in terms of anti-racism training, as well as an increased number of Black counsellors, has been made.

NETWORK MEMBERSHIP

Membership in BEN/REN is open to Black federal public servant executives (at the EX 01 level and above or are acting for one year or more in an EX-position or equivalent).

BEN/REN offers its members a supportive community for connection and engagement among Black executives. Members have full access to learning and networking events, membership meetings, and career development opportunities such as coaching and mentorship.

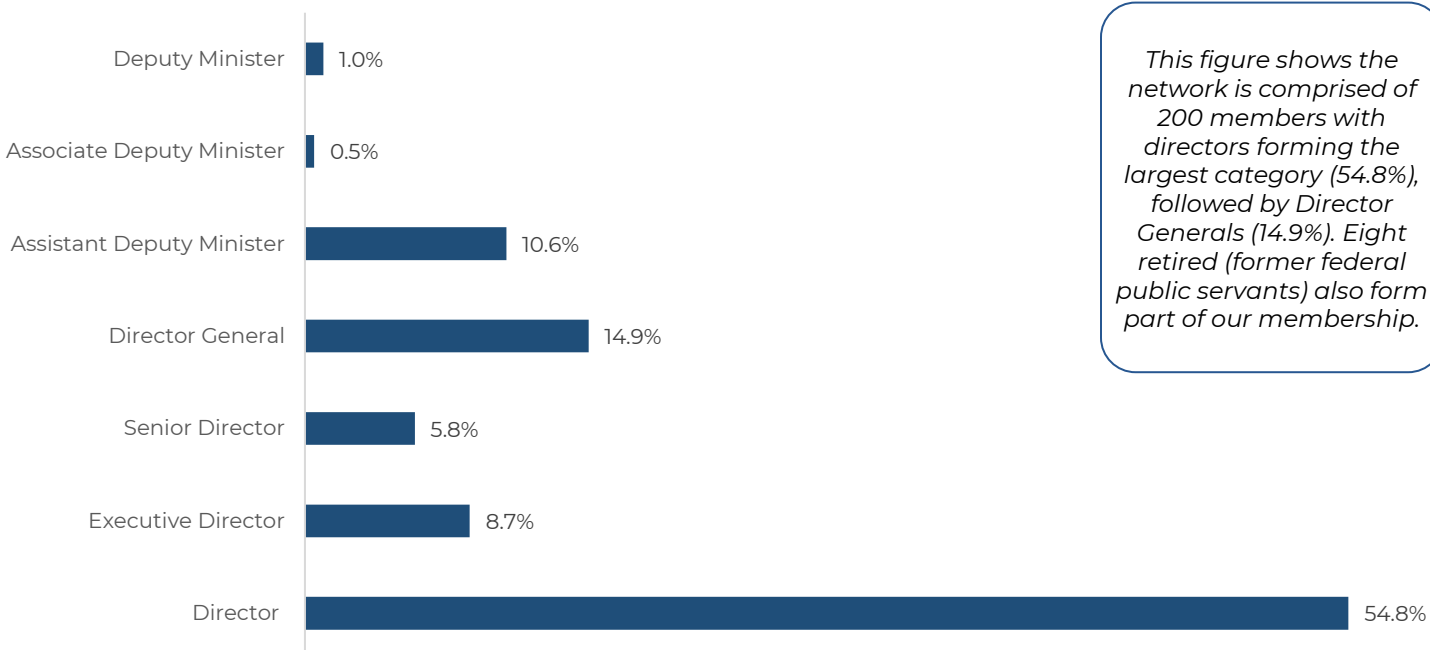


Members also have the opportunity to contribute to BEN/REN's mission as we strive for continuous growth and improvement in member and community support.

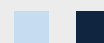
Membership Summary

200
members

BEN/REN currently has 200 members Canada-wide and within various departments, crown corporations and agencies.



This figure shows the network is comprised of 200 members with directors forming the largest category (54.8%), followed by Director Generals (14.9%). Eight retired (former federal public servants) also form part of our membership.



