

Department of Health and Social Services

*Human Resources Strategy for the
Health and Social Services System*

April 2015

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

As in all jurisdictions across Canada, new drugs, new technologies, and new collaborative models of care and leadership are driving the need for change to the Northwest Territories (NWT) health and social services system. These current and emerging changes highlighted the need for an in-depth examination of the health and social service occupations required to support and sustain the new health and social services system now and in the future. To produce an effective new system, it is critical that human resources are maximized to produce the best care, best health and best future for residents of the NWT.¹

Recruitment of health and social services professionals is a constant challenge in the NWT due to the vast geographic remoteness, fiscal restraints and socio-economic realities. Vacancy rates for health care professionals in the NWT remain significant and many health professionals are expected to retire over the next ten years. The scarcity of health care professionals compromises the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) Department of Health and Social Services' (DHSS) capacity to ensure the delivery of health care.²

A recent report released by the Office of the Auditor General's (OAG) recommended that:

*The Department of Health and Social Services, in collaboration with Health and Social Services Authorities and with the support of the Department of Human Resources, should develop a comprehensive human resource recruitment plan for the Northwest Territories health care system. It should monitor progress against the plan on an ongoing basis.*³

¹ Department of Health and Social Services System Human Resource Planning Division. (2013). Request for Proposals: Human Resource Strategy for the NWT Health and Social Services System Reference Number: PM015250

² *Ibid.*

³ OAG. NWT Health Programs and Service – 2011. Department of Health and Social Service. http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/docs/nwt_201103_e_34998.pdf

In response to the OAG report, and in an effort to ensure adequate and appropriate human resources are in place for an effective new system that provides the best care, best health and best future for residents of the NWT, the DHSS developed a Health and Social Services (HSS) Human Resource (HR) Strategy to guide the next five years. The HSS HR strategy was developed within the context of providing programs/services with the best interest of the public as a core philosophy to ensure client/patient safety and a client-centered model of care."⁴

The strategy will help ensure:

- The recruitment and retention of high quality employees
- Organizational stability and achievement of corporate and operational goals
- Linkages between corporate/strategic goals and operational activity
- Systematic and proactive planning

The information presented in this document summarizes the work done for the Department of Health and Social Services by the consulting firm DPRA over the period of 2013-2014 and 2014-2015. The Strategic Plan is also based upon discussions with the Department of Human Resources (DHR), as well as presentations to and feedback received from the Joint Senior Management Committee and the DHSS Senior Management Committee.

⁴ *Ibid.*

2.0 OVERVIEW OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

The Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) works under the direction of the Minister and Deputy Minister in partnership with the Health and Social Services Authorities (HSSAs) to plan, develop, implement, evaluate and report on program and service delivery that supports the health and well-being of people across the NWT.

2.1 Mandate

The mandate of the Department of Health and Social Services is to promote, protect, and provide for the health and well-being of the people of the Northwest Territories. The Department is tasked with:

- Promoting healthy choices and responsible self-care;
- Protecting protect public health and prevent illness and disease;
- Protecting children and vulnerable individuals from abuse, neglect, and distress; and
- Providing integrated, responsive, and effective health services and social programs for those who need them.

2.2 Mission

The mission of the Department of Health and Social Services is to promote, protect and provide for the health and well-being of the people of the Northwest Territories.

2.3 Vision

Healthy people, healthy families, healthy communities

2.4 Departmental Strategic Priorities

The *Building on our Foundation 2011-2016 - A Strategic Plan for the NWT Health and Social Services System* provides direction for the delivery of integrated health and social services across the Territory.

The six strategic priority areas, which focus on individuals and families, communities and system-wide administration, are as follows:

Strategic Priority	Objective
Priority 1: Enhance services for children and families	Increase capacity of community to care for children and families at risk
Priority 2: Improve the health status of the population	In cooperation with communities and partners, implement health promotion, prevention and self-care activities focusing on individuals most in need
Priority 3: Deliver core community health and social services through innovative service delivery	Through innovative delivery ensure people have the majority of their health and social needs met by high quality community-based support and care
Priority 4: Ensure one territorial integrated system with local delivery	Ongoing sustainability of the system and best value for money
Priority 5: Ensure patient/client safety and system quality	Build territorial and local capacity to ensure safety and quality of care
Priority 6: Outcomes of health and social services are measured, assessed and publicly reported	Ensure accountability of the system by reporting to the Legislative Assembly and the public.

