



Advisory Services to Executives (ASE)

2023-2024 Annual Report

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Advisory Services to Executives (ASE)	3
2023-2024 Year in Review	4
Client Testimonials	5
Who is Accessing the Service?	6
Main Reasons for Contacting ASE	7
Results of Partnership Activities	12
Final Words	14

Advisory Services to Executives

Executives should never feel alone! APEX is your professional association, led by executives for executives. We support you as an individual, and as a community; we are your active voice and advocate for more people-centric and psychologically safe approaches. We strive to provide value and ensure that executives are equipped to thrive in their roles and never feel hopeless and isolated. There is always a path forward, and we are committed to walking it with you.

Advisory Services for Executives (ASE) is a confidential, timely and easily accessible bilingual service that provides a safe space for conversations. APEX members benefit from unlimited access to the service.

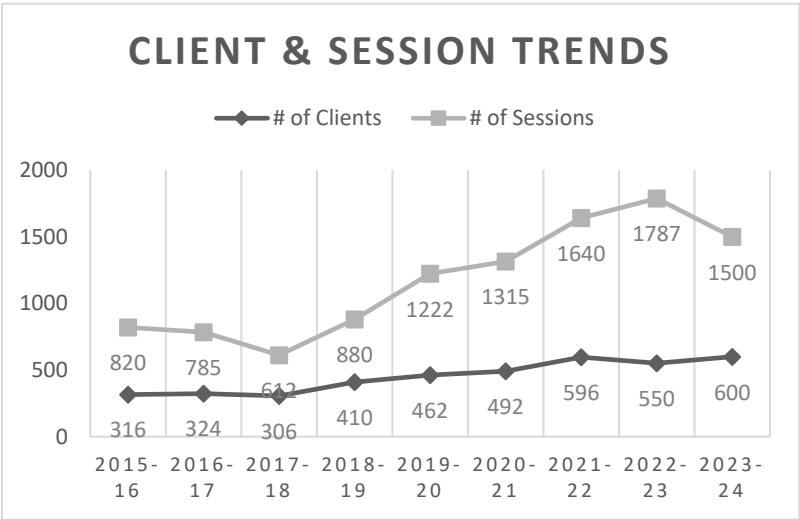
ASE team members are seasoned executives with a broad range of expertise and lived experiences. They use a human-centric and empathic approach to build trust with their clients and explore a wide range of options and opportunities to address executives' concerns and work towards the best possible outcomes. ASE shares tips and strategies on fostering healthy and psychologically safe workplaces, as part of an overall approach to inclusive leadership.



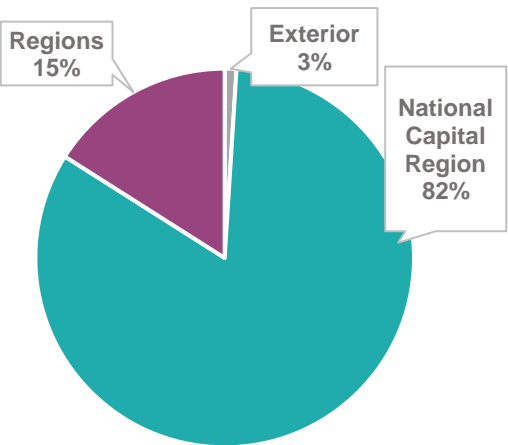
2023-2024 Year in Review

Key Findings

This year, over 600 executives accessed the service, with 540 using it for the first time.



While the number of client sessions can vary significantly, on average, APEX members accessed the service at least five times throughout the year to unpack complex issues, provide an update on their situation or seek additional guidance.



18 % of our clients are working in a region or abroad, which is consistent with previous years.

How Executives Heard About ASE:

- Colleague – Word of Mouth
- APEX Newsletter- Website
- Through their free membership year as a new executive
- Through their Ombuds or Human Resources Branch

Client Testimonials

The feedback received was very useful and helped me confirm the course of action I was planning on taking for the issue I was consulting about.

I have benefitted greatly from this service, having had to execute significant change and culture management my first 10 months on the job. It was a lifeline.

I appreciated the frank, honest, authentic, safe conversation, where I felt heard, validated, and was offered practical support and advice.

The advisor helped me a lot in my reflections and to normalize my situation. She even followed up with me several weeks later, which made me feel that she was really concerned about my situation. The service is full of compassion. I needed an ally at that moment and I found one.

Who is Accessing the Service?

Level	
EX-01	57.5%*
EX-02	25.8%
EX-03	10 %
EX-04	3.8%
Other (Acting Executives)	3%

**35% of that percentage are new executives*

More than half of ASE’s clients are executives at the EX-01 level (57.5%). This group is largely seeking information on their terms and conditions and what it means to be a new executive. Most popular themes being discussed include networking and career management strategies, effective onboarding strategies, navigating difficult situations and conflicts in the workplace, and understanding the performance and talent management process for executives.