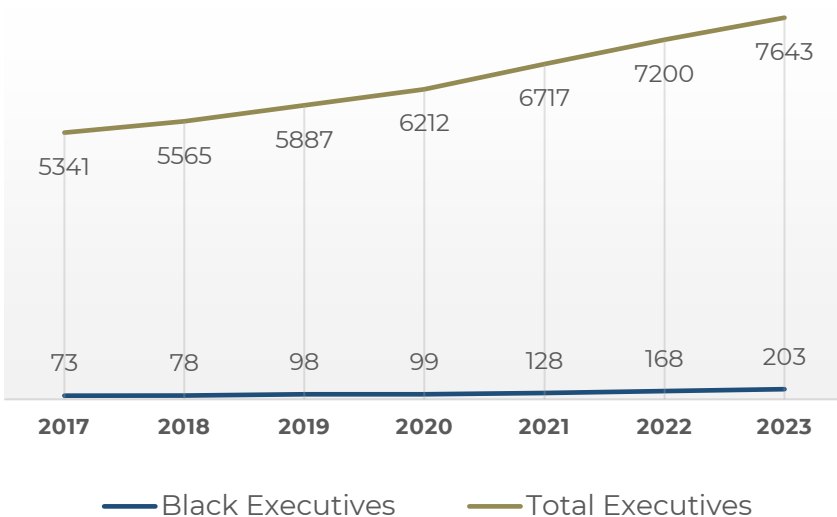
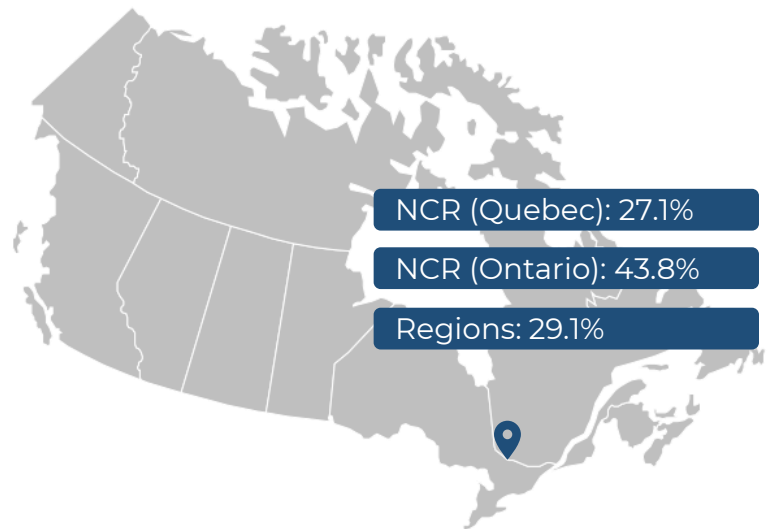
REPRESENTATION OF BLACK EXECUTIVES

Black Representation in the Federal Public Service

The data presented in this section are representative of Black executives within the core public administration, specifically those who have self-identified as such. Data for the Federal Public Service is not available because separate agency data is not collected centrally. It is important to note that this data, provided by the Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS), does not entirely reflect our network, as it may not capture the full diversity of Black executives who are engaged with or affiliated with our network.

Since 2020, joint efforts between BEN/REN, federal departments and agencies have significantly contributed to the increase in the representation of Black employees in the executive cadre.

However, a gap still remains between Black executives and other designated groups in the federal public service, underscoring the ongoing need for additional measures and actions to address these persistent disparities. This is necessary for ensuring the federal public service is becoming more reflective of Canada's current and future population.



Since 2017, the number of self-identified Black executives in the federal public service has increased from 73 to 203, representing a range of core and non-core departments, crown corporations, and special operating agencies nationwide.

While the percentage of Black executives increased from 1.4% in March 2017 to 2.7% in March 2023, this growth is modest compared to the 43.12% increase in the overall executive population during the same period.