There is a need to support these strategic priorities through targeted human resources.

3.0 SYSTEM HUMAN RESOURCE PLANNING DIVISION

Historically the responsibility for recruitment of health and social services professionals was shared by the following departments: Department of Human Resources (DHR); DHSS; and the eight Health and Social Services Authorities. Recently, the primary responsibility for strategic recruitment and retention initiatives shifted to DHSS, within the System Human Resource Planning Division. DHR remains responsible for operational and transactional staffing activities for all GNWT employees, and for recruitment and retention efforts for all other occupations in the GNWT.

In the past, the DHSS has acted as a training division, delivering programs such as the Community Health Nurse Development Program (CHNDP) and the Northern Graduate Employment Program (NGEP). It was recommended, however, that the DHSS System Human Resource Planning Division no longer assume responsibility for the training of employees due to potential risk (refer to Section 3.4).

3.1 Mandate

Broadly speaking, the mandate of the System Human Resource Planning Division is to support the mission and vision of the DHSS. More specifically, the mandate of the Division is to support the DHSS and HSSAs in the recruitment and retention of the right mix of health care providers with the right skills in the right place at the right time in order to produce the best care, best health and best future for residents of the NWT.

Moreover, the Division is responsible for:

- Developing and implementing innovative recruitment and retention initiatives within a continuous learning environment;
- Providing quality human resource services to attract, develop, motivate and retain diverse talent within the health and social service fields; and,

- Implementing human resource strategy, programs, and practices aimed at promoting a spirit of developing a strong northern health and social services workforce.

3.2 Values

The values that guide the strategic initiatives are:

- Connectedness
- Support for the entire learning continuum
- Balancing academic and applied learning
- Balancing recruitment and retention efforts
- Targeted, needs-based investment
- Responsive to dynamic environment
- Shared accountabilities and investments
- Fiscally responsible

3.3 Summary of Drivers for Change

The DHSS currently supports and delivers several academic, practical and professional development recruitment and retention activities. The following programs are under review and may be amended to address recruitment and retention needs of the health and social services system:

Supported Programs (through funding)

- Bursary Programs
 - Specialized recruitment initiatives designed to address current and forecasted shortages of qualified health and social services professionals through the provision of financial incentives.
 - The following bursaries were provided for eligible post-secondary students:
 - Medical Student Bursary
 - Post-secondary Studies Bursary
 - Graduate Studies Bursary

- Professional Development Initiative
 - Provides eligible DHSS frontline professionals, clinical staff and managers with increased opportunities for professional development, education and training for the purposes of skill and career enhancement.
- Advanced Nurse Mentorship Program
 - Provided experienced NWT RNs with the opportunity to develop skills and combine capabilities in order to transition into other areas of nursing.
- Introduction to Advance Practice
 - Offers the training, skill development and continued professional development to DHSS's casual and full time Community Health Nurses who are required to work in Community Health Centres (not hospitals).
- Practicenorth.ca
 - Provides information on living and working in the NWT and provides a place for new health and social service employment opportunities to be posted.

Delivered Programs

- Community Health Nurse Development Program (delivers)
 - A competency-based program that assists Entry Level Community Health Nurses (ELCHNs) in acquiring the knowledge, skills and abilities required to work, in an expanded scope, as a CHN.
- Northern Graduate Employment Program (NGEP) (delivers)
 - Helps NWT nursing and social work graduates find their first job and gain work experience and skills in or outside government.

3.4 Strategic Context

The GNWT HSS HR Strategic Plan was driven by a number of key factors.

National environment does not mirror NWT environment

According to *Canada's Health Care Providers, 1997 to 2011 – A Reference Guide*⁵, published by the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) (revised July 5, 2013), national human health resources are increasing. From 1997 to 2011, the number of health care providers - physicians, nurses and other health care providers - grew for most health professions in Canada.

