



Government of
Northwest Territories



THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES SYSTEM

BRIDGE BETWEEN PLANS

BRIDGING BETWEEN THE 2021-2024 HUMAN RESOURCES PLAN
AND THE 2025-2028 PEOPLE STRATEGY

FALL 2024

If you would like this information in another official language, call us.

English

Si vous voulez ces informations dans une autre langue officielle, contactez-nous.

French

Kīspin ki nitawih̄tīn ē nīh̄yawih̄k ōma ācimōwin, tipwāsinān.

Cree

Tłjchq yatı k'èè. Dı wegodı newq dè, gots'o gonede.

Tłjchq

ʔerih̄tl'is Dēne Sųlíné yatı t'a huts'elkēr xa beyáyatı theʔą ʔat'e, nuwe ts'ēn yóltı.

Chipewyan

Edı gondı dehgáh got'je zhatıé k'ée edat'éh enahddhę nıde naxets'é edahlı.

South Slavey

K'áhshó got'jne xadā k'é hederı ʔedjhtl'é yerıniwę nıde dúle.

North Slavey

Jii gwandak izhii ginjik vat'atr'ijahch'uu zhit yinothtan jı', diits'at ginohkhii.

Gwich'in

Uvanittuaq ilitchurisukupku Inuvialuktun, ququaqłuta.

Inuvialuktun

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Inuktitut

Hapkua titiqqat pijumagupkit Inuinnaqtun, uvaptinnut hivajarlutit.

Inuinnaqtun

Indigenous Languages:

1-855-846-9601

French:

