

# HUMAN RESOURCES



# OVERVIEW

## MISSION

Supporting excellence in the GNWT Public Service through the delivery of innovative, quality human resource services.

## GOALS

1. Support to management's human resource decision-making that results in productive and positive human resource management practices.
2. Integrated, client-focused programs and services that are simple, timely and consistent.
3. Streamlined and simplified administrative systems and processes.
4. Recruitment and retention of a capable, competent public service that is representative of the people it serves and that focuses on results.
5. A work environment that promotes employee development, safety and wellness and that offers an opportunity for positive labour/management relations.

## BUDGET (2008/09)

Compensation & Benefits	\$24,378,000
Grants & Contributions	-
Other O&M	\$7,095,000
Amortization	\$780,000
Infrastructure Investment	-

## POSITIONS (2008/09)

Headquarters (HQ)	120 positions
Regional/Other Communities	47 positions

## KEY ACTIVITIES

- *Management and Recruitment Services*
- *Corporate Human Resource Services*
- *Employee Services*
- *Human Resource Strategy and Policy*

## STRATEGIC ACTION

The Department will take the following actions in support of the government's strategic initiatives:

- *Improve Human Resource Management in the NWT (Refocusing Government Initiative)*
- *Support implementation planning for the consolidation of the Yellowknife Health and Social Services Authorities' clinics*

# STRATEGIC ISSUES

### Demographic Changes

There are a number of demographic issues being faced by the GNWT that impact human resource services. The current GNWT workforce is aging and there is a strong need to plan for both the development of staff and the transfer of corporate knowledge between experienced staff and those newer to the organization. The aging of the general population will change demands on GNWT programs, which also needs to be anticipated in the staffing mix. This includes a greater emphasis on the training and development of younger workers.

Among existing employees and potential recruits, there is an expectation of work-life balance. This is demonstrated through the regular use of programs such as the Deferred Salary Leave Program and flexible work arrangements. Many employees also have expectations of the ability to engage in volunteer activities in their communities. The GNWT must continue to explore ways of providing this balance while ensuring program and service delivery to NWT residents.

In some employee groups, there is an increasing interest in short-term or casual work creating pressure on departments, boards and authorities to regularly fill positions and create systems that allow for continuity of services to clients despite different service providers.

### Competitive Market/Labour Shortages

The western economy is robust, particularly in neighbouring jurisdictions such as Alberta. Individuals who may previously have considered a job north of sixty are now staying in the south where the cost of living may be less, there is greater accessibility to services and they are closer to family. Nation-wide, there are severe labour shortages in some occupational groups. While the nursing shortage has received much attention, there are other skilled occupational areas that are also very difficult to recruit such as engineering.

The NWT economy continues to grow, creating challenges for the GNWT in recruiting and retaining employees. Resource sector opportunities abound, as do jobs in service and support fields. The potential construction of a northern pipeline will accelerate these challenges. Increasingly, the GNWT's overall compensation package is less competitive. Salaries and benefits have not kept pace with provincial governments, and some sectors offer more short-term benefits, which may be attractive to a section of the workforce. In coming years, the GNWT must explore ways to make the government an employer of choice in order to attract qualified and competent employees to ensure residents of the NWT continue to receive high quality programs and services.

With continuing economic expansion in the NWT, the GNWT is increasingly unable to compete with private sector and governance organizations in the north. Many of the best and brightest are choosing the private sector for employment as their pay is higher and they provide key benefits to deal with the high cost of northern living.

The *Public Service Act* provides employees with the right to "equal pay for work of equal value". This legislation ensures that employees who are in jobs that require the same level of skill, effort, responsibility and working conditions are paid equally. This inhibits the GNWT's ability to react to market compensation levels for any particular occupational group in its compensation structure as equal pay relativities must be maintained. As a result, from time to time, the GNWT may be out of sync with market conditions for an occupational group and sees its ability to recruit and retain staff in

these occupations affected. What is important to assess is whether or not the entire GNWT compensation system allows the Government to continue to recruit and retain for a broad spectrum of jobs. This legislated equal pay environment makes development and maintenance of effective compensation policy and structure critically important, and adds significantly to the need for thorough and timely market research to gauge when issues may arise and how best to address them.