In the NWT, there are (true⁶) vacancies in almost every health care profession (e.g., physicians, social workers, nurses (LPNs, RNs, NPs). Thus, the national context is not entirely reflective of the NWT environment. For example:

- Increasing national trends in occupational numbers does not translate to increasing numbers in the GNWT
- Occupational surpluses do not necessarily mean recruitment opportunities for the GNWT given continuing challenges recruiting out of territory
- Occupations in which surpluses arise may not align with those occupations required in the GNWT

Rapidly changing environment

The NWT HSS environment is not static. The landscape is constantly shifting in response to changing factors such as population demographics, health status, technology, pharmaceuticals, programming, capital planning initiatives and occupation-specific processes, (e.g., credentialing – doctors, dentists, NPs).

⁵ <https://secure.cihi.ca/estore/productFamily.htm?locale=en&pf=PFC2161>

⁶ Position to be staffed in immediate future.

Aging workforce, particularly in management

In the National Occupational Category (NOC) called Health, it is reported that 19.8% of those in the GNWT health fields are eligible to retire in the next 1 to 5 years.

Current programs inflexible, non-inclusive

The current suite of GNWT HSS HR strategies is inflexible. Money is allocated to specific areas without the opportunity to move it around in response to changes in health and social services need across the system. Current HSS HR programs are heavily focused on recruitment initiatives (e.g., bursaries, CHNDP). Very little programming is aimed at retaining those GNWT HSS employees who have demonstrated their commitment to live and work in the NWT and who would like the opportunity to advance their scope of practice.

Moreover, the majority of HSS HR initiatives are provided to individuals wanting to become doctors and nurses, to the exclusion of other occupations that receive limited support.

Data limitations

While different data sources exist from which to capture HSS-specific information (e.g., PeopleSoft), there is no comprehensive system-level data set. As a consequence, it is labour intensive to get data to a point at which analysis for the purpose of decision making can occur. The data analysis itself requires a specific knowledge and skill set (e.g., one that includes an understanding of the type of positions, the national and territorial coding, the different meanings of the term 'vacancy') in order to understand how all of the information fits together.

DHSS Acting as a Training Facility

Currently, the System Human Planning Division acts as a training facility, overseeing the delivery of programs such as CHNDP. This is a responsibility that carries with it numerous challenges and potential risks including:

- Hiring individuals for a position that they are not yet qualified to take on, places DHSS at risk of liability (i.e., having a newly graduated nurse acting in the role of community health nurse without the requisite skills).
- There is a lack of capacity within DHSS to monitor the extent and effectiveness of on-site supervision.
- There is a high degree of variability in the way in which Nurse Educator Mentors (NEMs) are training community health nurses resulting in a lack of standardized skill and knowledge uptake.
- There is variability in the placements, with CHNs placed in larger community health centres being provided with more opportunity to learn and hone their skills than CHNs placed in smaller sites.
- The cost of delivering this program per person is prohibitive (greater than \$250,000/CHN) with a very low return on investment.
- Unlike completing a program through an academic institution, completion of the CHNDP through DHSS results in no formal certification.
- The DHSS lacks access to the type of resources (e.g., qualified staff, resource materials, etc.) that an academic institution can offer.
- Because of a lack of human resource capacity and necessary, DHSS is unable to accept all qualified CHNDP applicants.

4.0 GOALS, OBJECTIVES, STRATEGIES AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES: 2014-2019

It is critical that any plan include well-defined goals, objectives, strategies and measurable performance indicators. For the purposes of this document, they are defined as:

- **Goal:** A goal is a broad statement of what the System Human Resource Planning Division hopes to achieve.
- **Objectives:** Objectives are specific, achievable and measurable statements of what will be done to achieve goals within a designated time.
- **Strategies:** Specific initiatives to be undertaken in order to achieve the goals and objectives set out by the Division.
- **Performance Measures:** Quantitative or qualitative description of measures to be used to evaluate progress toward objectives.

4.1 Goal 1: Strengthening HSS labour market information

HSS is committed to providing accurate and timely labour market information in order to support evidence-based decision-making.

