

**Report to
Rapport au:**

**Ottawa Board of Health
Conseil de santé d'Ottawa
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Ward: CITY WIDE / À L'ÉCHELLE DE LA VILLE File Number: ACS2016-OPH-IQS-0005

SUBJECT: DEVELOPING AN ADAPTIVE WORKFORCE FOR THE FUTURE

OBJET: DÉVELOPPER UNE MAIN-D'ŒUVRE ADAPTABLE POUR L'AVENIR

REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Board of Health for the City of Ottawa Health Unit approve the strategic initiatives for Ottawa Public Health's Strategic Direction – *Develop an Adaptive Workforce for the Future*, as outlined in this report.

RECOMMANDATIONS DU RAPPORT

Que le Conseil de santé de la circonscription sanitaire de la Ville d'Ottawa approuve les initiatives stratégiques pour l'orientation stratégique de Santé publique Ottawa – *Développer une main-d'œuvre adaptable pour l'avenir*, comme indiqué dans ce rapport.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report outlines Ottawa Public Health's (OPH) progress in developing an *Adaptive Workforce for the Future*, in accordance with one of the five directions of OPH's 2015-2018 Strategic Plan.

Ontario public health organizations are experiencing unprecedented levels of change and uncertainty, requiring the need for an adaptive workforce and adaptable organization. Adaptable organizations are more successful at managing change, fostering innovation and developing a multi-skilled workforce. Adaptable organizations are able to match and synchronize the demand for services with capacity. They help leadership adjust operations quickly and smoothly to meet rapid changes and shifting priorities, and engage staff, partners, clients and the community in a meaningful way in the planning and delivery of services.

OPH has identified three strategic initiatives with the aim of creating a more adaptive workforce over the next several years:

- Build adaptable teams to increase the ability of staff to respond rapidly and effectively to community needs (e.g. Rapid Response team).
- Foster a culture of innovation and continuous improvement through: a) effective use of technology to reach the community in a client-centred manner, support OPH's program delivery, and streamline its business processes; and b) implementation of an Employee Engagement action plan.
- Enhance OPH's capacity to reach and serve a diverse community, through partnerships with local agencies and City departments, and through increasing the representation of visible minorities, Aboriginal peoples and people with disabilities in OPH's workforce.

RÉSUMÉ

Ce rapport met en relief les progrès réalisés par Santé publique Ottawa (SPO) dans ses efforts pour développer une *Main-d'œuvre adaptable pour l'avenir*, conformément à l'une des cinq directions de son plan stratégique de 2015-2018.

Les organisations de santé publique de l'Ontario font face à des changements et à des niveaux d'incertitude inégaux, lesquels exigent une main-d'œuvre flexible et une organisation adaptable. Les organisations adaptables sont plus aptes à gérer le changement, à stimuler l'innovation et à développer une main-d'œuvre polyvalente. Elles savent concilier et synchroniser la demande de services et la capacité à offrir ces services. Elles aident leurs dirigeants à adapter promptement et de façon harmonieuse les activités afin de répondre aux changements qui surviennent rapidement et à l'évolution des priorités. Elles encouragent la participation utile du personnel, des partenaires, de la clientèle et de la collectivité à la planification et à la prestation des services.

SPO a retenu trois initiatives stratégiques dans le but de développer, au cours des prochaines années, une main-d'œuvre plus flexible :

- Bâtir des équipes adaptables afin d'accroître la capacité du personnel à répondre promptement et efficacement aux besoins de la collectivité (p.ex. équipe d'intervention rapide).
- Favoriser une culture d'innovation et de mise en valeur continue en : a) utilisant de façon efficace la technologie de manière à atteindre la population dans une approche axée sur la clientèle, à soutenir la livraison des services de SPO et à simplifier ses procédures opérationnelles; b) mettant en œuvre un plan d'action axé sur l'engagement des employés.
- Renforcer la capacité de SPO d'atteindre la population et de servir une communauté diversifiée en établissant des partenariats avec des organismes locaux et des services municipaux et en accroissant la représentation des personnes issues de minorités visibles, des Autochtones et des personnes ayant des incapacités au sein des effectifs de SPO.

BACKGROUND

Introduction

This report outlines OPH's plans for developing an adaptive workforce for the future, in accordance with one of the five priorities of OPH's 2015-2018 Strategic Plan.

OPH is committed to building an organizational culture that is responsive to the diverse communities it serves, fosters ongoing learning, and creates the conditions for innovation and continued excellence in public health.