Executives at the EX-02 and above are interested in deeper strategic conversations on career progression strategies, effective influential strategies to challenge current ways of working and processes, address workload management issues, discuss values and ethics dilemmas and strategies to manage a diverse workforce and drive a more inclusive environment.

Our client base continues to be diversified: 69 % are women, and 20% of clients self-identified as belonging to the following equity seeking groups: Black executives, Indigenous executives, persons with a disability, persons of colour, and members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ communities. All were seeking guidance on career strategies and values-based leadership practices to lead with authenticity and learn to advocate for what they need to succeed and create more psychologically safe and trauma-informed workplaces.

Main Reasons for Contacting ASE

Career Reflection and Career Management Strategies

This broad category encompasses topics such as advice on what it means to become an executive, résumé writing, networking tips, job search strategies, career management coaching tips and pre-retirement considerations and strategies. The main catalysts for executives wanting to discuss career reflections are workload management and unsustainable work environment, career stagnation, major differences in leadership styles and conflict with a supervisor, climate of competition vs collaboration, lack of purpose and sense of belonging, and challenging values and ethics dilemmas.

Executives in search of a new role would like more transparency and support available from their HR or executive services team and central agencies team to help them find opportunities inside or outside their current organizations. Executives who find themselves in forced career transitions or wanting to escape a toxic environment would like direct support and career management support from OCRHO, like what is being offered at the ADM level for executives in transition: a list of available opportunities, a presentation of executives to senior leaders who have vacancies, and other similar services.

Terms and Conditions of Employment

More than 150 clients reached out again this year on a variety of questions related to executives' terms and conditions. Questions generally fell into the following categories:

- General overview of TBS people management policy suite for executives and applicable directives;
- interpretation of leave and special working arrangement provisions;
- employer's responsibilities with respect to the duty to accommodate and ensuring a successful return to work;
- recourses available to executives and sources of support for legal advice;
- resources available to support the health and wellbeing of executives and their teams, including professional coaching and counselling services.

Effective Onboarding Strategies

35 % of newly appointed executives reported having a very rough landing in their first executive role and not having received adequate onboarding from their direct supervisor. Many managers of executives are not investing time to strategically onboard, coach and support their executives, especially when they are being given transformational leadership or change management responsibilities. Many new executives lack experience with performance management issues, effectively managing disruptive employees or difficult labour relations situations, and are not sure what to do or who to turn to for appropriate leadership strategies when facing major resistance or being sabotaged by employees. Without proper support, new executives feel vulnerable, lack perspective and options, and may react inappropriately to situations with the adverse effect of escalating the conflict, eroding trust and affecting their physical and psychological well-being. This may lead them to question if they made the right decision by making the leap to the executive ranks.

Managing Up Strategies and Setting Healthy Boundaries

The current operating context and climate within the federal public service was challenging for many executives, characterized by constant change, uncertainty, geo-political influence, and unsustainable operational realities following months of realignment or austerity measures in many departments and agencies.

Many executives reached out for advice and practical tips on how to:

- better manage their workload and energy levels;
- exercise positive influence to challenge the status quo;
- adopt new mindsets and approaches;
- confront their beliefs and ways of thinking and develop new patterns of behaviours;
- advocate to their supervisors for what they need to succeed; and
- set healthy boundaries for themselves and for their teams.

Managing Conflicts in the Workplace



Many executives at all levels reached out to ASE to build their conflict management competence, gain new perspective, discuss their triggers, and default patterns of behaviours, regulate their emotions, and prepare for difficult conversations, facilitated conflict management discussions or mediation. They are using ASE as a sounding board to test their approach and strategies, regain control of their narrative, storyline and emotions, and seek additional perspective and ways of responding to various conflicts and values and ethics dilemmas in the workplace.

Performance Management Process

Between April and June 2023, 75 executives accessed ASE in the context of their performance management discussions with their supervisors. They wanted to discuss strategies and prepare for the conversations, leverage the process to drive their own results, narrative and performance, and advocate for a fair, equitable and transparent process, in alignment with the [Directive on performance and talent management of executives](#).

One key systemic issue that we continue to hear year after year is the lack of ongoing and transparent communication between executives and their supervisors and the lack of support from senior management when issues are being raised. When executives have very little interaction with their supervisor over the course of the year, negative comments that come as a surprise at year-end erode trust and confidence and create distress. The situation is made worse when the supervisor advises the executive to look for another job rather than working things out and providing meaningful feedback and examples, routed in factual evidence and not subjectivity, coaching and training opportunities and allowing enough time for the executive to address the perceived shortcomings.

