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# Corporate Services: Delivery of Human Resource Management Programs and Services

*Marilyn Fields and Marie Wells*

In 2004, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador began a Program Renewal initiative. This process involved reviews of financial, information technology, human resource (HR), administrative support and regional corporate services. As a result of the Program Renewal Process, information technology (IT) services were reorganized and consolidated under the Office of the Chief Information Officer. The process also resulted in the development of a Corporate Services Implementation Plan. That plan recommended strengthening the HR and financial services components of corporate services and enhancing the administrative support services and the delivery of corporate services at the regional level.

## **Corporate Human Resources: Overview**

The review of the corporate HR function suggested that Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) should be given greater emphasis. It was recommended that, where feasible, the following concepts be considered for implementation:

- *Centres of Excellence* - teams of technical HR experts who provide strategic, design and consultative services in areas such as employee relations, policy, planning and program development, learning and development, organizational development and recruitment and selection;
- *HR Services Consolidation* – a consolidated process responsible for responding to employee inquiries and processing HR transactions;
- *HR Practitioners/Business Partners* - positions located in departments to address HR issues / concerns and provide consultative services for people-related issues to executives and line managers.

These concepts signaled a shift in how HR services are delivered. Strategic Human Resource Management was seen as the development and implementation of

planned human resource strategies, activities and deployments intended to create and sustain organizations that perform consistently with high quality results. It was also felt that SHRM would prompt a move from performing transactional activities such as payroll and benefits administration, to a focus on assisting the organization in meeting its performance goals and objectives. The focus on SHRM was intended to:

- Increase the strategic value of human resource management by delivering effective and innovative HR programming focused on improving overall organizational performance;
- Create a proactive versus reactive environment; and
- Address issues of consistency in services offered and interpretation of policy.

## **SHRM in the Public Service Secretariat**

In terms of strategically focusing the Public Service Secretariat, the following broad business components were identified:

- collective bargaining;
- employment relationships;
- human resource policy, planning and program development
- classification and compensation;
- organizational management
- capacity building (including learning and development and French services)
- strategic initiatives (including equity, disability management and work planning)

Employees within the Secretariat will also be engaged in building a robust HR Community. This will likely include supporting communities of practice - groups of people who share an interest in HR and interact regularly to build their own capacity to do things better. These communities are about collective learning in a safe and supported environment. They will also foster knowledge transfer between people working in the same area or field. By formalizing such structures the HR Community will be able

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to enhance the learning from each other and increase the effectiveness of HR Practitioners.

One of the major challenges for the Secretariat will be to assist in moving the HR agenda forward. The Secretariat will need to be positioned to provide leadership in building organizational capacity – whether that is through organizational design and redesign, organizational development activities, learning and development programming or by building tools that can be used by professionals throughout the HR community. In addition, the Secretariat will need to explore its role in assisting departmental HR professionals in moving the HR function from a transactional role to one that supports organizational performance.

## **SHRM in Departments**

Human Resource Divisions within departments, as strategic partners, will focus on addressing HR issues and concerns and providing consultative services for people-related issues to executives and line managers. Program areas such as strategic thinking, organizational consulting, change leadership, employment relations, departmental specific training and development, departmental HR planning initiatives and assisting the department in meeting legislative requirements are important HR services to be developed and provided at the departmental level.

Five SHRM Units will be established through the Corporate Planning Initiative.

These units will be accountable for leadership of the strategic human resource management function in either a consolidated HR division serving several client departments or a single client department structure.

It is expected that each of the five units will be led by a Director of Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) who would report administratively to an Assistant Deputy Minister or Deputy Minister at the Departmental level. This position will have a strong accountability with the executive teams of all client departments in the unit and provide direction to HR practitioners. The structure of each HR unit, including the positioning of HR practitioners, will be informed by evidence such as the number of employees, number of client departments and established needs of departments.

### SHRM in the Public Service Commission

Under the proposed structure, the Public Service Commission (PSC) will retain responsibility for its current programs and services. It will however, assume responsibility for the staffing function for all government departments. While the final structure of this function has not been determined, it is envisioned that there will be a manager assigned to each SHRM unit. This will ensure a more proactive and concentrated management of all related recruitment and staffing functions. Existing Certified Selection Board Chairs will continue to assist in the recruitment function. The PSC will also be advancing a more strategic approach to the staffing and recruitment function by aligning such activities with the strategic directions of the organization, and working with the HR units to develop succession plans and strategies to address recruitment challenges and diversity.

### Human Resource Services Delivery – Office of the Comptroller General

In order to transform human resource delivery, there must be consolidation of human resource transactional activities. Consolidating such activities into a HR Services Consolidation Unit will significantly reduce departmental HR involve-

ment in routine administrative tasks and inquiries (for example, benefits administration, payroll, personal data maintenance). This, in turn, should enable departmental HR staff to enhance the role that HR has with respect to organizational performance. It will also increase the effectiveness of the delivery of HR employee services, especially with respect to timely responses to questions and concerns and consistency in policy interpretation across departments.

Underlying the new SHRM model is the consolidation of HR services and the effective use of information systems. This is fundamental to the transformation of HR services and without it much of the effort to enable HR practitioners at the departmental level to take on new roles will not be accomplished. Thus, the Office of the Comptroller General (OCG) and the PSS are working with the Office of the Chief Information Officer to develop the requirements for a human resource management information system which will assist HR staff in data maintenance and provide employee access to human resource related information.

### Guiding Principle for HR Model Implementation

The Corporate Services Steering Committee have established principles that

guide the actions with respect to the implementation of the human resource model. These are:

- HR resources will be organized based on departmental needs and allow for timely response and improved service quality;
- There will be flexibility in programs and services in order to meet fluctuating demands;
- The implementation plan will facilitate the evolution of HR programs to provide a more strategic level of service above what is in place today;
- A strategic HR presence will be available at the departmental level;
- A regional presence focused on delivering priority services will be encouraged; and
- More appropriate technology and best practice business processes will be utilized.

### Corporate Services – Human Resource Model

The diagram below depicts the proposed structure and reporting relationships between the Departmental Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) Units and the Public Service Secretariat. Also shown, is the structure and functions of the Public Service Commission and the Office of the Comptroller General. ■