OPH has a talented and vibrant workforce, which faces many challenges in meeting Ottawa's evolving needs. In addition, OPH employees are required to achieve organizational priorities and fulfill new accountability and legislative requirements. To do so they must become competent in new skills, technologies and business processes, and develop more efficient ways of delivering services. The adaptive workforce plan aims to provide employees the tools to foster collaboration, innovation and continuous improvement. It will also enable OPH to more efficiently and effectively address the community's changing needs, expand our reach and augment the impact of our public health services.

Literature scan

A recent Deloitte [Global Human Capital Trends](#)¹ report recommends that workplaces: strive to become more agile and client-focused; shift towards interconnected, flexible teams; develop adaptable leaders at all levels; and re-orient work practices through means such as adoption of new technology and leveraging a contingent workforce.

This includes the need for an adaptive workforce that is able to adjust to organizational change, new technologies, community needs and the cultural values and traditions of clients. The potential advantages of adaptable workforce may include creative problem-solving, interpersonal-adaptability, improved ability to handle emergencies and cross-cultural adaptability, and engaged employees who are committed, passionate, fully motivated and enthusiastic about their work².

As a result, adaptable organizations become better than others at managing change, fostering innovation and developing a multi-skilled workforce.³ They are able to match and synchronize the demand for services with capacity.^{4,5} They help leadership adjust operations quickly and smoothly to meet rapid changes and shifting priorities, and engage staff and clients in a meaningful way in the planning and delivery of services.

Implications for OPH

Ottawa is growing and becoming increasingly diverse; a quarter of its population was born outside of Canada.⁵ As well, preventable disparities limit the opportunity of many residents to be active, safe and engaged in their health and well-being. Consultation with employees advised that the role of technology in public health is particularly critical; a range of digital technologies can improve surveillance, support evidence-based decision making, and enable effective communication with clients and the public. In addition, OPH often has to deal with urgent issues that must be addressed on short notice, and flexibility is key to addressing these successfully.

OPH also needs to ensure that its workforce reflects the diversity of the community it serves. An analysis of our workforce demographics found that the representation of aboriginal peoples, visible minorities and people with disabilities in our workforce is in line with the City of Ottawa average but less than their representation in Ottawa-Gatineau's population.

According to workforce surveys and internal consultations, job satisfaction at OPH is high compared to other Health and Social Workers. Table 1 provides a comparison of OPH employee survey responses with those of a 2012 Canadian Management Centre survey of Health and Social Workers across Canada⁶. However, consultations also reveal that OPH employees desire a more flexible work style. They also indicate that employees would like the opportunity to apply their skills and knowledge and meet client and community needs in a more responsive, client-centric manner. Other indicators of a healthy workplace, such as sick leave and overtime, are lower in the OPH workforce than the city average.

Table 1: OPH Employee Results compared to Canadian Health & Social Workers

OPH Survey Statement	OPH employees who agree with statement	Canadian Management Centre benchmark
I am satisfied with my current job	74%	72%
I believe that my work makes a difference in the community	85%	73%
I have good relations with my supervisor	82%	73%

Aims of the Adaptive Workforce

The development of an adaptive workforce is one of the five priorities in OPH's 2015-2018 Strategic Plan, which aims to:

- Create a work environment that supports innovation
- Enhance capacity to develop healthy public policy
- Enhance use and integration of evidence-informed decision making
- Enhance capacity to reach and serve diverse communities (specifically communities facing health inequities)

This also addresses the [Ontario Public Health Organizational Standards](#) requirements of building and sustaining public health human resource capacity and ensuring a competent and diverse public health workforce by providing ongoing staff development and skill building related to public health competencies. The strategy complements OPH's efforts to enhance recruitment, retention, professional development, leadership development and succession planning and builds on the City's 2015-2018 Strategic Plan. Succession planning is an element of OPH workforce planning with a specific focus on key leadership positions and also includes unique, highly specialized positions. The focus is on developing employees so that the organization has a pool of qualified candidates who are ready to fill key positions.

OPH is working to improve the speed and flexibility of its response to community needs. Developing an increasingly Adaptive Workforce will enable OPH to accurately identify client and community needs and deploy employees quickly and efficiently to meet them. To this end OPH will support its staff in adopting a more flexible, team-oriented work style, applying their skills and knowledge in a variety of situations, and meeting community needs in a responsive, client-centred manner.

DISCUSSION

OPH has developed three strategic initiatives with the aim of creating a more adaptive workforce over the next several years.

