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Confidential

# **Providing Solid Evidence of Improved Organizational Productivity through Improved Environments with Existing Data**

## *Discussion Document*

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## Discussion Document

### Regarding

## Providing Solid Evidence of Improved Organizational Productivity through Improved Environments with Existing Data

### NOTICE

#### Restriction on Disclosure

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#### Introduction

The National Research Council Canada (the NRC) is pleased to submit the proceeding Discussion Document (DD) document to CABA. The following document shall be considered the NRC's formal proposal pertaining to "Providing Solid Evidence of Improved Organizational Productivity through Improved Environments with Existing Data", and is based on all available information provided by CABA to the NRC as of 2019-04-16. Should the scope of the current project change, or should additional information be provided to the NRC that alters the NRC's proposed work plan and/or proposed budget, the NRC reserves the right to modify the proceeding DD document prior to acceptance by both parties.

#### Background

CABA is an industry association dedicated to the advancement of intelligent home and building technologies. It has an international membership of nearly 400 companies involved in the design, manufacture, installation and retailing of products relating to home and building automation. Public organizations, including utilities and governments, are also members. CABA's mandate includes providing its members with networking and market research opportunities. CABA also encourages the development of industry standards and protocols, and leads cross-industry initiatives.

Several conversations with CABA, its members, and other participants in the commercial buildings value chain, have indicated that quantifying and valuing benefits beyond energy – associated with better buildings generally, and advanced, intelligent building systems specifically – would support industry growth and better building environments for all. There is a renewed industry focus on how buildings can improve organizational productivity as a mechanism for increasing the ROI on building systems



improvements. Tenants in competitive real-estate environments are increasingly looking for buildings with green, sustainable, comfortable, and healthy credentials.

The NRC engaged with CABA's Intelligent & Integrated Buildings Council (IIBC) to develop a white paper entitled "Improving Organizational Productivity with Building Automated Systems", delivered in 2014. This white paper established a framework for quantifying and valuing the benefits of an enhanced BAS on organizational productivity, by identifying multiple metrics that contribute to organizational productivity, and mechanisms by which the BAS could affect these metrics. The NRC was also a co-author on a 2014 report from the World Green Buildings Council, entitled "Health, Wellbeing & Productivity in Offices", which laid out a compatible framework with a global consensus.

Following this, the NRC successfully completed a CABA Boutique Multi-Client Research Study entitled "Improving Organizational Productivity with Building Automated Systems: Phase 1". This work was supported by six CABA members in addition to the NRC: Philips, UTRC, Intel, Schneider, Distech (Acuity Brands), and Pella. The project was completed in April 2017, and a seminar summarizing the results was presented at the CABA Forum in Santa Clara in that month. This project involved the review and synthesis of a vast body of published work in the fields of engineering, psychology, business, public health, and others. The results demonstrated that better buildings strategies have positive effects on multiple organizational productivity metrics (absenteeism, employee turnover intent, self-assessed performance, job satisfaction, health and well-being). Further, these effects are similar in size to other corporate investments designed to improve these metrics (office type [private vs open-plan], workplace health programs, bonuses, and flexible work options).

In parallel, the NRC conducted an investigation of 2015 data from a large Canadian bank whose office staff are spread across green-certified and conventional buildings, combining building data from the company's facility management branch with regularly-collected employee survey data from the human resources department. The results showed that most of the green-certified buildings were occupied by more satisfied employees than matched conventional buildings, and employees in some of them also scored higher on manager-assessed performance. However, as in prior NRC research, there were some green buildings that lagged their conventional peers, suggesting that there is more to learn about how to deliver the best conditions for people and the environment.

The two parallel projects – the CABA Phase 1 project and the bank project – show the potential for better buildings to improve organizational productivity. However, the results are general rather than specific, providing little guidance on which technologies, design approaches, or operational practices lead to the largest benefits and the shortest payback. The NRC has developed a plan to fill this knowledge gap, providing actionable information to the commercial buildings value chain, including guidance for technology providers about their specific approaches.