While the number of northerners with post-secondary education or specialized training and experience is increasing, the demand for these individuals has also grown. Utilization of the Northern Graduate Placement Program, and our efforts to raise the level of professionalism of the GNWT's human resources, have shown some success.

### **Fiscal Environment**

In early 2008, Cabinet identified five strategic initiatives based on the priorities of the 16<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly. These initiatives are: Building Our Future, Reducing Cost of Living, Managing This Land, Maximizing Opportunities and Refocusing Government. To support these initiatives, and address the current fiscal realities of the GNWT, departments, boards and agencies were asked to identify programs and resulting positions that could be eliminated. This budget reduction exercise will result in lay-offs in some areas; increased growth in others; and the creation of new or enhanced programs and services.

This creates a very challenging environment for the GNWT to recruit and retain employees. Uncertainty surrounding the changes may result in some employees leaving the organization and potential employees being hesitant to join the NWT Public Service.

### **Promoting Northern Employment**

When recruiting in the NWT, it is important to promote the benefits of the northern lifestyle and work environment. The GNWT offers complex and challenging work that makes a difference to a greater extent than is possible in larger provincial and federal governments. For employees coming from large southern centres, the easy access to outdoor recreation and not having to deal with long commutes to work are positive recruitment incentives.

The GNWT also offers a compensation package that is reasonably competitive with other public sector organizations in southern Canada. Provisions such as the leave package and health care insurances are very good and contribute to an improved work-life balance. One of the challenges for the GNWT is to promote the full compensation package beyond the salary an employee receives. With labour market shortages, the GNWT needs to enhance its marketing and promotion efforts to promote itself as an employer of choice.

Other issues that continue to be a challenge for both recruitment and retention include housing and isolation, as well as cost of living factors. Fuel price increases and the related impact on food costs add to these concerns. These issues impact not only those individuals being recruited from the south, but also those contemplating a move between communities or returning from post-secondary education and deciding which community to work in.

### **Increasing Demands on the Public Service**

Over the past two decades, the complexity of public service jobs has increased. As a result, government jobs often require more education and experience than in the past. This complexity comes from factors such as changing technology, added influence from other jurisdictions in some

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areas of operation, and additional program responsibilities. As well, in an era of instant information, the public's expectations of response time have increased which puts additional pressure on GNWT staff.

With limited financial resources, departments, boards and authorities are sometimes pressed to have current staff add new programs or service expansion to their existing workload. While this makes northern public service jobs interesting and dynamic, there is a challenge in how to let employees in the organization benefit from the complexity, without employees becoming overwhelmed by the breadth of the job or sacrificing the work life balance necessary to promote healthy choices and lifestyles.

### **Enhancing GNWT Human Resource Management**

The GNWT embarked on a process of human resource service transformation in 2005. While steady progress has been made, additional effort is required to ensure consistent and reliable service delivery by Department of Human Resources staff, resulting in consistent opportunities and benefits for employees while responding to the unique operational needs of each department, board and agency.

# CORPORATE MANAGEMENT

### *Description*

The Directorate provides leadership and direction to the Department. The Directorate also provides strategic human resource advice to the Minister as well as to Deputy Ministers and Deputy Heads across the GNWT.

### *2008/09 Resources*

#### Budget:

Compensation & Benefits	\$323,000
Grants & Contributions	-
Other O&M	\$382,000
Amortization	-

#### Staffing (Positions):

Headquarters (HQ)	2
Regional/Other Communities	0

### *Major Program and Service Initiatives*

The Directorate supports participation in the Refocusing Government Strategic Initiative, and coordinates strategic activities throughout the Department. Major projects include:

- Development of a Corporate Human Resource Strategy for the NWT Public Service;
- Assessment of service standard levels and matching resources with services to stabilize service delivery.

# **KEY ACTIVITY 1: MANAGEMENT AND RECRUITMENT SERVICES**

### ***Description***

The Management and Recruitment Services Division is responsible for the provision of general human resource services to management that support recruitment and retention of a qualified, competent and representative public service.

### ***Major Program and Service Initiatives***

Improve recruitment related services across the Public Service by focusing on reducing the time required to administer staffing competitions.