1. Strategic Initiative: Build Adaptable Teams

To increase its ability to respond quickly and with flexibility, transcend "silos" and deploy staff where they are most needed, OPH will build on the work it has already done in developing adaptable teams. These include:

- **Health Care Delivery** - OPH is developing interconnected, flexible teams in its Family Health, School Health and Infectious Disease Case Management programs. These models integrate employees from a variety of branches and with a variety of skills, in order to more efficiently meet a specific community need. OPH will continue to assess and develop interdisciplinary team-based models of care and service provision.
- **Rapid Response** - OPH is implementing a new rapid response team to increase its capacity to manage significant events such as large outbreaks of infectious disease.
- **Policy Development and Evidence-Informed Decision Making** - OPH is working with multiple stakeholders to advance public policies that make it easier for people to achieve and maintain good health. In support of this goal, OPH will implement a focused plan to build staff capacity in policy development and evidence-informed decision-making, as referenced in the strategic plan.
- **Expansion of contingent workforce** - In order to address the demand for specific skills and knowledge in specific situations, OPH will continue to access the services of researchers, toxicologists and other professionals on an hourly or contingent basis as needed.

2. Strategic Initiative: Foster a culture of innovation and continuous improvement

In pursuit of an organizational culture that fosters innovation and supports ongoing educational, skill and leadership development in its staff, OPH plans include the following:

- **Use of technology** - The Adaptive Workforce plan will make use of technology to effectively support OPH's program delivery and streamline and simplify its business operations. A comprehensive technological plan approved in January 2016 outlines several specific activities. These include: consolidation of OPH's four web sites and co-ordination of web, mobile and social media; implementation of electronic business management solutions that will provide services tailored to client needs; and modernization of the contact centre infrastructure to allow OPH to receive client inquiries through multiple channels. These activities will enable OPH to be more effective and efficient in addressing our clients' needs, and will provide clients with a more rewarding service experience.

- **Staff development** - OPH will implement a multi-year Employee Engagement Action Plan that focuses on further enhancing the relationship between employees and supervisors. OPH Employees currently report that they have positive relationships with their supervisors. However, they also indicate that they would like supervisors to communicate with them regularly and openly, recognize their achievements, and make optimal use of their skills and talents. Through focused development and learning opportunities, OPH aims to provide the necessary tools and knowledge for employees to learn, grow, and work to their full potential. We will measure and evaluate our progress toward this goal by using real-time employee engagement and quick pulse surveys.

In consultation with management and Human Resources, OPH has established a succession plan that identifies emerging leaders and areas of need. OPH will continue to make use of corporate development programs (e.g. Municipal Leadership Certificate, mentorship program and 360 degree feedback) to identify growth opportunities among its staff.

3. Strategic Initiative: Enhance capacity to reach and serve a diverse community

OPH is committed to enhancing its capacity to reach and serve diverse communities, to reduce health inequities and better understand the unique health needs of populations that experience marginalization.

- **A diverse workforce** - OPH will expand outreach and hiring activities with the goal of increasing the representation of visible minorities, aboriginal peoples and people with disabilities in its workforce. Specifically, OPH plans to increase the representation of Visible Minorities by 3%, Aboriginal Peoples by 1.2%, and Peoples with Disabilities by 0.64% over three years.
- **Partnerships** – As it works to better serve Ottawa’s diverse population, OPH will continue to develop partnerships with local agencies and City departments, such as the City’s Community and Social Services Department. These partnerships will provide a forum for information sharing across sectors. They will also allow OPH to leverage external data and statistics to enhance the quality of its programs.

Conclusion

The initiatives proposed in this report aim to develop and maintain a highly skilled, competent, and responsive workforce. We believe that they will further empower

employees by streamlining the use of technology, introducing new means of engaging with Ottawans, enhancing employees' skills, knowledge and job satisfaction, and creating a workforce that reflects the diversity of the community it serves. This will enhance OPH's capacity to respond to complex client needs as well as deliver on its core mandate.

OPH's commitment to serve residents with care and respect is deeply embedded in our organizational culture. Embracing an adaptive workforce will enable us to expand our reach and augment our impact in the community.

RURAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no rural implications to this report.

CONSULTATION

OPH's extended management team was consulted in the writing of this report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal impediments to the implementation of the recommendation in this report.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no risk management implications to receiving this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications to receiving this report.

ACCESSIBILITY IMPACTS

There are no accessibility implications to receiving this report.

TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS

OPH is working with the City of Ottawa's Information Technology Services Department in order to make use of technology to effectively support program delivery and simplify business operations.

DISPOSITION

OPH will implement the recommendation in this report.

REFERENCES

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5. The Chief Public Health Officer. Report on the State of Public Health in Canada 2014: Public Health in the Future [Internet]. Ottawa (ON); 2014. Available from: <http://publichealth.gc.ca/CPHOReport>
6. Canadian Management Centre. Build a Better Workplace: Employee Engagement Edition; 2012.