867-767-9348

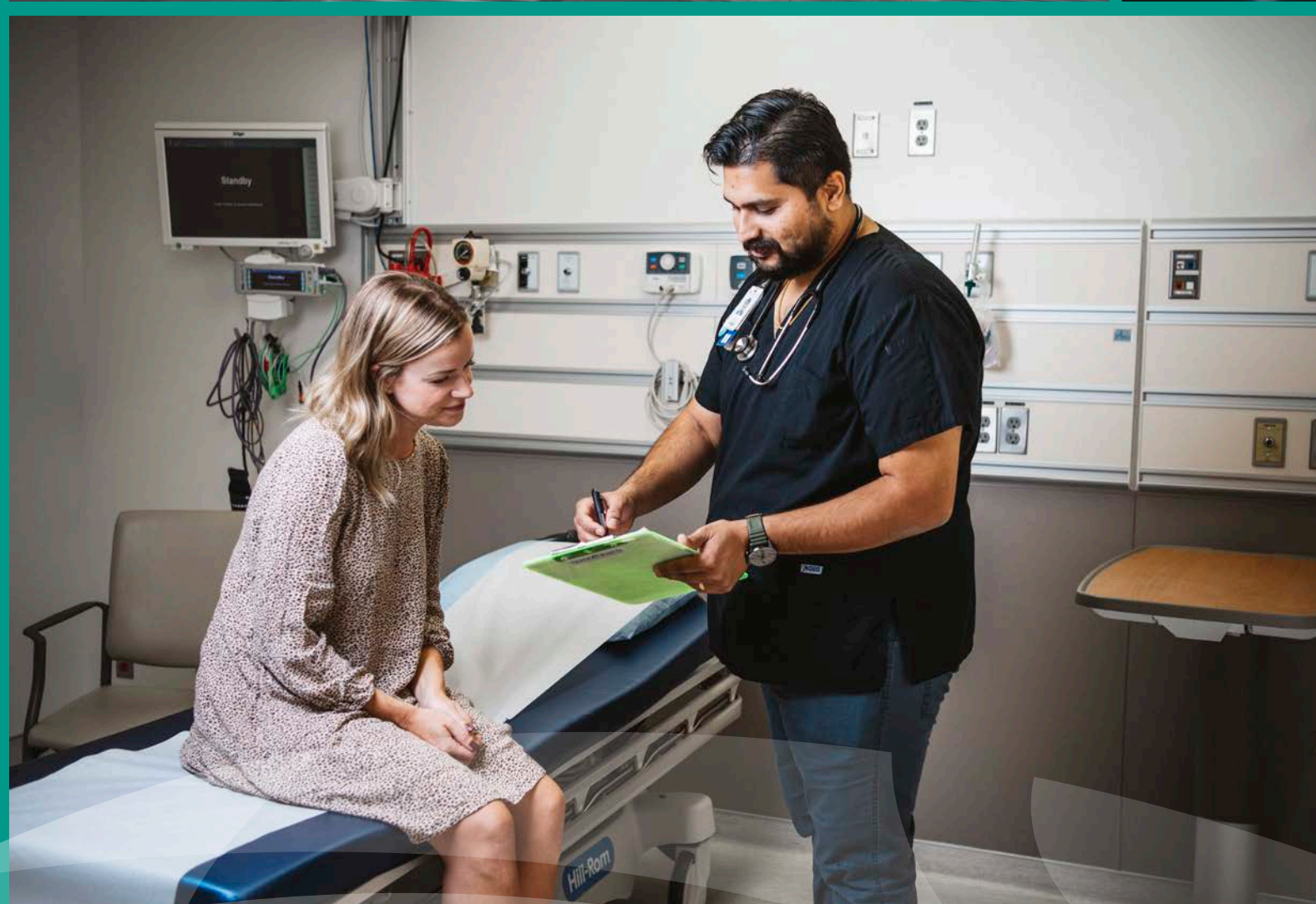
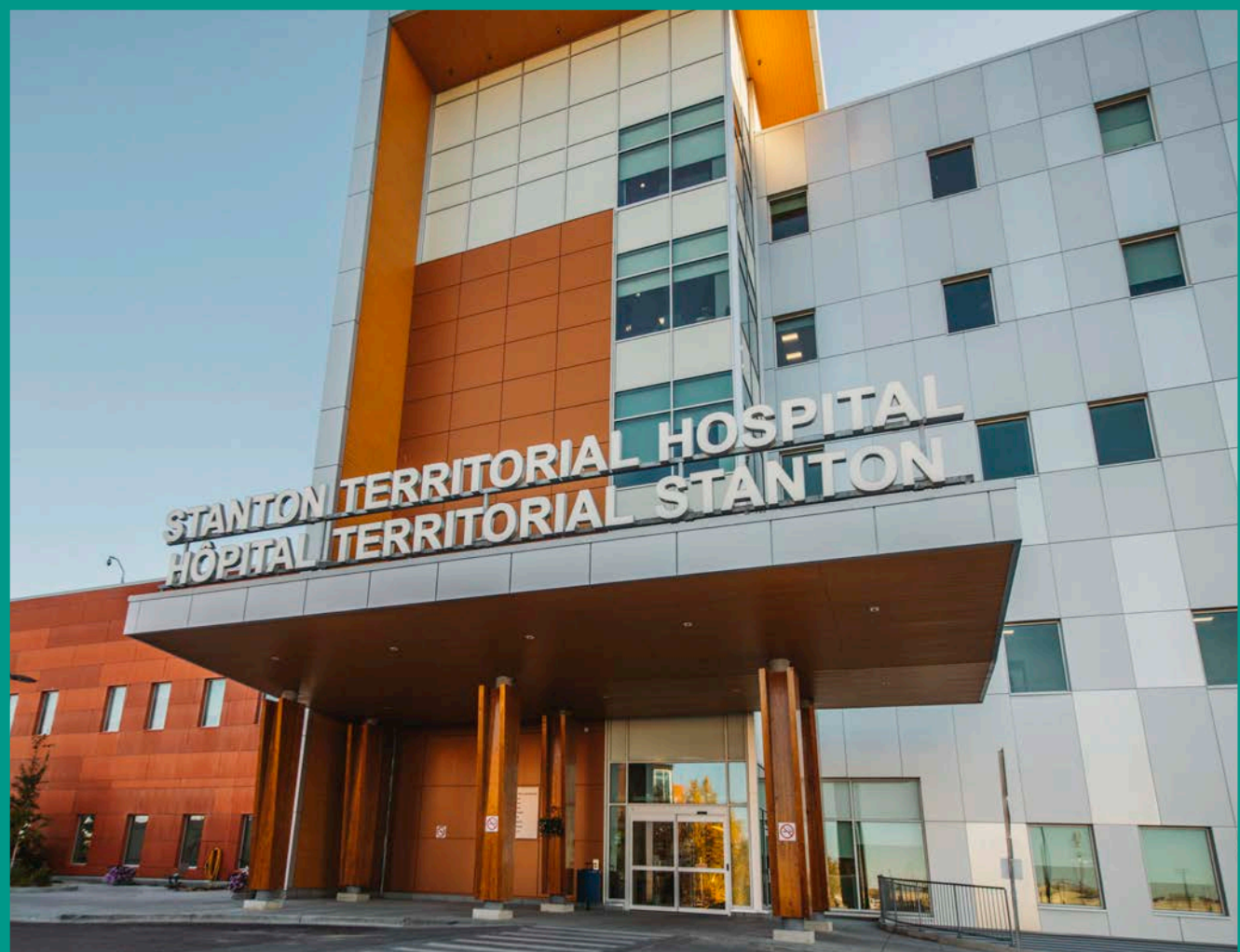
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INTRODUCTION