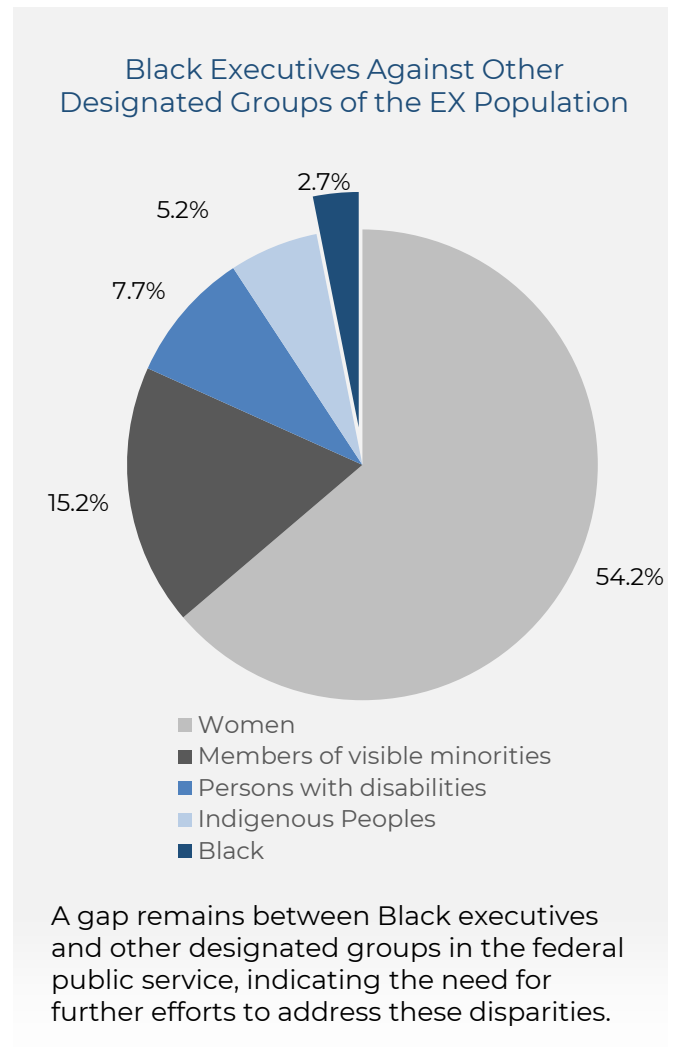


REPRESENTATION OF BLACK EXECUTIVES

Black Executive Representation in the Federal Public Service



Representation of Black executives by sex



Self-Identification

We encourage Black executives to self-identify in surveys and employment processes to provide BEN/REN and the Government of Canada with an accurate understanding of Black representation and experiences within the public service. This supports efforts to promote equity by identifying and addressing disparities and barriers Black federal employees face.

Moreover, self-identification guides the development of policies, programs, and inclusive practices that foster equitable opportunities and support for BEN/REN members and all public servants.



DEVELOPING THE PIPELINE

Future Black Executives

While BEN/REN's primary focus is the community of federal Black executives, the Network remains committed to its motto of "Lifting Others as We Lead" to actively support the pipeline for future Black federal executives from coast to coast to coast. The highest proportion of future Black executives at the EX minus 1 level is in the FI, EC, PA, PE, and IT occupational groups. Hence, it is crucial for the Network to mentor, appoint, and sponsor these future executives for several reasons: ensuring a continuous pool of qualified candidates for future leadership roles and succession planning, establishing a robust leadership pipeline that is inclusive and representative, and fostering a sense of belonging and trust for all public servants for sustainable long-term success.

With this objective in mind, BEN/REN contributed to bolstering support for the pipeline of aspiring executives through several key initiatives.



Key Initiatives

Black Policy Leaders Development Program (BPLDP)

BEN/REN in collaboration with the Privy Council Office (PCO) launched the BPLDP in January 2024. This program provides Black public servants at the EC-04, EC-05, and EC-06 levels the opportunity to acquire a wide range of policy experiences at PCO and the ability to play a pivotal role in developing and influencing policy that have a real impact on the lives of Canadians. As part of the program, participants will gain knowledge and experiences that would otherwise take the better part of a career to develop. Through a series of placements within PCO and based on performance, participants will progress to the EC-07 level by the time they graduate from the program.

Mosaic Leadership Development Program (MLDP)

At the inception of the MLDP, BEN/REN helped the Office of the Chief Human Resources (OCHRO) shape the program, ensuring that it reflects the perspectives of the Black federal community. The Program is designed to develop equity-seeking participants into potential executives equipped with the knowledge, skills, abilities and competencies for an executive position in the public service. The program has introduced three annual cohorts thus far, and BEN/REN continues to influence by encouraging its members to identify and nominate Black employees within their organization for future cohorts. This further promotes diverse representation in the program and supports Black talent development at the EX minus 1 level.

Speed Mentoring

BEN/REN hosted a Speed Mentoring Event in partnership with Public Service Procurement Services (PSPC) and Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC), creating an opportunity for Black aspiring executives to network and interact with multiple Black executive mentors. The event served as a learning environment where executives empowered mentees through valuable insights, guidance, and advice to support their professional growth.

