

TasCOSS Workforce Development Project 2009 - 2010

INTRODUCTION

This project aims to explore the major issues relating to recruitment and retention of staff in the community services sector. In particular, it will examine the connections between organisational culture and worker satisfaction and how this impacts on willingness to continue to work for an organisation.

This work is undertaken as part of the TasCOSS contract with the DHHS and is also informed by the Community Services Industry Plan which lists as a major priority the need to secure a workforce for the future. The plan recognises that one of the key elements to achieving this goal is that “organisations must be equipped to support staff, and to ensure their health and wellbeing in the workforce.”

CONTEXT

This project is undertaken in the context of demographic change and the increasing need for CSOs to be more accountable and transparent to government, clients and stakeholders. Keeping and maintaining staff is part of a larger equation which includes the need to identify competencies and skill sets and provide training and understanding of the current workforce as well as projections of the workforce of the future.

SCOPE

Workforce Planning is fundamentally the gathering of data on the current profile of the workforce, as well as future needs and gaps. It includes:

- identifying the current numbers of workers and gaps in numbers of workers required
- determining the education and training requirements of the workforce
- drawing up national occupational standards and benchmarks
- addressing the challenge of recruitment and retention of workers

Workforce Development is informed by Workforce Planning and describes a range of strategies, approaches and methodologies to support individual, team, leader, organisational and industry development.

The project survey is, in fact, the pre-cursor to workforce planning. Once the survey is completed and analysed, workforce planning can take place. This will then lead to workforce development initiatives that help organisations to attract and retain people. It is important to note that an overall strategy can only be determined once the workforce is analysed through qualitative surveys such as this and quantitative data in a workforce planning process.

This research seeks to inform the following workforce issues:

- How people at different levels – strategic, managerial and operational - feel about their workplaces.
- The factors that contribute to retention rates.
- The factors which impact on worker satisfaction in the workplace.
- The changes that people would like to see in their workplaces.

This project will not attempt to:

- provide comprehensive answers to staff retention and organisational culture issues but will seek to identify trends
- survey widely but will undertake case-studies of medium to small organisations to provide some indication of what workers in the sector may be feeling about their work and their workplaces

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research will employ the theoretical framework developed by the National Research Centre of Alcohol and Other Drugs (2005). This model clusters inter-related strategies at three levels of activity (1) systems, (2) organisational, and (3) team/individual. These levels of strategies include:

1. Systems Strategies:

- Ensuring adequate funding arrangements and resources
- Development and revision of policy and legislation to ensure effective and efficient functioning of organisations
- Development and review of award structures to ensure fair and adequate pay
- Provision of workforce development grants and scholarships
- Support for specific research on workforce development
- Development and support for related curriculum in human services tertiary education.
- Development and support for sector specialist qualifications in tertiary institutions
- Building organisational and individual capacity

2. Organisational Strategies

- Develop and implement workforce development policies
- Provision of supervision and mentoring programs
- Provision of professional development opportunities
- Ensuring adequate rewards and recognition
- Negotiation of job redesign and job enrichment with workers
- Provision of a healthy, safe and pleasant working environment
- Participation and support for workforce development programs and research
- Ensuring opportunities for input into organisational decision-making for all staff

3. Team/Individual Strategies

- Identification of professional development needs/priorities
- Proactive development of mentoring relationships
- Provision of support, guidance and encouragement to colleagues
- Openness to change and innovation in work practices
- Implementation of shared care arrangements
- Development of professional/collegial networks
- Innovative rewards

It is clear that all three levels of activity will impact on organisational culture. Indeed, the issue of organisational culture is not one that can be separated from other issues within the recruitment/retention matrix. A wide body of workforce development research illustrates the interconnectedness of all workforce development issues (see literature review).

Qualitative research has the capacity to explore the factors underpinning workplace culture which is not an issue that can be easily quantified with an examination of elements of instances and scope. It can, in particular:

- investigate the perceived elements that make up good workplace culture;
- establish the factors that increase the likelihood of staff retention due to a good workplace culture; and
- examine the actual and potential capacity of organisations to implement best practice in their workplace.

METHODOLOGY

1. Literature Review

A literature review will be conducted to collate research into workforce development which examines and which makes some significant contribution to the issues of recruitment and retention. The review will focus on the issue of organisational culture and its impact on staff satisfaction and staff retention.

2. Sample

The project is planned to include 10 case studies, 4 of which will be with small organisations (run directly by Management Committee/Board and with only one or two paid staff members). It is envisaged that at least 4 of these case studies will be with organisations outside of Hobart. These organisations will be examined at three levels - strategic, managerial and operational and both paid and unpaid staff will be included in the study.

3. Case studies

The Project Officer will conduct in-depth, semi-structured interviews with the CEOs and managers of organisations participating in the project. For operational/frontline staff and volunteers surveys will be disseminated via Survey Monkey with hard copy versions also available for those who prefer that format.

Individuals will remain anonymous but organisations will be identified. Any malicious response will be left out of the report but reasonable negative feedback which could impact on the reputation of the participating organisation will be described anonymously in the general findings section of the report.

It is anticipated that the case studies approach will also be a useful tool for the participating organisations which will receive their individual findings after the surveys from their staff and volunteers have been collated.

4. Data Analysis

At this stage there are several levels at which the data can be analysed. These include:

- Comparison between small organisations
- Comparison between medium organisations
- Comparison between paid and unpaid workers
- Comparison between management and frontline workers

RISKS

This project is undertaken under the assumption that CEOs/ Managers or Chairs / Presidents of organisations will be willing to allow us to speak to them and their staff on the issues of staff retention and organisational culture. The major risk to the project is that not enough organisations will be able to be accessed for case studies.

However, TasCOSS has a good reputation within the Community Services Sector and we have a large and varied membership. Three organisations have already indicated a willingness to participate and there is no real reason to suppose, at this stage, that the project will be unsuccessful in achieving its goals.

COMMUNICATION

Reporting

An individual report of findings will be given to participating organisations after the surveys from their staff and volunteers have been collated. A project report is due by May 2010

Project Advisory Group

To assist in the design, implementation and presentation of the research project a group of relevant stakeholders will be called upon for input. This will be a time-limited resource group who will not meet collectively, but rather be contacted by the Project Officer for specific advice related to their relative areas of interest. This group will consist of the following individuals:

- Adrienne Picone, Volunteering Tasmania
- Jill Maxwell, Volunteering Tasmania
- Maree Fudge, Community Services Consultancy
- John Furness, Department of Economic Development
- Diane Bester, Family Support Services Association
- Dale Rahmanovic, TasCOSS
- Carol Patterson, TasCOSS