

# Town of Halton Hills Corporate HR Strategic Plan 2025-2029



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Report by J Macpherson & Associates

2024

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## Section One: Report Summary

The Town of Halton Hills Council recently approved the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan. The Plan sets out a vision of a Town that is a growing, nature-rich community, proud of its small-town feel and urban rural mix where people feel welcomed, safe and connected. The Town's strategic plan sets out four strategic priorities and supporting objectives.

A critical element in achieving the vision and advancing the strategic priorities is maintaining an engaged, talented workforce supported by competitive and efficient HR practices and a modern Human Resources Department.

J Macpherson & Associates was engaged to support the development of a new Corporate HR Strategic Plan ("the Plan") with the following objectives:

- Ensure the Town has a knowledgeable, skilled, and engaged workforce to meet the future demands of business and of staff.
- Develop a safe, positive and supportive workplace.
- Identify HR technology needs that support the effective and efficient delivery of HR Programs and Services.
- Recommended HR staffing plan to ensure sufficient HR staff resources to deliver on the goals of the Corporate HR Strategic Plan.
- An implementation plan and recommendations on how to measure progress/impacts.

The Town of Halton Hills mission is, "To efficiently provide services that foster a higher quality of life for residents, making Halton Hills a desirable place to live, work, and invest."

A critical element in achieving the vision and advancing the strategic priorities is maintaining an engaged, talented workforce supported by competitive and efficient HR practices and a modern Human Resources Department.

An in-depth current state assessment was undertaken which included a document and HR process review and a comprehensive stakeholder engagement process to gain an understanding of key stakeholder perspectives and insights. A total of 34 stakeholders consisting of Commissioners, Directors, HR Staff and union representatives were interviewed. Additionally, 29 manager/supervisor surveys were completed by staff and the recent Staff Survey was reviewed as part of the current state engagement process.

A review and analysis of the Town's workforce was undertaken. It found that future retirements were manageable with targeted succession planning and the employee retention was a greater risk for the Town highlighting the importance of the planned Employee Attraction and Retention project.

Research on external people practices and a municipal benchmarking exercise that included 10 municipalities was undertaken to identify leading practices and municipal trends. The key findings helped influence the development of the Town's Corporate HR Strategic Plan. The importance of investing in staff learning to mitigate employee turnover risk and build greater internal staff capacity, as well as the implementation of technology to streamline processes, improve information and drive better outcomes were central themes.

The question of HR resource capacity was raised by numerous stakeholders during the current state review. It became evident that current Human Resources staffing levels meant they were limited to meeting day-to-day client needs and unable to advance new initiatives without an impact on client service. A municipal HR staffing benchmark survey of HR staffing ratios was undertaken. The research confirms that the Town of Halton Hills HR department provides service to a greater number of employees per staff member when compared to other external HR organizations.

Two new positions have been recommended to advance the initiatives in 'the Plan' that will allow for a transition to a more strategic HR approach. The report recommends phasing new positions over the life of 'the Plan'. The new positions will strengthen client service in the areas of safety and disability management, compensation and job evaluation and learning and development to address service gaps identified in the current state assessment. These additional resources will also allow the HR Department to advance to a more strategic approach of supporting employees and managers.

Based on the analysis of the current state findings and the external scan, several themes emerged that guided the development of recommended actions. The recommended actions have been categorized into four (4) Strategic Focus Areas, which would serve as the pillars to this Corporate HR strategic plan:

1. Modernize HR Processes, Technology and Build HR Resource Capacity (modernizing)
2. Employee Attraction and Retention (competing)
3. Healthy and Safe Work Environment (caring)
4. Building Employee and Organizational Capacity and Resilience (growing and performing)

It is important to note that the categorizing of actions into one of the four strategic focus areas does not mean that the actions are independent of one another. In many cases, the output from the completion of one action will drive and advance another action as part of a larger talent management system. The Corporate HR Strategic Plan is a collection of integrated actions implemented over a five-year period.

