

**Report To:** Human Resources Committee, Board of Health  
**Submitted by:** Dr. Nicola Mercer, Medical Officer of Health & CEO  
**Subject:** WDGPH HR STRATEGY

---

**RECOMMENDATION(S):**

- (a) **That the Human Resources Committee make recommendation to the Board of Health to receive this report, as presented, for information.**

**BACKGROUND:**

The Ontario Public Health Organizational Standards outlines in section 6.14 the requirements that:

The board of health shall ensure that the administration establishes a human resources strategy, based on a workforce assessment which considers the competencies, composition and size of the workforce, as well as community composition, and includes initiatives for the recruitment, retention, professional development and leadership development of the public health unit workforce.<sup>1</sup>

WDGPH has launched its 2016 – 2020 Strategic Plan, “Building Health Tomorrows Today”. This plan outlines the overall WDGPH organizational values: Advocacy, Engagement, Excellence, Respect and Transparency. The WDGPH HR Strategy supports the Agency goals and objectives while, in addition to ensuring regulatory compliance, ensures human resource compliance as outlined in the Ontario Public Health Organizational Standards (OPHOS).

**APPENDICES:**

Appendix ‘A’ – WDGPH Human Resources Strategy

## REFERENCES:

*Ontario Public Health Organizational Standards, 2011*

### **Bibliography**

- 1 Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. [Online].; 2016. Available from: <http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/orgstandards/>.

*Original Signed Document on File*

---

Prepared by:  
Justin Brown  
Manager, Human  
Resources, Administrative  
Services

---

Reviewed by:  
Elizabeth Bowden  
Interim Director,  
Administrative Services

---

Approved by:  
Dr. Nicola Mercer,  
Medical Officer of Health &  
CEO

## APPENDIX 'A'

### Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health Human Resources Strategy

#### Introduction

Human resource management is increasingly important in today's changing workforce. Some of the challenges Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health (WDGPH) currently faces are common across the Public Service, while others are unique to WDGPH. Significant challenges over the next few years include changing client needs, changes to regulations and increasing accountability factors, significant amounts of staff retiring, effective labour and employee relations and evolving learning needs. To ensure that WDGPH meets these challenges and to strengthen its human resource management, the agency is working to ensure strategies are in place for ongoing success.

Every person at WDGPH has a role to play in helping to make this plan a reality. WDGPH management team members must recognize their shared accountability for this initiative and be committed to its success.

#### What is it and why does WDGPH need one?

An organization's HR strategy acts as a guidance document to support the organization's HR practices. The Strategy illustrates various critical HR organizational functions and services that support the Agency's success. The Strategy is intended to support the drive of continuous service improvement to streamline, enhance, and improve core HR services.

It's the recognition of the required elements of a successful workplace and an analysis of current practices that enables WDGPH to develop effective operational plans to implement, monitor and assess the overall status of employee satisfaction and engagement in the workplace.

#### Strategic Context

WDGPH has launched its 2016 – 2020 Strategic Plan, "Building Health Tomorrows Today". This plan outlines the overall WDGPH organizational values: Advocacy, Engagement, Excellence, Respect and Transparency. The HR Strategy supports the Agency goals and objectives while, in addition to ensuring regulatory compliance, ensuring human resource compliance as outlined in the Ontario Public Health Organizational Standards (OPHOS).

The population needs and requests for the services of Public Health continue to grow as the funding becomes more constrained and tenuous. The changing demographics and the current and projected growth for the service delivery area of WDGPH indicate continued resource demand for public health services.

#### The WDGPH Workforce

WDGPH has a blended workforce in a number of ways, it has a mix of union and non-union employees with approximately thirty (30) percent unionized and seventy (70) percent non-union employees. The Agency's unionized nurses are 100% regulated by the College of Nurses of Ontario. Our non-union workforce is composed of administrative (31%), professional (27%) and management staff (12%). The Agency has both professionally regulated (46%) and non-regulated (54%) employees. Regulated professions include: Physicians, Public Health Nurse, Registered Nurse, Chief Nursing Officer, Registered Practical Nurses, Dental Assistants, Dental Hygienists, Dentist, Public Health Nutritionists, Speech Language Pathologists, Canadian Registered Safety Professionals, and Human Resources Professionals.