The Northwest Territories Health and Social Services System (HSS System) Human Resources Plan (HR Plan) “Bridge Between Plans” is a companion document to the HR Planning documents for the HSS System, providing an overview of the past (2021-2024 HR Plan), current (HR planning), and future (2025 – 2028 People Strategy) of HR planning and program delivery within the NWT HSS System.





WHO WE ARE

AN OVERVIEW OF THE NWT HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES SYSTEM

The HSS System represents a partnership between the Department of Health and Social Services and the three authorities: the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority (NTHSSA), the Hay River Health and Social Services Authority (HRHSSA), and the Tłı̨chʼo Community Services Agency (TCSA – Health).

The HSS System provides health and social services support to all 33 communities in the Northwest Territories and has a workforce of over 2,400 indeterminate and term employees, representing approximately 10% of the Northwest Territories labour force. This workforce

supports health and social services care over an area approximately 1.2 million km² in size. The HSS System serves a population of nearly 45,000 residents, of which approximately half are Indigenous Peoples.

Together, the three health and social services authorities collaborate under a one-system approach and are guided by the feedback from the Regional Wellness Councils, that provide valuable input to the HSS System on the needs and priorities of the residents in their geographic regions.



WHERE WE'VE BEEN

2021-2024

HOW THE 2021-2024 HR PLAN WAS DEVELOPED

The summer of 2021 marked the five-year anniversary of the consolidation of six of the health and social services authorities into the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority. The NWT HSS System had grown and evolved towards a more unified and collaborative system. With this evolution came the need for a shared approach in supporting the NWT HSS System workforce, to maximize the opportunities for success in delivering the best care possible to residents of the Northwest Territories and helping ensure a better future for the NWT HSS System.

The 2021 – 2024 NWT HSS System HR Plan was developed collaboratively with the guidance and support of the NWT HSS System HR Plan Working Group, with representatives

from DHSS – Community, Culture, and Innovation, the Department of Finance – Human Resources Branch, and the three health and social services authorities. The plan was guided by the broader strategic vision of the HSS System of **Best Health, Best Care, for a Better Future**, as well as the mandate and strategic priorities identified by the 19th Legislative Assembly and the DHSS Business Plan. The plan was also guided by a commitment to act in addressing systemic racism and promoting cultural safety and anti-racism within the HSS System.

Within the strategy, key goals and objectives were identified to better gather employee input moving forward, through pulse surveys, exit and entry surveys and interviews, strengthened communications between HSS System partners, and outcome-based performance measures derived from employee feedback.

ABOUT THE 2021-2024 HR PLAN

The HR Plan represented the collaborative, shared vision of a single health and social services system working towards a robust and representative workforce, supported by strong leadership and an organizational culture rooted in the principles of cultural safety and anti-racism. It provided an overview of the opportunities and challenges facing the HSS System at the time, along with the activities being implemented over the following three years.

As a three-year plan, this strategic document was created to support the future recruitment and retention needs of the HSS System. It was designed to address the medium and long-term HR needs of the HSS System through the establishment of a strong foundation. It was not intended as an immediate fix to HR challenges, but rather to anticipate and address many of the core challenges negatively impacting recruitment and retention over the coming years.