Timelines mentioned in the Plan are meant to only act as guidelines. Actual timelines will vary depending on organizational priorities, resources and budget implications. This means that progress on implementing actions is dependent on approval of recommended new HR staff positions and funding of select initiatives.

The Plan is bold, progressive and fitting for a municipality competing for talent in a competitive labour market, posed for significant growth, and believes that investing in staff and supporting staff is vital to advance toward the Town's vision.

## **Section Two: 2025-2029 Corporate HR Strategic Plan Highlights**

It is anticipated that the majority of the actions identified in this plan, but not all, will be led by Human Resources staff often utilizing cross departmental teams. It is a corporate plan requiring leadership support and contributions from the entire organization.

It has been created to build on the strengths of the organization, mitigate workforce risk, and achieve the objectives outlined below.

### **Objectives of the New Corporate HR Strategic Plan:**

- Ensure the Town is well positioned to compete for talent in an increasingly competitive labour market.
- Support the emergence of more strategic HR support.
- Address current HR Service gaps.
- Attract and retain a workforce with the skills and attributes to:
  - provide quality services to citizens today and in the future
  - advance the achievement of Council's strategic priorities
  - meet the challenges of a growing Town
- Provide a safe, supportive and welcoming work environment where employees feel a sense of belonging

### **Strategic Focus Areas**

The Plan has been developed based on stakeholder interviews, manager and supervisor survey results, internal assessment, and external research. The information gathered identified themes that guide the development of recommended actions. The recommended actions have been categorized into four (4) Strategic Focus Areas, which would serve as the pillars to this strategic plan:

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## **Measurement**

Each Strategic Focus Area has been assigned initial measures to assess effectiveness and progress. The initial measures are a collection of common Human Resources measures suggested by the Conference Board of Canada and Statistics Canada that allow for high level benchmarking to established standards. Some suggested measures will take time to report on and are linked to the advancement of Human Resource analytics and reporting.

## **Timelines**

Timelines mentioned in the Plan are guidelines. Actual timelines will vary depending on organizational priorities, resources and budget implications. This means that progress on implementing actions is dependent on approval of recommended new HR staff positions and funding of select initiatives.

# Section Three: Recommended Plan Strategic Focus Areas and Actions

## I. Strategic Focus Area One: Modernize HR Processes, Technology and Build HR Staff Capacity (Modernizing)

A critical element in implementing the Corporate HR Strategic Plan is Human Resources capacity and leveraging technology. Creating the conditions for success ensures the organization is in the best position to achieve the Plan's goals.

### Potential Performance Measures

- Corporate HR Strategic Plan annual progress report completion status
- Health and Safety System implementation (subject to approval)
- Learning Management System implementation (subject to approval)
- HR Staff Request Approved
- Human Resources Policies Reviews Completed (3-year review)

Actions/Initiatives	Timelines
<b>1. Advance HR Technology and Process Improvements</b>	
1.1. Continue to shift from paper to digitized forms. Identify HR processes that are manually intensive and that could be digitized and automated. (Example: classification request)	ongoing
1.2. Streamline HR Processes associated with Part-time and temporary staff in partnership with operating areas most impacted. Create an inventory of potential processes and prioritize based on risk assessment and impact on creating increased efficiencies.	2025
1.3. Prioritize and implement future technology solutions to address: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.3.1. Health and Safety System <b>(2025)</b></li> <li>1.3.2. Applicant Tracking System <b>(2026)</b></li> <li>1.3.3. Learning Management <b>(2029)</b></li> </ul>	2025 -2029
<b>2. Improve HR Measures and Reporting</b>	
2.1. Formalize measures and report to the Senior Management Team quarterly on key measures including turnover, vacancy	2025