DEVELOPING THE PIPELINE

Regional Mentoring Event with Future Leaders

BEN/REN members and Black employees from various federal departments and agencies in the Pacific Region convened at Browns Social House in Vancouver for an inaugural Aspiring Leaders Mentoring Event. The session was led by Irwin Bess, Darlene Bess, Yvette Monique Gray, and leadership coach Alicia Seifert. It was a significant opportunity for Black managers at the EX minus 1 and minus 2 levels, from across federal departments, to meet with BEN/REN members. For many, it was their first meaningful interaction with other Black colleagues or Black executives within their region.

The mentoring discussion centered on the barriers Black employees encounter in advancing their careers due to the pervasive impact of systemic anti-Black racism. BEN/REN members provided career management guidance, strategies for navigating and excelling in the public service, opportunities for learning and development, and effective methods for overcoming challenges to succeed. We would like to give a special thanks to Charles Agyemang and Ivy Mlalazi who contributed in the planning and execution of this event.

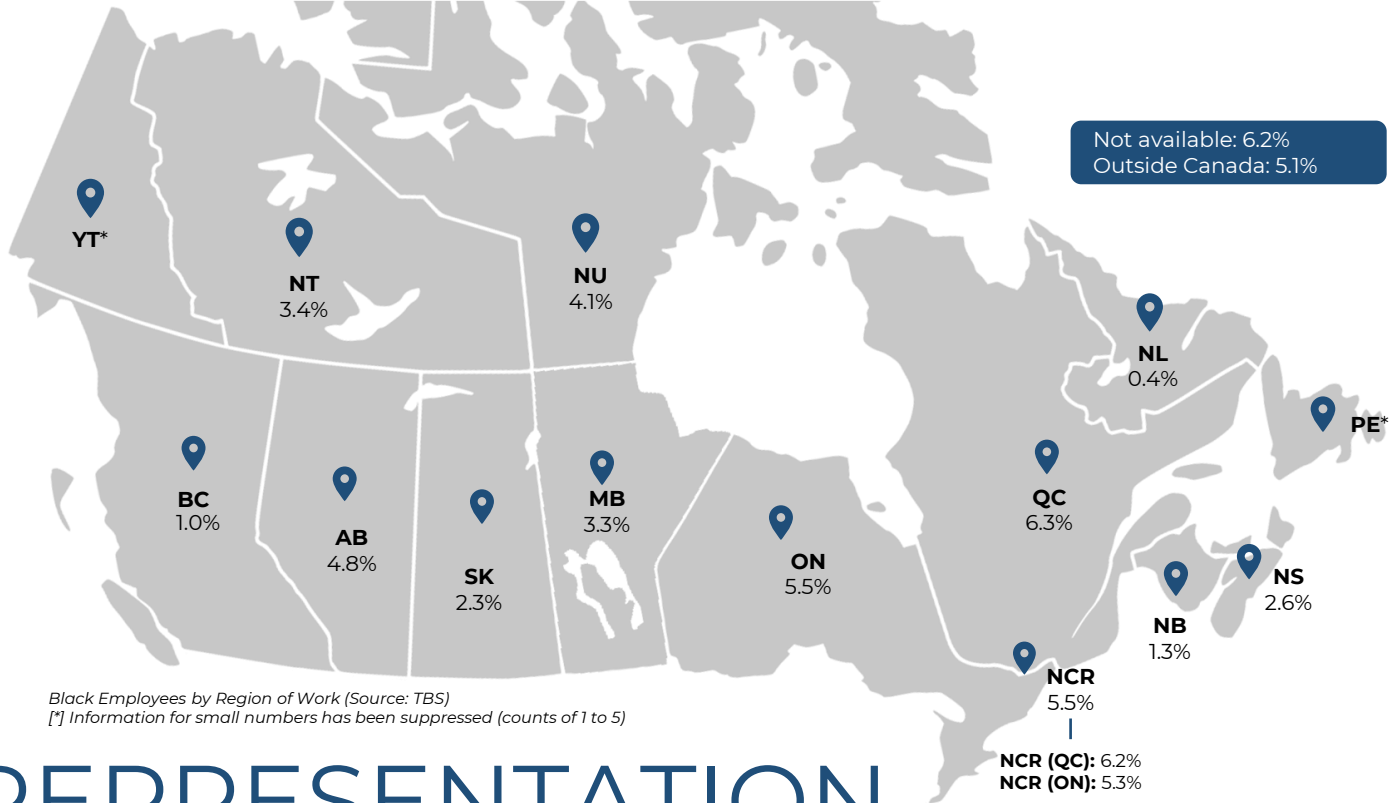
If there was one thing that was abundantly evident, it is that there is an urgent need for community among Black Employees in the Western region and BEN/REN looks forward to continuing to work together with our colleagues to build this community.