As required by the OPHOS, written policies and procedures exist and are maintained concerning:

- Orientation of public health unit staff;
- The availability of job standards and position descriptions for staff;
- A process to ensure that staff meet qualifications for their positions, job classifications and
- Licensure (as required);
- Contents of a personnel file and provisions for access. Complete personnel files are maintained for each staff member, with appropriate policies and practices regarding the confidentiality of personnel information;
- Occupational health and safety policies;
- Recruitment and retention strategies, including workplace health practices;
- A code of conduct;
- Compensation policy;
- Reporting relationships;
- Discipline and labour relation policies;
- Staff performance evaluation processes; and
- Succession planning.

### **Orientation of Public Health Unit Staff**

A new employee orientation introduces new employees to the organization, their new role and enables a new employee to be successful by:

- Reducing the anxiety of the employee
- Sharing relevant organizational information and beginning a process of learning about the organization's mission and work
- Socializing the employee to the culture of the organization, including the values, behaviours, formal and informal practices, etc.
- Building relationships between the new employee and colleagues, including managers or supervisors <sup>(1)</sup>

WDGPH provides new hire orientation (onboarding) in order to assist employees to successfully integrate into the workforce and to support staff retention. The orientation program is comprised of an HR orientation, agency online orientation, and program-specific orientations. Staff are provided with information on the Agency's mission, vision and values as well as the different programs and services that the Agency provides to our clients.

Orientation also provides employees with an understanding of how Public Health is different from acute health care and the strategic focus on population-based health and evidence informed practices. All employees are provided access to the Agency's Employee Handbook that also assists as a quick reference resource and training aid for orientation as well as how to access training aids, reference guides and policies and procedures.

Effective employee orientation accelerates the acclimation of new staff enabling them to fully integrate and contribute in a timely manner. WDGPH continues to review and enhance its new employee orientation to reduce new hire anxiety and expedite their integration.

## **Job standards and Position Descriptions**

A position description and job standards are a basic management tool that can help to increase individual and organizational effectiveness.

For each employee, a comprehensive job description and standards helps the incumbent to understand:

- Their duties and responsibilities
- The relative importance of their duties
- How their position contributes to the mission, goals and objectives of the organization

For the organization, comprehensive job descriptions and standards contribute to organizational effectiveness by:

- Ensuring that the work carried out by staff is aligned with the organization's mission
- Helping management clearly identify the most appropriate employee for new duties and realigning work loads <sup>(2)</sup>

Job descriptions have been developed for all positions to assist employees in understanding the duties and responsibilities as well as the performance expectations required for their position. Job descriptions are also utilized to help determine compensable factors in order to ensure WDGPH maintains pay equity compliance. Job descriptions also support employees who wish to grow within their career by identifying the skills, abilities, qualifications and prior work experience required for a position. Robust job descriptions also assist the Agency to attract candidates with the critical skills and abilities required for the position.

WDGPH continues to review the job description format and content ensuring they accurately reflect the overall purpose, function, skills and authority of the role. As the workplace and the work evolves, these can quickly become outdated and non-relevant making the link to goals setting and performance management almost impossible.

## **Ensuring Qualifications for Their Positions**

Based on the job standards and position descriptions, an organization assesses job applicants to determine if they have the required skills, abilities, qualification(s) and prior work experience in order to achieve the strategic business objectives and regulatory requirements, and to also ensure legal compliance while selecting the best qualified candidate on the basis of merit.

WDGPH recruitment and selection activities are carried out in an equitable, effective professional manner in compliance with the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act (AODA). The Agency acknowledges and commits that all job candidates have a right for equal treatment in the Agency's recruitment and selection process in accordance with the Ontario Human Rights Code prohibited grounds.

WDGPH requires that all Regulated Health Professionals (RHP) must maintain current membership status in their respective college or association while actively employed. In recognition of the nature of the services offered to the public, WDGPH requires a candidate to provide proof of membership in a RHP body prior to employment.

WDGPH ensures ongoing maintenance of qualifications, by requiring employees to provide proof of their professional membership status on an on-going basis.

## **Personnel File Management**

Organizations create and retain documentation on employees to effectively manage their workforce. Employee records provide employers with a consolidated place to store employee information, and provide documentation to substantiate decisions on hiring, promotion, compensation, disciplinary action and termination. <sup>(3)</sup>

WDGPH maintains personnel files including employee and employment information to ensure compliance with the Canada Revenue Agency, the Employment Standards Act as well as other statutes. Employee files have restricted access whereby only Human Resources employees have access. An individual may review their file upon request which is handled in accordance with applicable privacy legislation. The release of information to other internal users (i.e. direct line managers) is restricted on a need-to-know basis. The Agency confirmed ongoing compliance to this requirement by completing a file audit in August 2016 and will perform additional file audits a minimum of once every 5 years.