Objective:

- To maximize the potential of HSS information by ensuring the availability of credible and quality data to support current and future labour market planning
 - To ensure that the right information is available to the right person, in the right format at the right time.

Strategy:

- HSS HR Information Management
 - A strategy for the collection, analysis and reporting of human resources data for HSS HR planning purposes. Information management will span across the health and social services system to include employees in the GNWT, the Hay River Health and Social Services Authority, General Practitioners and Specialist Physicians.

The strategy will allow for enhanced evidence-based decision making, reporting, information sharing, accountability and transparency on the part of the Department of Health and Social Services.

Key Actions and Performance Measures

Key Actions	Measures	Targets
Develop a data management system	Web based system established	Completed web based data management system
Develop a system and system requirements for labour market forecasting	Labour market forecasting model developed	Completed forecasting model

4.2 Goal 2: Recruitment in hard to fill positions

HSS will adopt a proactive approach to recruitment in hard to fill positions by building relationships with key stakeholders, and by raising awareness of GNWT HSS as an employer of choice.

Objective:

- To respond to needs-based labour market demand using focused recruitment strategies
- To monitor labour market best practices
- To develop and foster relationships to work towards improving recruitment efforts
- To promote rural and remote health and social services as an attractive career choice

Strategy:

- Marketing and Promotion
 - The strategy has two primary focuses: labour market research; and labour market recruitment.

- **Labour Market Research** - The strategy is aimed at engaging with partners in order to understand the national, international and territorial health and social service system labour market trends, and building connectedness with key external stakeholders.
- **Labour Market Recruitment** - The strategy is aimed at broadening the pool of candidates for vacancies, encouraging potential candidates to consider NWT as a viable career location and to increase the awareness of NWT health and social services in other parts of Canada and internationally.

Specific Labour Market Research Initiatives:

- Targeted Recruitment Events:
 - Focused on identifying the most promising events to attend where DHSS could best position its recruitment interests.
- Annual Recruitment Priorities Planning:
 - Focused on relying on up-to-date labour market information in order to determine recruitment priorities for the upcoming year.
- Strategic Alliances:
 - Focused on developing and nurturing partnerships with academic institutions in order to expand interest in health and social services employment in the NWT. Examples of key relationships include medical schools that graduate physicians in rural and remote practice.
- Best Practices:
 - Focused on identifying and understanding best practices in the area of medical, health and social services recruitment and retention across the country so as to inform internal labour market planning.

Specific Labour Market Recruitment Initiatives:

- REACH (Research and Explore Awesome Careers in Health and Social Services)

- A program aimed at promoting health and social services careers to school-aged children. This program would run in partnership with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) and DHR (and other potentially interested organizations and agencies.) The intent is to:
 - Expand Northern student's interest in a health and social services career in early years;
 - Ensure they are enrolled in appropriate/relevant courses in high school; and,
 - Expose them to practical experiences to maintain, strengthen and apply interests that can lead to a health and social services career in the NWT.
- Territorial Medical Residency Program
 - Medical school teaches physicians a broad range of medical knowledge and basic clinical skills; medical residency gives in-depth training within a specific branch of medicine.
 - This program will broaden medical residency opportunities across the health and social services system. Building on the experiences of some of the Health Authorities who have already established programs with Canadian medical schools, this strategy will see the implementation of a pan-Territorial approach to attracting medical residency students from key universities.
- HSS Graduate Internship Program
 - This program would provide one to two year paid Internship placements for entry level health and social services professions. As professional working positions offered to students or inexperienced workers, the Internships will enable the Interns to gain valuable work experience and on-the-job training, while allowing them to build their professional networks in the North (with the intent of building a base of future health care recruits).

- Medical Affairs Unit
 - This strategy would create a central Territory-wide lead for physician recruitment, ensuring a pan-Territorial approach to addressing physician labour market needs.
- Rural and Remote Nursing Program
 - This program would replace the existing Community Health Nurse Development Program currently delivered by DHSS. The Rural and Remote Nursing Program would be delivered by Aurora College to qualified nursing students. This program will replace the Masters of Nursing - Nurse Practitioner Program currently being taught by Aurora College and slated for termination June 30, 2015 (no additional intakes occurred in the 2014-2015 academic year).
 - The existing Introduction to Advanced Practice (IAP) Program (condensed version) would still be available for nurses with experience working in an agency or a community health centre.