In 2024-25, BEN/REN plans to organize additional regional events to foster stronger connections with members located outside of the National Capital Region.

The Network will also continue to work with departments, and central agencies to support career advancement programs, develop talent management policies and leverage our network to facilitate the progression of Black employees into management and executive roles.

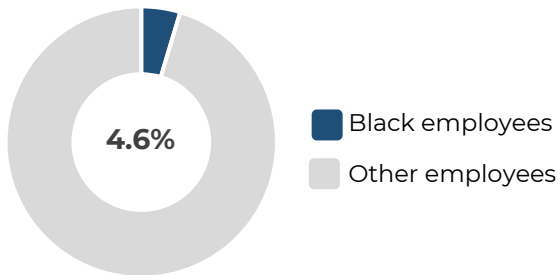
Additional efforts will focus on addressing barriers that hinder the advancement of talented Black employees.





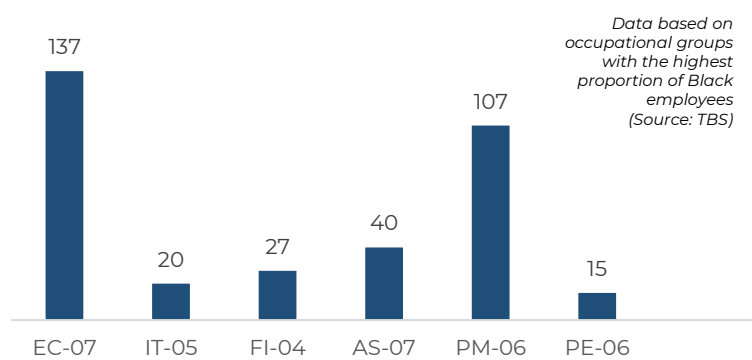
REPRESENTATION OF BLACK EMPLOYEES

Black Employees in the Federal Public Service



Between March 2022 and March 2023, the number of Black employees increased by 1,962 to a total of 11,771 employees.

Pipeline of future Black Executives (EX minus 1)



Black Employees by Region of Work

The figure above shows that Quebec (without the National Capital Region) had the highest representation rate of Black employees at 6.3%, followed by the National Capital Region (Quebec) at 6.2%. The lowest representation rate of Black employees was in Prince Edward Island and Yukon (figures for both are suppressed) and Newfoundland and Labrador (0.4%).



KEY RESULTS & ACHIEVEMENTS

The Clerk of the Privy Council's Call to Action on Anti-Racism, Equity, and Inclusion in the Federal Public Service (CTA) forward direction, calls on senior leaders and public servants to prioritize and implement the commitments outlined in the CTA to address systemic racism and remove long-standing barriers.

Building a diverse, equitable and inclusive public service is a shared responsibility, and BEN/REN is committed to doing its part to foster a culture of belonging and respect, which are essential for achieving success.

In this spirit, BEN/REN conducts regular meetings with senior leaders and stakeholders to develop and implement public service-wide strategies and solutions, influence public service management policies and programs to address systemic discrimination and the pervasive challenges that current and future Black executive face.

In September 2023, Chief Caroline Xavier, DM Co-Champion of BEN/REN, was appointed to the Taskforce on Values and Ethics by the Clerk of the Privy Council. To support this initiative, a Research Working Group was formed to strengthen the public service's commitment to diversity and inclusion. BEN/REN participated in discussions about how to embody our collective values and ethics in a complex environment, focusing on the unique experiences of Black Public Servants and sharing key findings from the Black-Centric Lens Analysis of the Public Service Employee Survey (PSES).

Additionally, BEN/REN continues to conduct data research, lead strategic initiatives that promote Black talent management, support learning events, and create opportunities for Black executives to connect and network. These efforts are seeking to address systemic barriers and close representation gaps in the federal public service.

Although the Call to Action generated positive momentum in the past few years, BEN/REN continues to work with senior leaders and partners as there is still much to be accomplished to cultivate an environment that truly values, supports, and retains Black executives and employees in the federal public service.



KEY RESULTS & ACHIEVEMENTS

BEN/REN Research Study on Black Executives within the Federal Public Service

BEN/REN commissioned the very first research study of its kind in the federal public service examining the unique experiences of Black executives. The study was led by Dr. Rachel Zellars, M.A., J.D., Ph.D., a lawyer, Senior Research Fellow, and a nationally recognized expert in critical implicit bias, a term that she coined in conjunction with her extensive, ongoing work with the federal government and numerous private institutions.