The Department of Human Resources will place a greater emphasis on providing strategic human resource advice and guidance to managers across the GNWT to assist them in the management of the Public Service. This will include the development of staff within the Department of Human Resources to enable them to shift from transactional to strategic service provision. This will provide increased consistency in the management of the Public Service.

2008/09 Budget:

Compensation & Benefits  
\$6,842,000

Grants & Contributions  
None

Other O&M  
\$499,000

Amortization  
None

**Staff (Positions):**

26 HQ  
44 Regional/Other

**Measures:**

*Measure 1:* Percentage of competitions completed within 8 weeks.

*Measure 2:* Number of upheld grievances.

*Measure 3:* Number of substantiated Human Rights Complaints.

*Measure 4:* Percentage of substantiated Workplace Conflict Resolution Complaints.

*Measure 5:* Percentage of staffing appeals upheld.

### KEY ACTIVITY 2: CORPORATE HUMAN RESOURCES

#### Description

The Corporate Human Resources Division is responsible for the provision of human resource management planning frameworks and strategic support services across government.

This Division also coordinates government-wide human resource management planning and programs, particularly in the areas of recruitment, retention, workforce adjustment, employee recognition, management and leadership development, and employee training and development.

The Division also strives to provide a comprehensive and clear framework of terms and conditions of employment that:

- is broadly used and understood,
- promotes harmonious labour management relations,
- results in fair and consistent treatment of staff,
- promotes productive work environments, and
- results in high service and ethical standards within the Public Service.

#### Major Program and Service Initiatives

To support the 16<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly in its Refocusing Government initiatives, and the need to have the right people in the right place at the right time, the Department of Human Resources will analyse the potential throughout the GNWT for eliminating positions during the 2009/10 and 2010/11 fiscal years through attrition and/or promotion of early retirement.

To support GNWT managers in the provision of consistent and effective human resource management practices, increased training in the areas of labour relations, employee development, human resource planning, and performance management will be offered.

The Department of Human Resources will continue to analyze its compensation package and make recommendations on program and policy changes or enhancements that support the recruitment and retention of a qualified and competent work force.

#### 2008/09 Budget:

Compensation & Benefits  
\$3,448,000

Grants & Contributions  
None

Other O&M  
\$4,241,000

Amortization  
None

#### Staff (Positions):

36 HQ  
0 Regional/Other

#### Measures:

*Measure 1: Percentage of affected employees redeployed through management of vacancies at a corporate level.*

*Measure 2: Number of training sessions offered.*

*Measure 3: Turnover rate across the GNWT.*

*Measure 4: Number of arbitration hearings completed.*

*Measure 5: Number of grievances settled.*

*Measure 6: Percentage of job evaluations that are appealed.*

### KEY ACTIVITY 3: EMPLOYEE SERVICES

#### ***Major Program and Service Changes***

The Employee Services Division provides compensation, benefits, data management and helpdesk services to the Public Service that are timely, accurate, relevant, courteous and helpful.

#### ***Major Program and Service Initiatives***

Continue to focus on eliminating the pay and benefits backlogs and identify mechanisms to prevent future backlogs.

Decrease the response time on employee benefits and payroll requests and inquiries.

Increase the level of benefit information provided to employees across the GNWT through the development and implementation of employee benefit information sessions.

Complete an enterprise resource planning exercise to assess current workloads and how to improve both customer service and response time to service requests.

Rollout of pension administration changes being undertaken by Superannuation to GNWT employees.

#### **2008/09 Budget:**

Compensation & Benefits  
\$11,454,000

Grants & Contributions  
None

Other O&M  
\$209,000

Amortization  
None

#### **Staff (Positions)**

34 HQ  
3 Regional/Other

#### **Measures:**

*Measure 1:* Number of backlogged pay and benefits .

*Measure 2:* Number of off-cycle cheques produced.

*Measure 3:* Establish baseline data relating to completion times for issues such as: Records of Employment, Final Pays, Retirements/Terminations and leave counselling and measure response times on an on-going basis.

*Measure 4:* Number of employee information sessions offered.

*Measure 5:* Percentage of Helpdesk inquiries completed by immediate response, and within one week.