In addition, WDGPH follows the provisions of the *Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004* (PHIPA) and the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (MFIPPA) for the collection, use, disclosure and retention of personal and/or personal health information or sensitive confidential information.

## **Occupational Health and Safety**

WDGPH is committed to protecting the health and safety of all its employees. In fulfilling this commitment, WDGPH provides and maintains a safe and healthy work environment, which meets the legislated requirements and strives towards best practices.

The Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) and regulations provide the legal requirements for the Health & Safety Framework. It sets out the rights and duties of all parties in the workplace. It establishes procedures for dealing with workplace hazards and it provides for enforcement of the law where compliance has not been achieved voluntarily by workplace parties.

Within WDGPH, there is a comprehensive health and safety program to ensure the agency is providing and maintaining a safe and healthy work environment. The program consists of policies and procedures as well as health and safety resources such as the Joint Health & Safety Committee (JHSC) and a dedicated Emergency Preparedness Health and Safety Officer. Additional initiatives include education and training, monthly workplace inspections, safety auditing, and reporting.

There is a genuine commitment to employee health and wellness at WDGPH. In addition to the JH&SC above, WDGPH also has an employee based “Healthy Workplace Committee” whose vision is “A workplace where physical activity, healthy eating, and positive mental health are embraced, valued, and supported.” As well, there is the Psychological health & Safety Committee – whose purpose includes. “To identify, recommend and support evidence based strategies that contribute to a psychologically healthy and safe workplace...”

## **Recruitment and Retention Strategies**

Hiring qualified and passionate employees is critical for every organization’s success. Given limited financial resources, an organization has to make critical decisions about who to target for recruiting and how to retain highly qualified individuals. Failure to target the right candidate may lead to an organization attracting unqualified candidates who cannot meet the performance expectations of the position or potentially candidates whose values may not be in alignment with that of the organization. This may lead to voluntary or involuntary turnover. Recruitment,

however, is only half the story if an organization is unable to retain these highly qualified employees. The effects of turnover adversely affects the Agency in terms of the time, organizational disruption, and the direct and indirect expense of backfilling a vacancy. As such, it is simply good organizational practice to minimize turnover whenever possible with qualified high-performing employees.

WDGPH utilizes a variety of approaches to attract and retain employees. The Agency retains staff by providing competitive pay and benefits, a professional collegial work environment, offering tuition reimbursement assistance and also professional developmental opportunities such as management secondments. The Agency is committed to providing employees with a quality work-life balance with a 35-hour workweek as well as supporting flexible working schedules while ensuring Agency service levels are maintained.

For a recruiting pipeline, the Agency has partnerships with regulated professional associations, external colleges and universities for unpaid student placement positions, as well as provides research opportunities for graduate students. Our nursing professionals support nursing students by acting as preceptors. These actions enable the Agency to identify high-potential candidates that may be suitable to consider for future job vacancies whose work behaviours and personal values are in alignment with that of the Agency.

The Agency ensures that all hiring and employment related decisions are in accordance with *The Ontario Human Rights Code*. WDGPH has a robust and adaptive recruitment process which provides flexibility when required to meet Agency staffing needs. The Agency prevents nepotism in hiring and employment related decisions in order to ensure confidence in the integrity and fairness of hiring and employment practices.

The Agency has also provided managers and employees with ongoing specialized training on topics such as workplace health best-practices. WDGPH also provides ongoing training to ensure compliance with the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* of Ontario. This commitment is demonstrated further through the standing Psychological health & Safety Committee that provides recommendations to management to enhance and build a supportive and healthy workplace.

## **A Code of Conduct**

A well-written code of conduct clarifies an organization's mission, values and principles, linking them with standards of professional conduct. The code articulates the values the organization wishes to foster in leaders and employees and, in doing so, defines desired behavior. As a result, written codes of conduct or ethics can become benchmarks against which individual and organizational performance can be measured.<sup>(4)</sup>

WDGPH has implemented a comprehensive Code of Conduct and Ethics policy which applies to all employees, students and volunteers in order to foster and support a culture of integrity and accountability. The Agency encourages employees to raise questions and bring forward issues, particularly with respect to ethics concerns.