The statement of work for the CABA Boutique Research Project had outlined a three-phase, sequential multi-year effort. Since that time, further discussions with many partners, including CABA, have refined the NRC's plan. Instead of three sequential phases (one of which was the now-completed Boutique



Research Project), the NRC is pursuing work in three tracks in parallel, which taken together will provide solid evidence that specific energy retrofits can result in improved organizational productivity as well as reduced operational costs for energy and maintenance. Track 1 is a series of field investigations occurring in buildings before and after they undergo retrofit projects. Track 3 consists of bespoke technology tests in NRC laboratories to prequalify specific technologies that are hypothesized to deliver benefits for the environment, occupants, and organizations (the triple bottom line).

Track 2, this project, will use existing data from a partner organization to examine the effects of building retrofits. That is, provided suitable data (longitudinal data for both building performance and occupant responses in buildings that were retrofitted and comparable buildings that were not) from a project partner, the NRC will focus on the specific renovations undertaken in a subset of buildings, and compare the responses of occupants in those buildings with their matched counterparts that had not then been renovated. These tests will identify the effects of the specific retrofits undertaken, and will build evidence to support similar investments to be made elsewhere.

The NRC is uniquely-positioned to conduct this work, for the following reasons:

- World-leading expertise in both engineering and behavioural science;
- A global leader in R&D related to buildings;
- Co-authors of prior related CABA and WGBC reports;
- Extensive experience measuring and analyzing organizational productivity and indoor environment data;
- A long track record of delivering large-scale valuable projects for industry clients;
- History of enabling acceleration of building technology to commercialisation and user acceptance;
- Multiple instances of positive influence on industry standards, codes and best practice documents.

In January 2019, the CABA Board decided to make this project, “Providing Solid Evidence of Improved Organizational Productivity through Improved Environments” its Landmark Project for commercial buildings in 2019. In a Landmark Research project a subset of CABA members are solicited to co-fund the project, which is typically conducted by the proposing organization. In this case, we anticipate that there may be other partners along with CABA. CABA will then be one of the project partners under a contract with NRC. CABA members will have their own contracts with CABA. The Steering Committee for the project will constitute co-funders from the CABA members who join the CABA Landmark Research Project, along with representatives from any other funders with whom NRC contracts, the NRC and CABA representatives.

## **Objectives**

This project (Track 2) will leverage existing, archival data from partner organizations to evaluate the effect of various intelligent building technologies and operations on multiple organizational productivity

metrics. Results will enable decision-makers<sup>1</sup> to value strategic investments in specific building technologies.

## Work Plan

The work under Phase 2 will comprise two stages:

1. Acquisition of relevant real estate (RE) and human resources (HR) data from one or more partner organizations.
2. Analysis of these data to quantify how investments in building technologies affect organizational productivity metrics.

In Stage 1 the archival data will be gathered, qualified, and prepared for analysis. Analysis cannot commence until suitable data have been acquired. The specific variables of interest are described in the Materials and Equipment section below. Our experience on projects similar to this one is that most modern large organizations (and their service providers) will already be archiving the data we need for this project in RE, facility management (FM), and HR databases. The challenge will be to get access to these data from an organization (which might require the agreement of multiple internal stakeholders), putting data confidentiality provisions in place (particularly with HR data), knowing which staff were in which buildings (or which technologies they were exposed to) at the time the HR data were collected, and understanding extraneous factors that might have affected outcomes other than the technology in question. Our prior experience shows that these challenges can be overcome with a motivated partner, and the NRC has mechanisms in place to facilitate this process.

Analysis may follow either of two models: pre-post or cross-sectional, and one or both may be utilized in this project, depending on the nature of the data available.