The HR Plan introduced a variety new programs and initiatives through the plan's six strategic goals of:

1. Informed Decision-Making Related to Workforce Planning, Recruitment, and Retention
2. Developing and Supporting Indigenous and Northern Populations in the Pursuit of Health and Social Services Careers
3. Enhanced Attraction and Recruitment Strategies and Goals
4. Increased Employee Engagement through Organizational Change and Leadership Development
5. Support Quality Training and Targeted Development
6. Enhanced Health, Safety, and Wellness Support Systems

CHALLENGES FACED BY THE NWT HSS SYSTEM FROM 2021 - 2024

During the lifetime of the 2021 – 2024 HR Plan, the Northwest Territories faced several challenges that impacted the delivery and evolution of the HR Plan:

COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent burn-out highlighted and exacerbated pre-existing staffing shortages within the health and social services sector across Canada.

Increased National Shortages of HSS Professionals

The national shortage of health professionals led to service reductions and system impacts across the Northwest Territories and Canada. Post-pandemic, this shortage intensified, with many health professionals resigning, retiring, or reducing their working hours.

Increased Competitiveness

As a natural result of national shortages of HSS professionals, jurisdictions across Canada offered increasingly competitive recruitment and retention initiatives, including labour market supplements and bonuses.

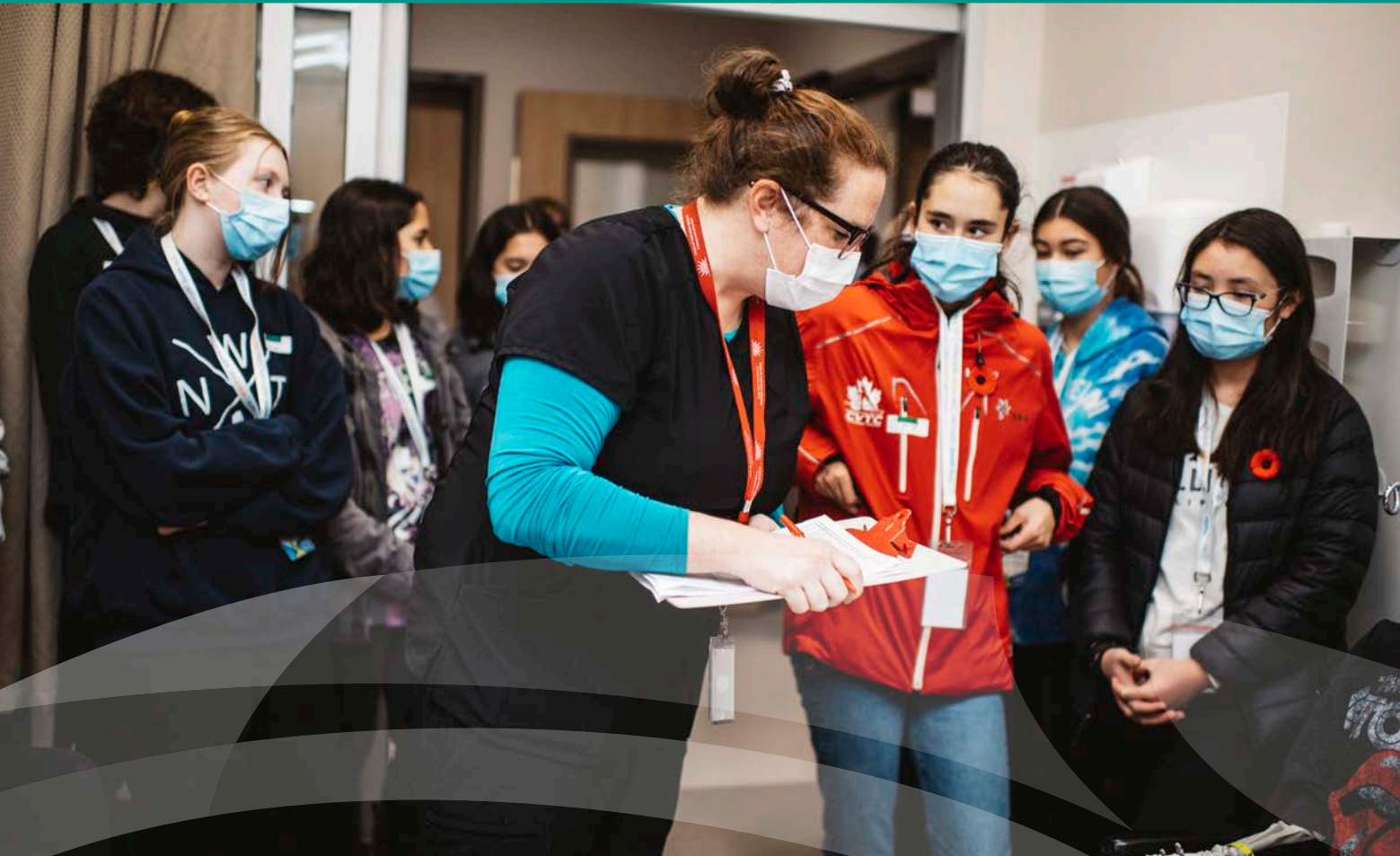
Increased Cost of Living

The increased cost of living in the Northwest Territories, in combination with an expired Collective Agreement for the NWT Public Service, made the HSS System less competitive than it once one in targeting hard-to-fill positions.

Natural Disasters

In 2021 and 2022, Northwest Territories experienced it's worst flood season on record with Hay River, Jean Marie River, Fort Simpson, Fort Good Hope, Aklavik and Fort Resolution all directly impacted and hundreds of people forced to evacuate their homes. The Northwest Territories 2023 wildfire season was the worst fire season on record with nearly 70 percent of residents evacuated from their home community or the territory, in some cases more than once. These events create a significant strain on NWT residents, HSS System clients, and HSS System staff.

While the NWT HSS System continued to focus on the delivery of programs and initiatives as outlined within the HR Plan, these challenges increased workloads, created delays in the roll-out of some initiatives, and lead to the creation of additional programs and initiatives beyond those outlined within the HR plan.





THE BRIDGING PERIOD

WHAT IS HAPPENING BETWEEN PLANS

OBJECTIVES BEING COMPLETED DURING THE BRIDGING PERIOD