Actions/Initiatives	Timelines
rate, safety results, absenteeism, and new hires. Key measures and level of detail should be expanded once information access is more readily available.	
2.2. Develop an annual Corporate HR Strategic Plan Progress Update for the Senior Management Team.	2025
<b>3. HR Service Model Enhancement</b>	
3.1. Formalize backup support for key single incumbent roles such as the Health, Safety & Wellness Specialist	Immediate
<p>3.2. Invest in additional HR Resourcing to address current service level gaps, increased complexity of work and to advance Corporate HR Strategic Plan actions.</p> <p>3.2.1. Additional HR Business Partner Resource to support Health, Safety and Wellness and assume some client areas responsibilities so that an existing HR Business partner can dedicate more time to support job classification and compensation management. <b>(2025)</b></p> <p>3.2.2. Dedicated Learning and Development Consultant to advance learning and development offerings at the Town and lead succession planning. Learning and Development is at the core of talent management strategy to attract, retain and develop talent. <b>(2027)</b></p>	2025 and 2027
<b>4. HR Policies</b>	
4.1. Create new policies as required and implement changes to existing policies and procedures to meet changing legislation, mitigate risk and advance attraction and retention of staff as required.	ongoing
4.2. Create a new Corporate Safety Policy and Procedures Manual for the Town.	2025
4.3. Transition to a new policy maintenance cycle of reviewing every HR policy every three years.	2025 and 2028
<b>5. HR Communications</b>	

Actions/Initiatives	Timelines
5.1. Regularly update the HILLS Portal and Managers' Toolbox.	ongoing
5.2. Maintain HR external presence and update the careers page on Halton Hills Website with employee value propositions.	ongoing

**II. Strategic Focus Area Two: Attraction and Retention of Talent (Competing)**

Attracting and retaining talented staff is essential for the Town to meet both current and future service needs. It means competing in a challenging labour market and creating a compelling reason for individuals to want to work for your organization.

**Potential Performance Measures**

- Time-to-fill
- Voluntary Turnover Rate
- First Year Turnover
- Staff Survey Questions. Add a question to future Staff Surveys and seek to increase your score in future years. For example: Employees recommend the Town of Halton Hills as a great place to work.

Actions/ Initiatives	Timelines
<b>1. Employee Attraction and Retention</b>	
1.1. Actively participate and support the Corporate Attraction and Retention project that is being led by the Attraction Retention Team.	2024-2025
1.2. Support implementation of Attraction and Retention Project recommendations.	2025-2027
<b>2. Recruiting Support</b>	
2.1. Continue to implement the Hiring Supervisor led recruitment service model.	2024-2025
2.2. Review and update recruitment support tools to support the Hiring Manager recruitment process.	2024-2025

<b>2.3.</b>	Work with Hiring Managers to develop strategies to address Hard-to-fill positions that may include development of career paths for hard-to-fill positions.	ongoing
<b>2.4.</b>	Streamline the Part-time recruitment process through automation.	2024-2026
<b>2.5.</b>	Participate in the Corporate Employee Onboarding Project and implement approved recommendations that require HR support.	2024-2025
<b>3.</b>	<b>Employee Retention</b>	
<b>3.1.</b>	Conduct a Compensation and Benefit review every three years to assess market competitiveness and make the appropriate adjustments.	2024 and 2027
<b>3.2.</b>	Build on the successful refreshed Goals and Plans for Success (GPS) through additional automation of forms and making the process mandatory for all non union full-time staff. Expansion to Part-time staff should only be implemented after consultations with managers of large operating areas and appropriate modification.	2025
<b>3.3.</b>	Review and improve the current job evaluation process to streamline the process and improve timelines. Timeline will be dependent on the new FTE request.	2025
<b>3.4.</b>	Explore the feasibility of introducing a more flexible benefit package and providing employees greater choice.	2027
<b>3.5.</b>	Develop and implement solutions to Employee Pulse Survey results as they relate to HR responsibilities.	ongoing
<b>3.6.</b>	Review the effectiveness and value of the current exit interview process and determine whether it should continue in present form or at all.	2025

### III. Strategic Focus Area Three: Healthy and Safe Work Environments (Caring)

An organization's commitment to providing a safe workplace and supporting employee wellness and health exceeds meeting legislative requirements. It is an expansion of the organization's culture and a demonstrated action of caring for employees. Responsibility for a safe, healthy and inclusive workplace is shared by all employees and individuals performing services on behalf of the Town.