Key Actions and Performance Measures

Key Actions	Measures	Targets
To identify and attend relevant, targeted recruitment events	Number of opportunities identified that support identified recruitment needs	Select events based on targeted recruitment
To develop annual recruitment priorities based on current labour market information	An annual plan linking relevant labour market information and strategies for recruitment and retention	Annual plan in place
practicenorth.ca	On-going, regular updating of website as a central marketing point	TBD
Monitor practicenorth.ca usage	Search engine ranking and click-through rate Page views and bounce rate	TBD

4.3 Goal 3: Supporting and developing capacity across the career continuum

HSS is committed to employee retention by providing ongoing career development support to those employees whose skills set align with identified system needs.

Objectives:

- To broaden the scope of practice
- To strengthen retention
- To build northern leadership capacity

Programs:

- Targeted Academic Support Program
 - A program aimed at employees who want to expand their scope of practice. The program is evidence-based and is focused on the acquisition of academic and/or technical training offered through post-secondary training/education.
- Targeted Placement Support Program
 - A program aimed at advancing employee skills and knowledge through on-the-job training. It provides employees with the opportunity to learn the roles, responsibilities and functions of a new position through multiple placements in a variety of contexts. This strategy is evidenced-based and determined by current and projected system needs.
- HSS Executive Leadership Program
 - A program aimed at developing the leadership skills and core competencies in high potential senior officials who aspire to move into senior management positions within the HSS system.
It is designed for succession planning towards executive level positions. This is an evidence-based program driven by current and projected system needs across the HSS system. The program would be delivered by an accredited academic institution.

Key Actions and Performance Measures

Key Actions	Measures	Targets
To develop and implement new professional development programs	Number of new programs development Policies and procedures developed	3 new programs
To establish and administer the HSS Executive Leadership Program	Initial intake with 3 participants	3 participants

5.0 EVALUATION MATRIX

5.1 Key Evaluation Themes

1. Relevance - continued need for the programs and strategies
2. Design and Delivery – effectiveness and efficiency of the program and strategies
3. Progress toward achieving outcomes – success of the program and strategies in achieving their outcomes
4. Future considerations – alternative program and strategies

5.2 Guiding Evaluation Questions

Relevance

1. Are the programs/strategies consistent with DHSS's role, and departmental and government-wide priorities?
2. Is there continued need for the programs/strategies?

Design/Delivery

3. How effective are communications about the programs/strategies?
4. To what extent are the strategies / programs effective at reaching their targeted audience?
5. To what extent are the resources (human and financial) intended to support the implementation of the programs/strategies sufficient?
6. Are programs/strategies being implemented in the way they were intended?
7. Do the programs/strategies duplicate, complement or overlap any other HR programs?
8. To what extent are programs/strategies effective in supporting the development or maintenance of GNWT HSS HR-related partnerships (internal and external)?

9. To what extent is the information being collected relevant and reliable to support HSS labour market planning, decision making and reporting related to labour market planning?

Progress towards achieving program/strategy objectives

10. How effective have program/strategy activities been in supporting intended outputs and outcomes?
11. To what extent have programs and strategies progressed toward achieving their intended outcomes (short- and long-term)?
12. What challenges and facilitators have influenced the effectiveness of achieving program and strategy goals/objectives?
13. Have there been any unintended impacts as a result of implementing the GNWT HSS HR Strategic Plan? Programs or strategies specifically?

Future considerations

14. Are there alternative programs and/or strategies that might achieve better outcomes in relation to the overall strategic goals?

3.0 Evaluation Matrix

The table below links the evaluation questions/sub-questions with key performance indicators and data collection methods.