Looking back to the creation of the NWT HSS System in 2016, an incredible amount of positive change has occurred. The 2021-2024 HR Plan laid out a clear path forward, with the tools, programs, and support required to succeed in delivering the best healthcare and social services possible to the residents of the Northwest Territories.

Over the course of the 2021-2024 HSS HR Plan, and often in response to challenges that were being faced, additional funding and priorities led to new recruitment and retention initiatives. These initiatives provided additional support to the HSS System, including incentives to recruit and retain HSS professionals in hard-to-fill positions.

Highlights from the 2021-2024 HR Plan Results Report (to be released Summer of 2024) and details about additional recruitment and retention initiatives are outlined in Appendix A: Where we Are At- A Bird's Eye View.

With the conclusion of the 2021 – 2024 HR Plan and the finalization of the 2025 – 2028 People Strategy being developed over the next year and finalized in spring of 2025, there will be a “bridging period” between human resources plans. During the bridging period, the NWT HSS System will focus on four areas:

1. Continued delivery of existing programs and initiatives
2. Completing outstanding actions and initiatives within the HR Plan not achieved during the lifetime of the HR Plan
3. Supporting the creation and delivery of HR initiatives outside of the HR Plan
4. Support, planning, and development related to the 2025 – 2028 People Strategy

Notable objectives scheduled for completion during the bridging period include:

INFORMED DECISION MAKING

Survey Delivery and Analysis

The NWT HSS System will continue to deliver entry and exit surveys. This includes expanded analysis and reporting of survey results, to help address recruitment and retention challenges within the HSS System.

Screening Criteria Project

The Screening Criteria Project is a database of hiring and training requirements within all established NWT HSS System job descriptions. The current database includes all job descriptions from HRHSSA, NTHSSA, and TCSA – Health. During the bridging period it will be expanded to include all positions within DHSS, thereby capturing all established positions within the NWT HSS System. A biannual analysis and recommendations report, based on trends found within the database, will be generated on a go-forward basis.

DEVELOPING STUDENTS AND YOUTH

The HSS Youth Mentorship Program

It is anticipated that the HSS Youth Mentorship Program will be launched during the summer of 2024. The Mentorship Program will help pair students and youth with mentors within the HSS System.

Take Our Kids to Work Day 2024

As with previous years, this annual November event will continue to evolve to meet the needs of students at the in-person and virtual events.

Family Medicine Residency Program

The Residency Program accepted two new residents on July 1, 2024. As of June 30, 2024, six residents have graduated from the residency program.