#### Performance Measures

- Add questions to the next staff survey to understand staff perceptions on safety and seek to improve.
- Inactivity Rate
- Workplace Lost Time
- Frequency and severity rates
- Long Term and Short Term Disability usage
- Training rates

Actions/Initiatives	Timelines
1. Conduct a Corporate Health and Safety Audit to identify strengths, concerns and opportunities of current approaches and training.	2024-2025
2. Refine the current OH&S governance model by reviewing the number of current Steering Committees, membership eligibility and role.	2024-2025
3. Develop a new Town of Halton Hills Corporate Health and Safety Program (Legislative compliance).	2025-2026
4. Develop an annual Health and Safety work plan for Senior Management Team approval that addresses corporate priorities and is achievable with current staff resourcing.	2025 ongoing
5. Work with operational areas to identify an inventory of potential modified work placement opportunities (Accommodation and Return-to-work).	2027
6. Continue to support Corporate Wellness Committees and ongoing wellness related communication. (Mental, Physical, and Social well-being).	ongoing

Actions/Initiatives	Timelines
7. Explore the effectiveness of the current Employee Family Assistance Program.	2027

#### **IV. Strategic Focus Area Four: Building Employee and Organizational Capacity and Resilience (Growing and Performing)**

An organization's commitment to supporting and investing in employee learning can be a competitive advantage in attracting and retaining talent. An organization where staff value learning is better prepared to maneuver in an ever changing environment. A commitment to learning and teaching enhances performance, mitigates risk associated with employee turnover and retirement and builds capacity.

##### **Potential Performance Measures**

- Percentage of Performance Reviews completed
- Commissioner and Director Readiness Index (number of positions that have potential replacement available)
- Succession Planning Program is active, and critical positions have been identified with replacements.

Actions/Initiatives	Timelines
1. Maintain and enrich current employee development opportunities and the use of internal facilitators. Explore formally adopting the 70-20-10 learning model with an emphasis on experiential training.	ongoing
2. Reestablish a corporate training calendar incorporating the findings from the recent needs assessment survey as well as training in core competencies (example project management, report writing).	2024
3. Reestablish a formal succession management program for senior level positions and hard to fill positions.	2026
4. Conduct an annual retirement risk assessment and take appropriate actions to mitigate risk associated with loss of experience and knowledge.	2025 ongoing

<b>Actions/Initiatives</b>	<b>Timelines</b>
5. Establish a Town of Halton Hills Leadership Training Program (With a focus on utilizing internal resources).	2026 -2027

## **Section Four: Managing the Plan**

### **Bringing the Plan to Life**

This is an exciting time for the Town of Halton Hills and for the Human Resources team. The long anticipated growth is soon to be realized and the 2023 - 2026 Council Strategic Plan articulates a compelling and clear vision of the Town.

The HR department has demonstrated success and commitment to improving services by implementing new technology, streamlined processes, and through responsible reallocation of resources to address the need for a dedicated Health, Safety and Wellness Specialist and HR Business Partner positions.

The 2025–2029 Corporate HR Strategic Plan is bold and ambitious, and it is also dependent on a number of factors.

- It requires an understanding of current HR resource constraints and growing client demands. That any additional work commitments identified by others that require HR resources will impact the HR department's ability to meet other clients' service needs and must be evaluated against that impact.
- That new investments to fund two positions during the life of the plan will be required to advance a significant number of the actions identified in the Plan.
- Investment in technology as the stepping stone for modernizing processes, creating efficiencies and improving workforce data analytics.

### **Keeping the Plan on Track**

Regular monitoring and annual reporting on Plan progress to the Senior Management Team must occur. Plan reporting should also identify any barriers to advancing the Plan.

It is important to note that timelines indicated in the Plan are guidelines and actual timelines will vary depending on organizational priorities, resources and budget implications. Deviations from the timelines outlined in the Plan will be noted in Senior Management Team updates as well as the rationale.

### **Conclusion**

The Human Resources Strategic Plan is owned by the entire organization. It is the roadmap to building a resilient workforce and establishing the Town of Halton Hills as a preferred employer.