In support of this Code of Ethics and Conduct, all employees, students and volunteers are to:

- Maintain the highest level of professional standards;
- Show respect to all people in the workplace and honour diversity in co-workers and the community;
- Treat all persons honestly and fairly with regard for their rights, entitlements, duties and obligations;

- Accept responsibility for the duties assigned and collaborate with others in a spirit of teamwork to accomplish defined goals;
- Provide others with respect, cooperation and dignity;
- Be professional and courteous with both internal and external personnel;
- Resolve any work-related disagreements in a mature manner based on reasonable expectations;
- Avoid any situations which would place them in a potential conflict of interest as defined in CA.52.01.101 *Conflict of Interest* policy;
- Report any attempt by another organization, a member of the public or a co-worker to influence the outcome of any decision relating to WDGPH business; and
- Protect WDGPH's assets and ensure their efficient use. Theft, carelessness and waste have a direct impact on the financial health of WDGPH.

### **Compensation Policy**

A good compensation policy includes a balance between internal equity and external competitiveness. Compensation and benefits affect the productivity and happiness of employees, as well as the ability of the organization to effectively realize its objectives. <sup>(5)</sup> Compensation policy and administrative practices also critically influence the ability for an organization to attract and retain highly qualified staff.

WDGPH has achieved pay equity and maintains it by reviewing changed and/or new jobs on a regular basis. Positions are banded according to the outcome of the job evaluation process. The salary scale is reviewed regularly by the Board of Health and any adjustments are incorporated.

WDGPH monitors total compensation when assessing internal equity and external competitiveness. Total compensation can be defined as all of the resources available to employees, which are used by the employer to attract, motivate and retain employees. WDGPH employees enjoy a total compensation package that far exceeds the value of their base salary alone. The Agency also benchmarks compensation (i.e. base wages) and supplementary benefits (i.e. health, dental, prescription, paramedical, etc.) as well as fringe benefits (flexible working hours, compensation time practices, etc.) in the labour market to ensure they are competitive and in compliance with legal requirements.

### **Reporting Relationships**

It is said that one of the most important decisions an organization makes is who is placed in leadership positions. One of the key elements in an Organization is the relationship between a people leader and their direct reports. Employees expect their leaders to be accessible, unbiased, consistent and fair.

WDGPH ensures that leadership is competent to lead the individuals that they report to by ensuring they have the necessary education, qualifications, and credentials required in their program area. The Agency is committed to preventing nepotism in any employment-related decisions to preserve employee morale; to provide the highest quality service possible; to ensure equitable opportunities; and ensure integrity in the recruitment process.

It is the Agency's position that no employee shall attempt to use a family or significant social relationship for his or her personal benefit or gain. This includes an employee misusing their authority to influence or make an employment-related decision. Management has a responsibility to report relationships in order to prevent potential issues of nepotism.

## **Discipline and Labour/Employee Relations**

Clear expectations, appropriate supervision and feedback on a day-to-day basis are the best ways to avoid the necessity of implementing disciplinary action. However, when problems with behaviour or performance occur, corrective action is necessary. By implementing a progressive discipline process, an organization is able to provide employees with an opportunity to become a productive part of an organization and to improve the organization's ability to defend the corrective action taken.<sup>(6)</sup>

Progressive discipline is not considered an effective tool in managing employee performance. Clearly defined goals and objectives, proper training and timely effective feedback are primary tools to guide successful employee performance. WDGPH is a professional environment where all employees are expected to act in the best interests of clients and the Agency. The Agency has in place a dispute resolution system to resolve internal conflict as well as a progressive discipline policy and practice.

WDGPH's Public Health Nurses are represented by the Ontario Nursing Association (ONA) whereby the terms and conditions of their employment are encompassed by the Collective Agreement. The Agency ensures positive labour relations through fair and consistent Collective Agreement application and open dialogue with the Union where appropriate.

WDGPH does have a detailed progressive discipline policy and process that can be utilized when proactive and preventative employee performance management measures are not successful.

## **Staff Performance Evaluation**

The fundamental goal of performance management is to promote and improve employee effectiveness. It is a continuous process where managers and employees work together to plan, monitor and review an employee's work objectives or goals and his or her overall contribution to the organization<sup>(7)</sup>.