This groundbreaking research study explored the unique systemic barriers faced by Black executives and highlighted measures that could improve their working conditions and representation across the federal public service. The final report includes a secondary study that examines situations where Black executives, particularly Black women executives, experience racially targeted disciplinary actions in the workplace. The final report will be published in the Fall 2024.

As BEN/REN disseminates this report broadly and implements practical solutions into actions, we look forward to actively engaging with BEN/REN's members to further gather invaluable insights that will guide our next steps.

Talent Management e-Binders

BEN/REN launched two distinct e-Binders showcasing the professional profiles of 'Black executives' and 'Aspiring Black leaders' across the federal public service, ready for career progression and mobility. Too often, career stagnation is caused by systemic barriers and biases due in-part to anti-Black racism in the federal public service. As such, the e-Binders were created to support inclusive staffing and address the representation gap of Black talent at all levels. Hiring managers and HR professionals are encouraged to utilize the guide to promote fair and equitable staffing practices. In the same vein, executives and senior leaders are urged to sponsor Black employees to facilitate career advancement.

An enhanced iteration of the e-Binders will be launched in Fall 2024.

Third Deputy Minister Panel Discussion

On February 21, 2024, BEN/REN hosted its Third Annual Deputy Minister (DM) Panel featuring the Clerk of the Privy Council, John Hannaford, Dr. Rachel Zellars, the Association of Professional Executives (APEX) Chief Executive Officer Carl Trottier, Deputy Minister Isabelle Mondou, Deputy Minister Simon Kennedy, Chief Human Resources Officer Jacqueline Bogden, and moderated by BEN/REN Steering Committee member, Paula Folkes-Dallaire, Associate Assistant Deputy Minister at Public Services and Procurement Canada. The panelists engaged in a candid discussion centered on the results of the BEN/REN research study on Black Executives within the Federal Public Service with a focus on actionable strategies, such as increasing accountability of leaders, implementing targeted actions, addressing mental health impacts, and enhancing organizational culture and wellbeing.

KEY RESULTS & ACHIEVEMENTS

Mental Health Panel Discussion

On March 28, 2024, BEN/REN hosted its first Mental Health Panel to discuss the unique challenges Black executives face. Distinguished panelists Dr. Rachel Zellars, Gérard Étienne, and Dr. Helen Ofosu led the conversation and provided a comprehensive overview of the current state of Black mental health with the goal to destigmatize mental health issues and to increase Black executives' access to tools and resources for navigating workplace conflict. The discussion was moderated by Trudy Samuel, Director General, Equity Strategy at the Canadian Institutes for Health Research. To improve the conditions of Black executives, it will require collaborative efforts from BEN/REN, senior leaders, and culturally competent health professionals, among others, to develop actionable solutions.

External Partnerships

BEN/REN continues to partner with external organizations such as the Association of Professional Executives of the Public Service of Canada (APEX), the Institute of Public Administration of Canada to collaborate on learning events, national conferences, and local events, where our members actively participate and serve as panelists and moderators. The purpose of our contribution is to incorporate a diversity and equity lens as well as insights to public administration discussion that reflect diverse perspectives of our community.

1834 Fellowship

The 1834 Fellowship (hosted by Operation Black Vote Canada) was created by Annamie Paul and Velma Morgan to develop a strong network of Black policy leaders from across Canada. Each year, the 1834 Fellowship seeks out 20 high-potential Black youths who wish to enter or increase their capacity for civic leadership roles and support them in their skills and career development. The fellowship has become today the fastest growing public policy network for Black youth in Canada and has become instrumental in developing the next generation of Black Canadian public service leaders. Members of the BEN/REN and the Secretariat participated in and supported the professional panel discussion with the 4th cohort of 1834 Fellows on October 3, 2023, which was followed by a graduation reception hosted by Gowling WLG in Ottawa on October 5, 2023.



