

# Framework for Action

**Comprehensive Five-Year Human Resource Strategy**

**IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

**April 2004 – March 2009**

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## **Northwest Territories Approach**

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The NWT faces the same challenges as the rest of Canada in recruiting and retaining professional staff. In addition, the NWT faces unique challenges to the recruitment and retention of health professionals due to the geographical, remoteness and socio-economic realities of the NWT. The competition to hire and retain health and social services professionals is intense and requires a focused and determined effort.

The Department of Health and Social Services and the eight Health and Social Service Authorities will continue to work together with employees, the unions and professional organizations to identify, develop and implement initiatives that will support the retention and recruitment of health and social services professionals.

The research and preparation of this Comprehensive Five Year Human Resource Action Plan included the preparation of a Health and Social Services System Human Resource Strategy by Grant Thornton (August 2003) and consultation with a broad range of individuals across the NWT.

A HR Plan Working Group was established to develop and monitor the implementation of the Comprehensive Five Year Human Resource Strategy through an Implementation Plan based on the three major goals identified within the Strategy.

Consultation resulted in input and a number of initiatives coming from members of the Joint Senior Management Committee; front-line staff and managers within the system; and from professional associations including the Registered Nurses Association of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut and the Social Workers in Northern Canada.

## **Background**

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Over 1200 employees in the Northwest Territories deliver health and social services programs. These employees provide direct care services in 33 communities through different types of facilities.

Staff that work in the 8 Authorities and in the Department of Health and Social Services support front line workers. The Department has developed this 5-year comprehensive human resource plan to help set the direction for recruiting, retaining and maximizing the potential of staff within the Health and Social Services system for 5 (five) years.

In January 2002, the Minister of Health and Social Services published the NWT Health and Social Services System Action Plan 2002-2005 to guide changes and improvements over that three-year period. The plan is primarily focused on changes that address current weaknesses in the system to improve the quality of services provided to northerners.

One way of ensuring service levels are improved, is to ensure that staff throughout the system are well positioned to fully carry out their roles. Effective delivery of services requires:

- That there is an effective recruitment system that ensures all positions can be staffed and that northern hiring and development opportunities are maximized;
- That employees understand the role of the system and their specific assignments and accountabilities within that system;
- That employees have the required skill set(s) to carry out their roles;
- That employees find positive challenges in their work and are encouraged to enthusiastically carry out their work;
- Mobility to move within the system where employees are interested in doing so; and
- The development of a northern workforce is supported through the development of northern students and the promotion of health and social services as occupations of choice.

The Health and Social Services Action Plan sets out the specific actions that are required to improve the focus on Human Resource development and management over the short term. However, the Department also identified a need to develop a longer term Comprehensive Human Resource Plan.

To this end, on February 24, 2003 the Department entered into a contract with Grant Thornton for the development of a HR Strategy that the Department could use as the building blocks of a Comprehensive Five Year Human Resource Plan.

## Background

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The objectives of this contract were:

1. To provide a 5-year human resource management model with attention to the recruitment and development of northern aboriginal employees.
2. To clarify human resource planning direction and set goals that provide continuity of service delivery.
3. To forecast demand for and supply of health and social services professionals in NWT and Canada.
4. To identify issues facing human resource planning in the NWT.
5. To provide competency based human resource development strategies for major occupational groupings identified in the service delivery model.
6. To provide strategies for *retention* of employees that enhance those methods currently practiced. Examples of this include but are not limited to:
  - I) A career progression model for health and social services occupations;
  - II) A standardized orientation program for new staff and an implementation strategy;
  - III) An approach for mentoring staff in all front line occupations;
  - IV) Succession planning strategy.
7. To provide strategies for *recruitment* to key occupations that build upon methods currently practiced.
8. To provide recommendations for elements of a Rapid Response Plan that ensures the provision of continuing services during periods of heightened demand.

On September 4, 2003 Grant Thornton submitted the final Human Resource Strategy to the Department of Health and Social Services. Within the Strategy Grant Thornton identified three major goals that the Department will be striving to accomplish over the next 5 years:

1. The Department is striving to build and develop a skilled workforce in the North that is representative of the people and communities that we serve. This encompasses building a Northern workforce and supporting those committed to living and working in the North.

## **Background**

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2. The Department wants to support and invest in its people, technology and workplace to promote safety, excellence, collaboration and innovation, both today and into the future.
3. The Department wants to recognize and reward people for their contributions and work towards a cooperative and collaborative work culture.

Under each goal Grant Thornton identified strategies that the Department and Authorities/Boards can use to help meet their objectives. The strategies outlined within the report build upon existing programs and support mechanisms currently in place within the Department as well as identifies new strategies where appropriate.

### **HR Plan Working Group**

An HR Plan Working Group was established to develop and monitor the implementation of the HR Strategy prepared by Grant Thornton. The Implementation Plan will address the three major goals identified with the Human Resource Strategy.

The Implementation Plan will make recommendations on which initiatives, identified within the Strategy should be implemented, how they should be implemented, who is responsible for the implementation and develop a proposed 5-year timeline for the implementation of all initiatives.

A comprehensive 5 – year Implementation Plan will be completed and ready for distribution by the fall of 2004.