NWT HSS Bursary Program & Clinical Observership and Job Shadowing Program

The NWT HSS Bursary Program and the Clinical Observership and Job Shadowing Program will continue to be delivered during the bridging period.

ENHANCED ATTRACTION AND RECRUITMENT

PracticeNWT Online Presence

PracticeNWT will continue to expand its online presence and reach, through the PracticeNWT website, social media presence, and targeted marketing campaigns focused on filling hard-to-fill positions.

Quarterly Newsletters

Through PracticeNWT, the NWT HSS System is delivering quarterly newsletters for three different target audiences: students and youth, HSS professionals, and physicians, for a total of twelve newsletters per year. While several newsletters were produced in 2023/24, a set schedule has been established, with roll-out occurring in earnest in summer 2024.

Recruitment Fairs and Conferences

The NWT HSS System will continue to participate in recruitment fairs and conferences targeted at helping to recruit for hard-to-fill vacancies within the HSS System. The schedule for 2024-2025 has been developed, with attendance at over 30 events planned during the bridging period.

RETENTION AND EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT

Leadership Training and Development Program

The NWT HSS System is working on a partnership with the Canadian College of Healthcare Leaders to further develop and implement LEADS In a Caring Environment, Leadership Capabilities Framework, as part of the Management and Leadership Training and Development Program. This program is still in development with a cohort of 10 employees enrolled in the LEADS Pilot program. This program includes operational training for leaders to manage within the HSS environment.

Employee Engagement Strategy

An Employee Engagement Program Specialist position will be staffed. Work will continue over the bridging period to launch the final draft of the Employee Engagement Strategy, and develop the programs and initiatives identified under the action plan that promote employee engagement and Leadership Development. This includes providing opportunities where employees can engage through facilitated engagements sessions, and various forms of feedback surveys to assist in program development and new initiatives.

Employee Wellness Program Specialist

This newly established position will be staffed during the bridging period and tasked with developing an Employee Wellness Strategy for the NWT HSS System, including programs that focus on employee health and wellbeing.

Retention and Employee Development Funding Programs

Retention and employee development related funding programs will continue to be delivered during the bridging period, including the Targeted Academic Support Program and the Professional Development Initiative.

Training and Development

All NTHSSA staff were successfully integrated into the Learning Management System by the spring of 2024. During the bridging period, additional eLearning modules, including Onboarding, will be developed to support NTHSSA growth and development. Orientation modules will continue to be offered.

HEALTH, WELLNESS, AND SAFETY

Occupational Health and Safety Unit Visits

As part of a 3-year cycle, there will be scheduled visits to all NTHSSA regions and their worksites. NTHSSA Territorial OHS Unit site visits include meetings and education opportunities with staff, a worksite inspection, an executive visit recap, and a written report with observations and recommendations.

Occupational Health and Safety Unit Hub

The newly launched OHS Hub is a growing internal online resource for NTHSSA employees to access OHS Programs, Policies, Legislation, Regulations, Incident and Injury Reporting, Training, Forms, Joint OHS Committee and OHS Representatives information, and other Resources. Monthly Safety Topic updates and new Safety Bulletins are added regularly. Staff can now also schedule fit testing through this resource.

Fit Tester Training

Fit tester training will continue to be offered regularly for NTHSSA Regions to staff. The OHS Unit also offers the opportunity for other Health Authorities in the NWT to attend these training sessions to ensure respiratory protection standards are met across the Northwest Territories.

Federal Transport Canada Client Identification Database

Each NTHSSA worksite will be onboarded into the Federal Transport Canada Client Identification Database by the end of 2024. This database houses type, class, and divisions of dangerous goods handled or transported.





ON THE HORIZON

AN OVERVIEW OF HR PLANNING AND APPROACH FOR THE 2025-2028 PEOPLE STRATEGY

The 2025 – 2028 People Strategy will help provide a clear vision of the human resource priorities and activities of the NWT HSS System from 2025 – 2028, building upon the foundational work completed during the 2021 – 2024 HR Plan.