KEY RESULTS & ACHIEVEMENTS

NETWORKING EVENTS



BEN/REN Summer Social

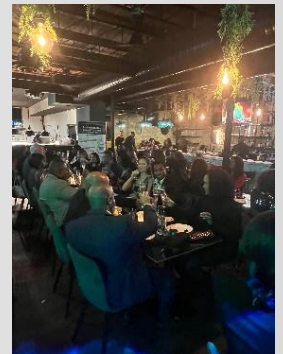
July 27, 2023

Our members gathered in Ottawa in the summer to forge deeper connections. The evening was marked by genuine warmth and laughter, as members engaged in enlightening and inspiring discussions that transcended professional boundaries. Social events such as this one, create a sense of solidarity, interconnectedness, and common purpose among Network members. It is essential to sustain opportunities for these types of gathering and BEN/REN will continue to organize networking events in the future.

BEN/REN Holiday Social

December 7, 2023

We held our Second Annual Holiday Social a few weeks ahead of the holiday. The evening celebration was an opportunity for Black executives to network, engage in enriching conversations with colleagues, and sharing a memorable experience together. To underscore the outstanding leadership and contributions of BEN/REN's Deputy Minister Champions; Chief Caroline Xavier and Deputy Shalene Curtis-Micallef, and past Secretariat members; Maria McKay; Christopher Scipio; and Victoria Simba, the Network presented them with awards of recognition as a token of appreciation.



Deputy Ministers / Black Executive Networking Event in Honour of Black History Month

February 29, 2024



In partnership with APEX, we co-hosted our Second Annual Black History Month event. This event brought together Black executives and the DM community for an evening of fellowship and networking. The event featured a keynote address by one of Canada's most renowned Nova Scotian educator, social worker, researcher, and community activist, Senator Wanda Thomas Bernard, whose speech inspired resilience, unity, and the empowerment of the Black community. Attendees were also inspired by a spoken word performance by Nonso Morah, celebrating the richness of Black history and its potential.





The Richard D. Sharpe Award

For outstanding commitment to addressing issues of systemic and anti-Black racism in the Canadian Federal Public Service

The highlight of the 2024 Black History Month event was when the inaugural ‘Richard D. Sharpe Award’ was presented to Richard Sharpe himself, honouring his steadfast commitment throughout his career of over 26 years in combatting systemic anti-Black racism in the Federal Public Service.

As we reflect on this moment, we are inspired to uphold Richard’s vision of leadership in building a public service that is truly anti-racist, equitable, and just, both now and in the future.

Who is Richard D. Sharpe?

Richard D. Sharpe is a human rights advocate with 30 years of experience at both the community and institutional levels. Richard started his 20+ year career in the federal public service in 1996, focusing on human rights, equity, and diversity. His career is rooted in his initial work as a community organizer, where he discovered the impact of grassroots efforts in driving change.

In 2018, Richard founded the Federal Black Employee Caucus (FBEC) to address the specific needs of Black employees in the federal public service. The Caucus operates under the policy framework of the United Nations Decade for People of African Descent (UNDPAD), leveraging the Prime Minister’s endorsement of this initiative as a key driver for change.

From January 2022 to his departure from the federal public service in January 2023, Richard served on the Black Executives Network (BEN/REN) Steering Committee.

Currently, Richard serves as the Director of the Black Equity Branch within the Centre for People, Culture, and Talent at the Treasury Board Secretariat of the Ontario Public Service. Prior to this, he was the Director of Equity, Anti-Racism, Diversity, and Inclusion at the Department of Justice Canada, where he led efforts to address systemic racism and discrimination, advancing measurable outcomes for equity and inclusion.

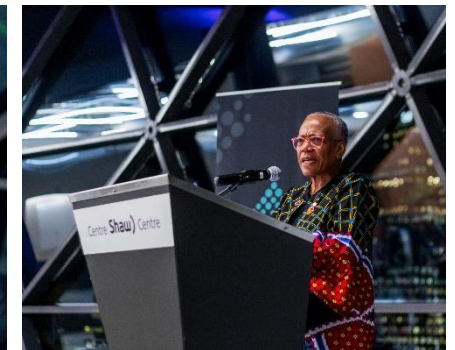
Richard’s commitment to justice and equity has led him to revitalize Black employee networks and build vital partnerships with Black and African diaspora communities in Canada, influencing policies and practices that foster inclusive environments.





Deputy Minister & Black Executives Networking Event

In Honour of Black History Month



LOOKING AHEAD: OUR WORK CONTINUES

Message from the Chair

As we bring this annual report to a close, I want to take a moment to reflect on the significance of the journey we've been on together. This past year has been one of challenges, hard truths, and meaningful progress for the Black Executive Network and Racialized Executive Network (BEN/REN).

This past year, the BEN/REN reached several important milestones that have strengthened our Network and advanced our commitment to supporting and advocating on behalf of our members.

