

Backgrounder CRA Strategic Directions Collections and Verification

Purpose:

The purpose of this document is to provide you with an understanding of the strategic direction of the Collections and Verification Branch (CVB) to be used as part of the consultative process on the development of a new organizational model in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA).

Organizational Context:

There are many CVB programs managed by the field in either Tax Services Offices, the new National Verification and Collections Centres (NVCC) or two of the four processing centres. Of the many millions of files addressed by CVB, very few are dependent on the specific geographic locations of taxpayers. With advances in technology, national inventories, an Agency model that looks to using electronic communication with clients more than in-person service, and client activities that span more than geographic area, CVB is generally well positioned to work from anywhere in Canada. There are exceptions where the nature of the work requires closer proximity to the taxpayer (such as for meetings, to better understand their environment, third parties or other Agency functions). These exceptions have evolved as technology and program design change, and are decided nationally by Headquarters in consultation with the field.

Drivers for Change:

Like other Canada Revenue Agency programs, CVB also requires regions to create viable organizational structures that are efficient and have the critical mass necessary to support program efficiency and the management structure. Increasingly, Headquarters in CVB has encouraged the consolidation of specialized Centres of Excellence (CoE) to provide the right focus on building capacity to address complex issues, and more integrated program strategies; such as insolvency and aggressive tax planning for collections and workload development.

The branch is also increasingly focused on having the right mix of work in its field operations, creating actual organizational cultures that promote in some cases high productivity, high volume centres such as the new NVCCs, leaving generally high complex, lower volume Tax Service Offices (example DAC 2, 3 and 4 collections, Trust Exam) in the urban centres. In some cases, regions have anticipated the branch direction and applied the CoE model to the complex work and created larger, stronger TSO organizations in the urban centres, enabling a far more coordinated approach to program planning in the community.

As experienced in our tax centers and call centres—and now in NVCCs and processing centres—it is CVB's view that physical co-location for in-office staff offers the greatest opportunities for the development of positive coherent organizational culture. This may not always be possible in the first instance; however, it is important to keep as an end goal.

Each region is responsible for considering these branch directions when considering real property and/or organizational changes primarily in the larger urban centres. How, when, where and to what degree regions implement them is based on local opportunities, plans and the need to consider the requirements of all the many programs in scope.

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People Considerations:

Depending on the taxpayer work can be performed from CRA offices, the taxpayer's location, or remotely via telework. Therefore, flexibility is critical to the effective delivery of the program.

Employee commutes and hours of work have significant impacts: on costs, on people, on morale and productivity, and entire families.

Employee development is enhanced when more senior employees work in the same area, facilitating peer-learning and professional development.

Performance and retirement plans are relevant factors, but not the only factor, in making decisions about work location for workloads and people.

Implications for the GTA:

Centres of Excellence are a preferred model for CVB operations – having employees and management focused on specific areas of work allow for a greater focus on results, an ability to foster technical capacity, and thus better results for taxpayers and Canadians. Improving tools, clients who operate nationally and internationally, and digital services offer opportunities to organize CVB work based on efficiency and effectiveness and not where a client may be located. From National Verification and Collections Centres, to the Debt Management Call centre, Insolvency and Aggressive Tax Planning for Collections to Trust Compliance national Inventory, we have the ability in CVB to perform almost all work from anywhere in Canada. Where we can't, we have tax service offices in many communities to provide a range of functions that require first-hand knowledge of the community and the ability to interact with them physically.

The organizational consolidation of like work under executives and managers provides greater program focus with improvements in quality, service and effectiveness. Centralization also allows for increased career development and succession planning.

The physical co-location of employees in centres of excellence can improve on the organizational consolidation benefits mentioned above, with benefits varying greatly depending on the degree the employees in that CoE spend time in the office to exploit their grouping with colleagues.

The physical co-location of CVB CoEs with Agency CoEs from other programs or third parties such as banks and insolvency trustees can improve communications, client service and provide more certainty on Agency outcomes in a given segment of the population.

No organization model or real-property solution can be perfect. Finding the best and most affordable balance at a given point of time is the key to CVB and Agency success.