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Evaluation of the Tobacco-Free Workplace Initiative

Submitted to:

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Prepared by:

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Executive Summary

The Tobacco Free Workplace Initiative (TFWI) was one of four initiatives of the British Columbia (BC) Healthy Living Alliance's (BCHLA) Tobacco Reduction Strategy and sought to decrease smoking prevalence and initiation, and second-hand smoke exposure to British Columbians. The TFWI engaged employers across the province and supported them in implementing tobacco cessation supports and services. The initiative's target audience was young adults aged 19 to 29, working in primary industries, manufacturing, transportation, service, and retail in BC. The BCHLA provided a \$960,000 grant from October 2007 to March 2010 to the Canadian Cancer Society (CCS) to support implementation of the TFWI.

The BCHLA and Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research (MSFHR) entered into an agreement for MSFHR to facilitate the evaluation. Through a competitive process, MSFHR contracted the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC) to conduct the evaluation of the TFWI and other BCHLA Initiatives. SRDC focused the evaluation of the TFWI on the implementation of the initiative's pilot project. The TFWI implemented a workplace smoking cessation pilot project that engaged 32 employers from across the province in providing smoking cessation support programs to employees. The evaluation used a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods to collect data from initiative staff, employers and employees participating in the initiative from across BC to understand what works well in providing workplace smoking cessation programs.

What made this initiative different compared to other resources available to workplaces was the provision of Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) and monetary incentives for employees in combination with personal hands-on support and guidance for employers. Through the pilot project, employers became more aware of what supports and services employees want, and the role the workplace can play in tobacco cessation. A total of 418 employees from 32 workplaces participated in a smoking cessation program and 122 (23 per cent) were successful in their attempt to quit at the end of a six-week program. The initiative also appears to have increased employees' awareness of what cessation resources are available through their employer benefits plan, the role the workplace can play in tobacco cessation, and knowledge about the challenges and strategies for quitting smoking.

While many challenges were encountered (such as engaging the target population), the TFWI increased employers' and employees' awareness and knowledge of tobacco use and the role the workplace can play in the health of its employees. More importantly, it added to the knowledge of what worked well in implementing tobacco cessation programs in workplaces.