One of our most significant achievements was the commissioning of the first-ever study on Black executives in the federal public service. This groundbreaking report not only exposed the systemic challenges our members continue to face but also opened the opportunity to engage in important conversations with leadership. We remain resolute and committed to turning the findings and discussions into tangible, lasting actions.

In addition to the study, we hosted several events focused on supporting the well-being and growth of our members. Our Mental Health Panel provided a safe space for candid discussions on the challenges faced by Black executives, fostering healing and resilience.

We advanced professional development through our Talent Management e-Binders, ensuring members are prepared for leadership opportunities. Our third annual Deputy Minister Panel for Black History Month offered a key platform for continued dialogue between senior leadership and our members while our year-end social event strengthened community bonds and renewed our collective purpose.

Finally, we capped off the year with a social event that brought our members together in celebration and camaraderie. These moments of connection remind us of the importance of community in this journey, and they renew our collective strength in our Network.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to our colleagues in the BEN/REN Secretariat, whose dedication drives our agenda forward, and to the members of the BEN/REN Working Groups, who balance this important work alongside their demanding roles as executives. Your commitment is truly appreciated. To our general membership, we are deeply grateful for your continued support and to get actively involved, contribute your ideas, and be a driving force in our ongoing efforts to create a more inclusive and equitable public service.



HANTZ PROSPER
Chair, Steering Committee
The Black Executives Network



RESOURCES GUIDING OUR WORK



- **Canadian Human Rights Act:** <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/h-6/>
- **Canada Labour Code:** <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/l-2/>
- **Employment Equity Act:** <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/e-5.401/>
- **Employment Equity in the Public Service of Canada (FY 2022-23):** <https://www.canada.ca/en/government/publicservice/wellness-inclusion-diversity-public-service/diversity-inclusion-public-service/employment-equity-annual-reports/employment-equity-public-service-canada-2022-2023.html>



- **Speech from the Throne 2020:** <https://www.canada.ca/en/privy-council/campaigns/speech-throne/2020/speech-from-the-throne.html>
- **United Nations Decade for People of African Descent, 2015-2024:** <https://www.un.org/en/observances/decade-people-african-descent>



- **The Federal Budget 2024:** <https://budget.canada.ca/2024/home-accueil-en.html>
- **The Federal Budget 2023:** <https://www.budget.canada.ca/2023/home-accueil-en.html>
- **The Federal Budget 2022:** <https://www.budget.canada.ca/2022/report-rapport/chap6-en.html>



- **Ministerial Mandate Letters:** <https://www.pm.gc.ca/en/mandate-letters>
- **Call to Action on Anti-Racism, Equity and Inclusion:** <https://www.canada.ca/en/privy-council/corporate/clerk/call-to-action-anti-racism-equity-inclusion-federal-public-service.html>

Contact Information

For more information on BEN/REN, please visit:

- **GC Wiki:** [The Black Executives Network / Le Réseau des exécutifs noirs \(BEN/REN\)](#)
- **GCollab:** [The Black Executives Network / Le Réseau des exécutifs noirs \(BEN/REN\)](#)
- **LinkedIn:** [The Black Executives Network](#)

To join BEN/REN, please subscribe to our mailing list by sending an email with your name, job title and department/agency at

BlackExecutivesNetwork-ReseauDesExecutifsNoirs@ised-isde.gc.ca



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BEN/REN Working Group Members

Kim Beals
Irwin Bess
Farahldine Boisclair
Rosie Dénot
Ray Edwards
Paula Folkes-Dallaire
Valérie Lundy
Dr. Nicholas Martin
Lorraine McKenzie-Presley
Samora Merizier
Adeola Onafua
Chuks Onwuachi
Trudy Samuel
Mitos Sandiego
Michelle Seymour
Tineka Simmons
Richard Smith II
Dienabou Sow
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Tina Walter

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ENDNOTES

- 1: The WFA estimates, derived from the Labour Market Availability (LMA) based on the 2016 Census and the 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability (conducted every five years), serve as the benchmark for Employment Equity (EE) representation within the core public service.
- Population of the federal public service by executive level, [Population of the Federal Public Service by Executive Level - Canada.ca](#)
- Distribution of public service of Canada employees by designated sub-group and occupational category - Members of visible minorities, [Distribution of public service of Canada employees by designated sub-group and occupational category - Members of Visible Minorities - Canada.ca](#)