Out of 50 executives reaching out this year on this topic, 80 % of them felt that their senior leaders were not walking the talk on values and ethics and respecting the directive on performance management of executives, and that there is a lack of communications, respect,

and transparency. Executives are also advocating for more transparency with respect to the talent management process and how vacant executive positions are being filled.

Demystifying various types of workplace issues, including perceived discrimination, harassment, and misconduct

The ASE team provided a safe space for executives facing very difficult situations and emotional distress, such as when confronted with perceived wrongdoing or misconduct in the workplace, values and ethics dilemmas, irreconcilable differences in leadership and communications styles, and allegations of harassment. We helped executives explore various options and avenues to navigate through the various processes. In line with the Directive on harassment prevention and violence, and the role of APEX in this regard, we helped executives prepare their responses and refer them to legal counsel when appropriate as we are not mandated to represent individual executives or accompany them to interviews nor disciplinary hearings.

More than 40 executives also reported their frustration with the various and sometimes conflicting mechanisms employees have to file a grievance, complain, or make a proactive disclosure with respect to perceived harassment or violence in the workplace, or breach of the values and ethics code. This can be especially pronounced when it may appear that a complainant is trying to leverage every mechanism at their disposal to try to reverse decisions, seek revenge or personally attack an executive. We have seen executives facing multiple malicious complaints and grievances in parallel. There appears to be no holistic or systemic approach to cases like these, and few preliminary discussions amongst all players involved to determine if an investigation should be launched or to explore root causes and if complaints are filed in good faith and in compliance with the intent of each process. Some complainants have also discovered the flaws of our current reporting system. They realize they are stronger together and start using mobbing and bullying tactics against executives to poison the work environment by gossiping and making defamatory comments. 9% of executives involved in dealing with complex employee issues reported being harassed, sabotaged, and bullied themselves, and each executive approaching our services for this reason had a common

element to their story – they were all trying to initiate change or transformation, manage somewhat dysfunctional teams, and were facing huge resistance, trying to manage disruptive employees and poor performance or misconduct that were never addressed before. Executives are advocating for financial assistance after they have been exonerated from malicious or frivolous complaints not supported by factual evidence.



Results of Partnership Activities

APEX is proud of its ongoing partnerships with various service providers in the areas of mental health and wellness, leadership development, professional coaching services and legal services.

We've hosted learning events in collaboration with mental health experts on [building resilience](#), [fostering belonging and igniting innovation](#), and on [leveraging our largest untapped mental health resource: our people](#), with more than 250 executives in attendance.

To help support executives wanting to access specialized resources related to workplace wellness and mental health, we were happy to partner with Health Canada to encourage executives to register for their customized 2-week Decompression Program, designed and delivered by mental health professionals, aimed at supporting leaders and their teams following prolonged periods of operational stress.

We were also pleased to contribute to, focus test and actively promote OCHRO's new, evergreen, [Back pocket guide for executive supports](#) to consolidate resources available across the federal public service to support executives throughout their careers. It aims to facilitate access to support, tools and training executives need to succeed, including resources to help executives take care of themselves and their teams, transition to a new role, and seek advice and guidance.

To complement its advisory services offering and respond to a growing demand for professional or specialized coaching services, we are proud to have leveraged ongoing relationships with several partners and service providers in this area, such as but not limited to: the Personnel Psychology Centre's Executive Counselling Services; Health Canada's Specialized Organizational Services (SOS); Pourquoi Pas Coaching; The Knowledge Circle for Indigenous Inclusion, and CareerJoy.

In response to last year's requests from ASE clients to better understand their terms, conditions and rights as executives, we were delighted to host two sessions with our legal partners, Ravenlaw and Nelligan Law. Close to 100 executives attended these events. The event with Ravenlaw was aimed at demystifying executives' terms, conditions, and rights; and the event with Nelligan Law covered various types of workplace investigations.



Finally, ASE leveraged its ongoing relationship with the federal ombuds community, the Heads of HR community and Heads of Executive Services, and APEX ambassadors, to join forces and develop additional strategies, recommendations and [practical resources](#) to address gaps, develop best practices, tackle systemic issues and provide additional value to the executive community.

Final Words

It has been a true privilege for APEX and the ASE team to be of service to the executive community. We appreciate your trust and confidence in our services, year after year.

Going forward, we will continue to strive for service excellence and advocate for more inclusive, psychologically safe, and people-first approaches to affect executives' overall health and wellbeing, and affect system change and structure.



We will be delighted in 2024-2025 to share the results of [our 7th APEX Executive Work and Health Study](#). We expect early study results in December and will be arranging a series of sessions to share the analysis and inform action plans.

In the meantime, please take care, and never hesitate to reach out or recommend our services to executives in need of a safe space to bounce ideas, feel heard and tackle issues or any types of leadership challenges! [We are here for you](#), and we care.