It is anticipated that the People Strategy will be finalized by April 1, 2025. The strategy will be developed based on a variety of sources, including:

- The Mandate of the 20th Legislative Assembly
- The Leadership Priorities survey
- People Strategy priorities focus groups
- Entry and exit survey results
- Employee Engagement and Satisfaction Survey results
- 2021 – 2024 HR Plan and Results Report
- Employee feedback
- Interjurisdictional scan

A further understanding of HSS System People needs, priorities, goals, and objectives will be clarified through a progression of actions:

Late-Summer / Early Fall 2024:

- Organizational leadership surveyed (Leadership Priorities Survey) on the human resource needs and priorities of the HSS System.

Winter 2024

- Focus groups with HSS System employees will engage a variety of staff across the system to build on key takeaways from the Leadership Surveys; and
- Completion of an interjurisdictional scan related to health and social services human resources activities and people strategies in other Canadian jurisdictions.

Early 2025

- Draft Strategy completed and shared with key stakeholders for consideration.

Spring 2025

- People Strategy is finalized.

With the successful creation and launch of the 2025 – 2028 People Strategy, the NWT HSS System will have a clear vision for the medium- and long-term human resources priorities that aligns with the mandate of the 20th Legislative Assembly and the vision of NWT HSS System leadership. Through this aligned vision, the NWT HSS System will be set up for success over the next three years.





APPENDIX A:

A BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF 2021-2024 RESULTS

2021-2024 HR PLAN RESULTS

The 2021-2024 HR Plan Results Report is being finalized in July 2024. Notable developments highlighted in the Results Report, listed by strategic goal, include:

1. Informed Decision-Making Related to Workforce Planning, Recruitment, and Retention

- Key information to help inform recruitment and retention efforts through the introduction of entry surveys in 2022/23 and a new exit survey platform.

2. Developing and Supporting Indigenous and Northern Populations in the Pursuit of Health and Social Services Careers

- Two new initiatives intended to inspire NWT students and youth to consider careers in the health and social services were launched: the Clinical Observership and Job Shadowing Programs, and the NWT HSS Bursary Program.

- The NWT Health and Social Services Occupation Guide was updated in early 2024 to reflect additional occupations, updated salaries, and tailored information.
- The in-person Take Our Kids to Work Day event evolved to two events that were well received by Grade 9 students across the Northwest Territories. The first event was hosted in a larger space in Yellowknife with guests and booths, the second welcomed students from across the NWT online.

3. Enhanced Attraction and Recruitment Strategies and Goals

- Approximately 200 marketing campaigns were launched through PracticeNWT over the life of the HR Plan, targeted at attracting health and social services professionals to the Northwest Territories.
- PracticeNWT sponsored or attended over 80 career fairs / conferences to connect with HSS professionals, including its partnership in the inaugural PEER North Medical Conference in 2022, in Yellowknife.

- PracticeNWT continued to expand its online presence, with over 40,000 unique PracticeNWT website visitors in 2023/24, and over 4,000 social media followers for its Facebook, X, Instagram, and Threads social media accounts.
- The first digital newsletters were published in 2023/24. There are newsletters for Student and Youth, HSS Professionals, and for Physicians.

4. Increased Employee Engagement through Organizational Change and Leadership Development

- “Inclusive leadership” was added as the GNWT’s seventh core competency, in support of an organizational culture focused on cultural safety and anti-racism.
- The LEADS Health Leadership Pilot Program launched in Fall 2022 with 10 NTHSSA Health leaders taking part.
- The Employee Engagement Strategy Pilot was launched in December 2023. The main priorities of the strategy are Employee Well-Being, Onboarding and Orientation, Leadership Strategy and Development, and Development and Growth.

5. Support Quality Training and Targeted Development

- The NTHSSA New Employee Orientation Program launched in April 2023 with a 50% satisfaction rate with the training in its first year.
- The new eLearning NTHSSA Mandatory Training series was launched in April 2024 with 10 eLearning modules developed for the NTHSSA mandatory training series.
- Elsevier Clinical Solutions was implemented in November 2021 with ongoing access and use by clinical teams across the HSS System.

- Over 200 HSS System staff were supported with the Professional Development Initiative (PDI) each year and the Targeted Academic Support Program (TASP) supported 42 graduates between 2021 and 2024.
- The Community Health Nurse Competency Development Program launched in 2022 as a self-directed learning opportunity, accessible to all nursing staff within the HSS System. 340 staff accessed this Program between 2021 and 2024.