# KEY ACTIVITY 4: HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY & POLICY

### Description

The Human Resource Strategy and Policy Division is responsible for government-wide human resource management strategies, legislation, policies, guidelines and practices as well as quality assurance services to ensure consistent and fair application of the legislation, policies and guidelines. It is also responsible for leading negotiations with bargaining groups, and supporting research and analysis within the Department.

### Major Program and Service Initiatives

Undertake a comprehensive review of the *Public Service Act*, including the *Public Service Act* Regulations, with a view to updating the Public Service Act and the Regulations.

Transition to the next supported version of the Human Resource Information System (HRIS) to ensure continued support, including tax and regulatory updates. The work is anticipated to take place during the 2011/12 fiscal year.

Ensure that an up to date policy framework supports the updated *Public Service Act* and Regulations. This includes an updated Code of Conduct and a Code of Ethics.

Negotiate the renewal of collective agreements with the Northwest Territories Teachers' Association and the Union of Northern Workers.

Negotiate new employment contracts for physicians in the Northwest Territories with the Northwest Territories' Medical Association.

### 2008/09 Budget:

Compensation & Benefits  
\$2,311,000

Grants & Contributions  
None

Other O&M  
\$1,764,000

Amortization  
\$780,000

### Staff (Positions)

22 HQ  
0 Regional/Other

### Measures:

*Measure 1:* Number of Human Resource Manual Sections Updated.

*Measure 2:* Percentage of Workplace Conflict Resolution Policy investigations completed.

*Measure 3:* Successful negotiation of collective agreements.

*Measure 4:* Successful completion of policy and legislation reviews.

### **STRATEGIC INITIATIVE: REFOCUSING GOVERNMENT**

#### **Action: Improve Human Resource Management in the NWT**

##### **Description**

The Department of Human Resources, in support of the *Refocusing Government* initiative, leads providing human resource analysis and strategic human resource planning advice on resulting initiatives.

Improving human resource management in the NWT is vital to the long term success of program delivery. The GNWT, community and Aboriginal governments must be able to attract and retain qualified motivated individuals. Especially critical to this effort is the requirement to enhance initiatives to attract and retain affirmative action employees.

Human Resource Planning is critical to the successful implementation of initiatives that may be undertaken that will impact human resources such as Board Reform. This is required to ensure compliance with the legal framework that governs human resource management.

##### **Objectives**

To ensure the broader Public Service of the Northwest Territories has the right people in the right place at the right time to deliver quality programs and services to the residents of the Northwest Territories.

##### **Action Plan**

- Work to support the strategic action will include:
  - The provision of strategic human resource planning advice and guidance as actions resulting from the *Refocusing Government* initiative; and
  - An analysis of the feasibility of an early retirement incentive (Superannuation waiver) to support the *Refocusing Government* initiative.
- The detailed action plan for GNWT initiatives will be finalized after the completion of the Corporate Human Resource Strategy, which will include a three-year action plan outlining priority actions. However, specific actions may include:
  - Expand the existing GNWT intern program and develop a community government intern program;
  - Develop a public service marketing plan;
  - Develop a public service training program; and
  - Develop enhanced initiatives to attract and retain affirmative action employees.

### **INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS**

Updates to the Human Resource Information System (HRIS) are required on an ongoing basis. Updates are required not only to introduce new functionality, but also to ensure continued support from the software makers. This support includes patches and fixes as well as ongoing assistance with system issues, in addition to regulatory and tax updates.

Based on current information on support timeframes for the current product, the transition to a new version will likely be required in the 2011-2012 fiscal year. This will be a smaller transition, given the elimination of many customizations. The transition will include whether to enhance functionality with new modules or module improvements available in the next version.

In addition, hardware improvements are required to support the system and the increasing number of self-service users. Hardware improvements will be required over the next four years.

### **LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES**

During this business planning period, a complete updating of the *Public Service Act* will be initiated. The *Public Service Act* sets the foundation for the employment relationships in the GNWT. It also sets out, in Regulations, benefits such as particular leaves, some aspects of compensation, and the staffing appeal process.

Although minor changes have taken place over the years, The *Act* has not been completely reviewed and re-written since the 1980's.

A legislative proposal will be completed in the 2008-2009 fiscal year. Additional steps and timing will be determined based on the legislative proposal.