The pre-post model can be conducted with a single building, provided it has a large enough population with valid data to ensure statistical power in analysis. In its most straightforward application, key outcome variables related to organizational productivity are measured both before and after the application of a new building technology or process. Data from a comparable building (or from a section of the same building) that did not undergo a change during this time are also required. With appropriate statistical controls, the difference in the outcome variables is attributable to the applied technology. For example, an organization might see a reduction in average staff sick leave following the introduction of an advanced control system that optimizes ventilation delivery. Applying this same technique to multiple buildings (from one or more portfolios), each with their own technology implementation, can isolate the effects of a variety of technologies, as well as providing valuable replication of the effects of similar technologies across buildings. This approach is complicated if multiple technologies or other changes occur in the same building simultaneously, but statistical techniques can at least partially separate out effects with appropriate data.

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<sup>1</sup> E.g. building owners and operators, who might be project partners themselves, or clients of project partners.



The pre-post model is the preferred option for several reasons. It is statistically stronger than a cross-sectional approach because individuals act as their own controls - many factors other than building technology that might affect organizational productivity outcomes are thus held constant. Note also, that because this project can be conducted entirely with archival data, the intervention could be one that happened in the past, with pre- and post-data already recorded. There is no need to wait for new data following a future, scheduled technology implementation.

The cross-sectional approach is best carried out on a variety of buildings in the same portfolio (i.e., employees from one host organization). Rather than examining changes before and after the application of a technology, the cross-sectional approach (in its most straightforward application) samples data from all buildings at a single point in time, and relies on prevailing variations in building features and technologies across the portfolio. Some buildings will have a certain combination of features, other buildings will have another combination, and statistical techniques are used to tease out the effects of different technologies on outcome variables. Keeping the analysis within a portfolio means that contextual differences between organizations (and differences in available data – format, definitions etc.) that might obscure technology effects can be controlled to some extent, although there may still be cultural, climatic, local economic and other differences between buildings in the same portfolio. However, the robustness of conclusions can be enhanced by applying this technique across several portfolios.

The detailed work plan in each stage will be guided by the Steering Committee.

## **Materials and Equipment**

The data necessary to undertake the analysis outlined in this proposal have particular characteristics. Partners indicating that they would like to provide data to the project should be aware of these characteristics in advance so they can assess data availability within their own organizations, or from their own clients or other relationships.

Working with international organizations, the NRC has developed a multi-metric framework for assessing the broad impact of building environments and technologies on organizational productivity. These metrics are derived from archival data already routinely collected by most office building stakeholders, and typically include the following categories/sources:

- Tenant/employer HR data from individual employees, for example:
  - Retention: e.g., number of people leaving their jobs voluntarily
  - Absenteeism: e.g., days per person of short-term, discretionary sick leave
  - Performance: e.g., manager assessed, or a defined/tracked task performance metric
  - Job satisfaction, well-being: e.g., regular employee survey
- Facility manager (or equivalent) RE data, for example:
  - Occupant comfort: e.g., regular tenant satisfaction survey
  - Tenant complaints: e.g., log of calls to FM support system



- Building automation sensors: e.g., space temperatures, return air CO<sub>2</sub> levels
- Relevant building and technology characteristics: e.g., location, size, age, systems, envelope, schedules
- Retrofits (if any): their nature, when the change was made

In all cases, the dates on which the data were collected are required, as is the information that links the HR data to the RE data (i.e., locations of the individuals and work groups within the RE portfolio).

The final choice of characteristics and metrics will be determined via discussions between the NRC and project partners supplying data. It is understood that not all of these metrics might be available at each study building, and that this does not necessarily exclude a site from consideration; a subset of variables could contribute to overall conclusions derived from many buildings. Further additional metrics of value, or surrogate metrics, from a particular site might also be considered.

## **Deliverables**

There will be four deliverables for this project, all due at the end of the project schedule. Project participants will have the opportunity to review drafts of these documents, and provide comments, prior to delivery of final versions.

1. A detailed report with major sections describing the characteristics of the data, the building technologies addressed, analysis methods, and results. This report will position results to provide participants with marketplace advantage, according to the following:
  - Evaluate the effects of specific building technologies and strategies on organisational productivity metrics.
  - Input to more informed decision-making and purchasing.
2. A PowerPoint slide deck describing the project and its major findings. This slide deck may be used by the NRC in describing the results to the partners themselves, or in other partner-approved technology transfer activities. The slide deck may also be used by partner organizations as source material for their own presentations for marketing or other purposes.
3. A version of the final report edited for submission to a scientific journal.
4. A webinar presentation of the slide deck for all funders.