6. Enhanced Health, Safety, and Wellness Support Systems

- 61% of workplaces had a Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee or representative by March 31, 2024.

ADDITIONAL RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION INITIATIVES

New incentives to both recruit new employees and retain the valuable employees we currently have that were implemented over the course of the 2021-2024 HSS HR Plan, include:

Expanding Paramedic Use

Expanding the use of paramedics has provided additional support to remote and isolated communities, and to acute care emergency room operations. A contract for these services was issued in the summer of 2023, resulting in paramedics being used in multiple locations across the territory, including at both Stanton and Inuvik Hospitals, as well as in Fort McPherson, Délı̄ne, Aklavik, Tuktoyaktuk and Ulukhaktok. Paramedics also supported emergency care operations at Stanton during the city-wide evacuation order in the summer of 2023, and assisted in Hay River during a physician shortage and during evacuation during the 2023 summer.

Locum Physician Licensing Fee Reimbursement

From August 2022 to March 31, 2024, 87 Locum physicians had their licensing fees reimbursed with the NTHSSA for a total cost of \$33,438.

Friends and Family Travel Program

The Friends and Family Travel Program provided reimbursements to travelling friends and family visiting the NWT while eligible employees (midwives, registered nurses, physicians) worked over two holiday periods. For the 2022/23 season, there were 114 total claims and 100 claims in 2023/24. Staff from all authorities used the program. The overall total cost of the program was approximately \$350,000.

Referral Program

The Referral Program offers GNWT employees up to \$2,000 with the successful referral of nurse practitioners, physicians, and registered nurses to indeterminate and term positions within the HSS system. As of March 31, 2024, ten referrals had been received. This included two successful hires, one active referral, four ineligible referrals, and three referrals where the candidate had not responded to outreach.

HSS Transition Coordinators

Four new HSS Employee Transition Coordinator positions (3 with NTHSSA, 1 with HRHSSA) were created in 2023 with a focus on providing a positive and supportive transition experience for new and relocating employees and their families. As of March 31, 2024, 15 new hires had received support through these staff.

International Travel to and from the NWT

Through the international travel to and from NWT measure, any Canadian physician, Nurse Practitioner, or Registered Nurse who is currently living abroad and wishes to relocate to the NWT, or work as a casual/locum, can have the costs of their international travel covered allowing for coverage for many essential services and consistency of care for several areas across the NWT. Between August 1, 2022, and March 31, 2024, 6 physicians utilized the international travel to and from NWT program totaling \$73,947.

Labour Market Supplements

In fall of 2022, the GNWT and HRHSSA each signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Union of Northern Workers (UNW) to provide a temporary Labour Market Supplements in the form of recruitment

and/or retention payments based on community, eligible positions, and type of employment. As of March 31, 2024, over 830 staff have benefited from these supplements.

Indigenous Employment Plan

In 2022/23, DHSS, NTHSSA, and TCSA released their Indigenous Employment Plans (IEP) in alignment with the GNWT Indigenous Recruitment and Retention Framework. The IEP's outline how the organization will increase Indigenous representation and leadership in the territory's public service.

Additional Recruitment Efforts Focused on Nurses

A dedicated Project Lead position was established through the NTHSSA Consolidated Hiring Project to create efficiencies and streamline the current staffing processes, with an aim to decrease the time to hire Registered Nurses. In addition to this, other recruitment efforts targeting nurses included:

- The increased use of internal expressions of interest for existing staff.
- Every casual and former nurse that had worked with NWT HSS System in recent years was contacted to see if they could do short term casual contracts or come back in an indeterminate role.
- A specialized OBS RN recruitment event was launched.
- All Aurora College RN graduates are provided a conditional job offers in the Fall before they graduate.

Additional Training Supports for Registered Nurses

Additional training supports for Registered Nurses that were implemented over the course of the plan included:

- Neonatal resuscitation training in the delivery room with all RNs in the Beaufort-Delta Region enhancing their capacity to provide safe OBS services.
- The NTHSSA Specialized Nursing Transition Program (SNTTP) providing financial support to RNs employed in indeterminate positions to obtain a specialty certificates.
- The Canadian Association of Student Nursing (CASN) graduate nursing residency program (pilot) at STH providing 6 months of mentorship to new RNs in the workforce.