The Agency establishes annual goals and objectives linked to operating plans as a component of the strategic plan. Each employee has specific goals and objectives linking to the overall Agency plan requirements. Managers establish performance standards through annual performance reviews that are provided to permanent staff as well as provides regular feedback in regards to an employee's work performance.

WDGPH embraces effective leadership through the development of leadership skills through on-going training provided to employees and managers. All staff are provided with a performance review as well as informal performance feedback when required. Based on the community as well as client needs, pro-active training is identified and deployed to managers and front-line staff.

In 2016, WDGPH has embarked on a process to revise and revitalize the performance appraisal program including the automation of the process to enhance the level of interaction of the process and provide enhanced performance management documentation processes.

## **Succession Planning**

Succession planning acknowledges that staff will not be with an organization indefinitely and it provides a plan and process for addressing the changes that will occur when they leave. Key positions can be defined as those positions that are crucial for the operations of your organization and, because of skill, seniority and/or experience, will be hard to replace.<sup>(8)</sup>

WDGPH benefits from very low staff and management turnover. Generally the most significant challenges exist in backfilling staff to cover the numerous job protected leaves as outlined in the Employment Standards Act of Ontario.

For non-IMS activities, the Agency employs practices to ensure that service levels are maintained through unplanned absences through recruiting staff with specialized skills and abilities, ensuring appropriate vacation scheduling such as ensuring that nursing managers are always readily available and cross-training staff in key functional areas.

WDGPH maintains a comprehensive Emergency Response Plan in order to respond to emergencies in a way that will protect the health and welfare of employees and the community served. A crucial element of this plan is the Emergency Fan-Out report which is designed to support the Incident Management System (IMS) activities as required under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act R.S.O. 1990*. As outlined in the Agency's Emergency Response Plan and the standards, the Agency has a comprehensive IMS activation, notification and staff fan-out procedure in order to enable and ensure a consistent and effective response to public health emergencies and emergencies with public health impacts.

### **Summary**

The field of human resources is broad and rapidly evolving, there are numerous legislative changes each year requiring a fulsome review of the Agencies practices on an ongoing basis. The key is to maintain a proactive Human Resources Strategy for WDGPH. In addition to the legislative competence and compliance, it is essential that the human resources team maintain a significant level of operating knowledge of the programs and services offered by WDGPH to ensure HR programs and services are aligned to support the Agency in achieving its goals and the staff to ensure their continued success and satisfaction with their employment relationship.

## Works Cited

1. HRCouncil.ca. HRCouncil.ca - Orientation. [Online].; 2016 [cited 2016 09 08. Available from: <http://hrcouncil.ca/hr-toolkit/right-people-orientation.cfm>.
2. HRCouncil.ca. HRCouncil.ca - Job Descriptions. [Online]. [cited 2016 09 06. Available from: <http://hrcouncil.ca/hr-toolkit/right-people-job-descriptions.cfm>.
3. HRCouncil.ca. HR Council.ca - HR Policies & Employment Legislation - Employee Records. [Online]. [cited 2016 09 08. Available from: <http://hrcouncil.ca/hr-toolkit/employee-records.cfm>.
4. Ethics and Compliance Initiative. Ethics and Compliance Initiative - Why Have a Code of Conduct? [Online]. [cited 2016 09 08. Available from: <http://www.ethics.org/eci/research/free-toolkit/code-of-conduct>.
5. HR Council.ca. HR Council.ca - Compensation Systems: Design and Goals. [Online]. [cited 2016 09 08. Available from: <http://hrcouncil.ca/hr-toolkit/compensation-systems.cfm>.
6. HRCouncil.ca. HR Council.ca - Keeping the Right People: Discipline. [Online]. [cited 2016 09 09. Available from: <http://hrcouncil.ca/hr-toolkit/keeping-people-discipline.cfm>.
7. HrCouncil.ca. HR Council.ca - Keeping the right people - Performance Management. [Online]. [cited 2016 09 09. Available from: <http://hrcouncil.ca/hr-toolkit/keeping-people-performance-management.cfm>.
8. HRCouncil.ca. HRCouncil.ca - HR Planning - Succession Planning. [Online]. [cited 2016 09 09. Available from: <http://hrcouncil.ca/hr-toolkit/planning-succession.cfm>.