The Steering Committee will review drafts of these documents. Submission of the journal manuscript will occur only with agreement of all project partners.

Some funders will receive other benefits of their contributions, depending on the level of funding (see below).



## Proposed Budget

	Total (US\$)
CABA (cash)	\$150,000
NRC (in-kind) and other partners Co-investment (cash)	\$75,000
<b>TOTAL (without applicable taxes)</b>	<b>\$225,000</b>

In addition, this data will require data to be donated by one or more organizations. The costs of preparing the data in a format suitable to protect privacy and to be ready for the NRC to analyze are expected to be in-kind costs borne by the donor organization. Donor organization(s) will be considered full project partners and will have a seat on the Steering Committee.

## Responsibilities

The NRC will:

- Conduct all technical work and data analysis;
- Produce all deliverables;
- Ensure the confidentiality of all data entrusted to it by project partners. Unless otherwise instructed by the supplier of the data, the identity of specific buildings will not be revealed to other project partners or the public. No original data on buildings (RE) or individuals (HR) will be shared with other project partners or the public, only the results of analyzing these data in aggregate will be shared.

CABA will:

- Provide funding to the NRC for execution of the project;
- Recruit from its members organizations wishing to participate in the project;

CABA member participants will:

- Provide funding for the project via CABA as established by CABA;
- Provide data (if applicable) for the project, direct to the NRC;
- Identify representatives from each organization to participate on the project Steering Committee, although participation in meetings is entirely optional;
- Provide input to the direction of the technical work, analysis, and content of deliverables, via the Steering Committee.

Other partners are expected to join the project by direct contract with the NRC.

By default, Steering Committee meetings will be monthly following a kick-off meeting at project launch. Nevertheless, the Steering Committee may decide to meet more or less frequently as they see fit, and as project progress suggests.

## Project Plan/Schedule

Project Task	Completion Date
Pre-launch webinar	May 3 <sup>rd</sup> , 2019
Secure funding	September 30 <sup>th</sup> , 2019
Project launch SC meeting	October 15 <sup>th</sup> , 2019
Stage 1: Secure and format data	January 16 <sup>th</sup> , 2020
Stage 2: Analyze data	June 15 <sup>th</sup> , 2020
Draft Deliverables	September 30 <sup>th</sup> , 2020
Final Deliverables & Project Close	December 31 <sup>st</sup> , 2020

Note that the NRC experience is similar projects indicates that considerable time must be devoted to Stage 1. Enabling secure data transfer, as well data cleaning, and formatting of data from multiple sources into a common and analyzable format is a major task requiring specialized resources. The project schedule may be accelerated if donors of suitable data and project funders can be found sooner than suggested in the plan above.

## Funding Levels and Benefits

Funders of the project may participate at one of the levels below, and will receive the benefits through CABA and NRC associated with the level of contribution.

### Bronze Funder (\$5K):

- Name and logo will be placed on the front page of the research report, slide deck, media releases, and marketing material.
- Opportunity to participate in the final webinar with all the funders which will highlight the findings of the research in detail.
- Ability to ask the questions to the research analysts.
- Final report, executive summary, presentations.

### Silver Funder (\$10K):

- All benefits of the Bronze Funder.
- Will have a one (1) hour webinar specifically for their organization and hosted by the National Research Council (NRC). Anyone from the organization may attend to receive an overview of the research findings.



- Will be on the Steering Committee and allowed to: define the research scope and methodology, provide feedback and input regarding the direction of the study, and participate in Steering Committee webinars.

Gold Funder (\$15K+):

- All benefits of the Silver Funder.
- Additional custom benefits package established on a case-by-case basis. This could include a case study incorporated within the research to highlight the work their organization has been doing in the area. This case study will be completed by the National Research Council (NRC) as a side project and additional costs may be involved; the cost will depend on the complexity of the proposed case study.