Themes / Questions	Indicators	Data collection methods
Relevance		
Is there continued need for the HSS HR Strategy?	# of true vacancies generally and in hard to fill positions # of requests for staffing assistance # of training assistance requests Employee demographics	Information management (IM) database analysis (gap analysis) Interviews (SHRP staff, key stakeholders) Document review

Themes / Questions	Indicators	Data collection methods
To what extent does the HSS HR Strategy align with Departmental priorities? Government-wide priorities?	Degree of alignment	Document review Interviews (SHRP staff, stakeholders)
To what extent is the HSS HR Strategy able to respond to emerging HR system needs?	Flexibility of program and strategy focus Flexibility of funding allocation amounts to programs and strategies	Document review Interviews (SHRP staff, stakeholders) Jurisdictional review Financial review
Design and Delivery		
How effective are communications about the HSS HR programs? (internally and externally)	Website traffic on practicenorth.ca (NWT residents, non-NWT residents) # of HSS HR program inquiries # of applications submitted Satisfaction with communications	Communications/media review Website traffic review Interviews (SHRP staff) Entry surveys Employee survey
Are program/strategy stakeholder roles and responsibilities well defined and communicated?	Stakeholder understanding of roles and responsibilities Stakeholder awareness of roles and responsibilities	Interviews (SHRP staff, key stakeholders)
To what extent are the programs reaching their target audience?	# of applications submitted by qualified candidates for each program % of overall applicants coming from target audiences	Application review IM database analysis Interviews (Advisory Committee members, SHRP staff, key stakeholders)
To what extent are the resources (human and financial) intended to support the implementation of the programs/strategies sufficient?	Application turn around time SHRP budgetary overruns Number of unanswered inquiries Lag time between posting and processing	Interviews (SHRP staff, key stakeholders) Financial review Application review
Are programs/strategies being implemented in the way they were intended?	Extent to which policies and procedures are being followed	Interviews/surveys (SHRP staff, key stakeholders, partners)

Themes / Questions	Indicators	Data collection methods
	Identification of challenges that impact intended program / strategy implementation	
Do the programs/strategies duplicate, complement or overlap any other HR programs?	# and type of complementary programs # and type of duplicating programs # and type of overlapping programs	Document review (HSS, and other departments (e.g., DHR, ECE)
To what extent are programs/strategies effective in supporting the development or maintenance of GNWT HSS HR-related partnerships (internal and external)?	# of quality partnerships Extent of collaboration Sustainability of partnerships	Interviews/surveys (SHRP staff, partners)
To what extent is the information being collected sufficient to support HSS labour market planning, decision making and reporting related to labour market planning?	Availability, accuracy and timeliness of evidence-based information Evidence of information use in planning Evidence of information use in decision making Evidence of reporting	IM database analysis Interviews/surveys (SHRP staff, key stakeholders) Document review
Progress Toward Outcome		
How effective have program/strategy activities been in supporting intended outcomes?	Alignment of activities with outcomes	Interviews/surveys (SHRP staff, key stakeholders) Employee survey
To what extent have programs and strategies progressed toward achieving their intended outcomes (short- and long-term)?	# of Northern individuals recruited Level of employee knowledge and skills Breadth of scope of practice # of true vacancies generally and in hard to fill positions Retention rates	IM database analysis Interviews/surveys (SHRP staff, key stakeholders) Employee survey Document review

Themes / Questions	Indicators	Data collection methods
	Employee satisfaction	
How satisfied are GNWT HSS employees with the programs and strategies?	Level of employee satisfaction Level of stakeholder satisfaction	Interviews/surveys (SHRP staff, stakeholders) Employee survey Exit survey
What challenges and facilitators have influenced the effectiveness of achieving program and strategy goals/objectives?	Identified challenges Identified facilitators	Interviews/surveys (SHRP staff, stakeholders) Employee survey
Have there been any unintended impacts as a result of implementing the GNWT HSS HR Strategic Plan? Programs or strategies specifically?	# and type of positive impacts # and type of negative impacts	Interviews/surveys (SHRP staff, stakeholders) Employee survey
Future Considerations		
Are there alternative programs and/or strategies that might achieve better outcomes in relation to the overall strategic goals?	Alternatives programs and strategies Identification of best/promising practices	Interviews (SHRP staff, key stakeholders, partners) Jurisdictional review