

NORTHERN INTERIOR FOREST REGION

STAFFING STRATEGY

The Northern Interior Forest Region's staffing strategy is a plan of attack to overcome the short and long term staffing challenges in the north.

Strategic Alignment with Public Service Goals

The draft staffing strategy aligns with the Corporate Human Resource Plan for the Ministry and the Public Service of BC. The Public Service Agency identifies six main goals for human resource management in the public service and assigns accountability for performance to ministries, managers/supervisors and employees. *Fostering Excellence in the Public Service* defines the goals, identifies the strategies and key performance measures, and provides key objectives and accountability for each goal (*Attachment 1A*). *Ministry of Forests and Range Human Resources Management Plan* (*Attachment 1B*). The following draft staffing strategy uses this strategic framework to set the context for its presentation of staffing options and recommendations.

Four key areas addressed in the staffing strategy are:

1. Identification of in-service staffing options
2. Identification of out-of-service staffing options and opportunities for collaboration
3. Reduction in the time and cost of present and future staffing, and
4. Become an employer of choice in the north

Why the urgency?

Within the Northern Interior Forest Region, possible retirements, resignations, and 'turnover' have been projected for 2005 and 2010. Turnover represents collective employee departures from the NIFR. The projections for the fiscal year 2005/06 indicate a possible turnover rate of 19% -- a significant turnover that requires immediate action.

Projections were undertaken to explore employee turnover and more specifically, retirements within the NIFR and external pressures that compound these estimates. These projections underscore the importance of employing a flexible approach in staffing and retention to avoid a potential fall-down in the Forest Service.

- NIFR possible retirements for 2005-2010 by classification groups (Attachment 2)
- Headquarters possible retirements for 2005-2010 by classification groups (Attachment 3)
- Branch and other regions possible retirements for 2005-2010 by classification groups (Attachment 4)
- Other regions/branch retirements and the possible drain those retirements could have on the north (Attachment 5)
- NIFR turnover for 2005/06 (Attachment 6)
- NIFR turnover for 2005-2010 – Existing rate (Attachment 7)
This scenario shows NIFR possible retirements for 2005 and 2010 and assumes that

- resignations and permanent transfers will be the same as for 2004/2005. The projections identify a possible turnover rate of 50% for professional positions and 40% for all positions.
- NIFR turnover for 2005-2010 – 20% drain (Attachment 8)
This scenario outlines NIFR possible retirements for 2005 and 2010 and assumes that 20% of other regions and branch retirements will be staffed by the north (northern drain). The projections show a possible turnover rate of 70% for management and 52% for all positions.
 - NIFR turnover for 2005-2010 – 30% drain (Attachment 9)
This scenario outlines NIFR possible retirements for 2005 and 2010 and assumes that 30% of other regions and branch retirements will be staffed by the north (northern drain). The projections show a possible turnover rate of 89% for management and 63% for all positions.

RECOMMEND FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION

For immediate action, the Northern Interior Forest Region should consider:

- Developing and implementing an ongoing posting process for the region;
- using other staffing actions such as temporary employee reassignments to perform work in hard to recruit locations;
- overstaffing in hard to recruit locations;
- calling for expressions of interest for lateral transfers;
- offering temporary assignments; and
- planned overlap for cross-training.

OPTIONS FOR IN-SERVICE STAFFING

1. Staff who wish to relocate should be given the opportunity for lateral transfers. This can be done to fill any regular vacancy by inviting expressions of interest. The expression of interest would be open to all regular staff that have been in their geographic location for at least 2 years, meet all the basic requirements and are at the same grid level.
2. Advertise and staff (on a regular basis) supervisory and management positions 4 to 6 months before incumbent leaves allowing for the transfer of knowledge.
3. Consider flexible work location in staffing regional positions.
4. Use growth position to enable clerical and other staff to move into technical positions.
5. Expand the use of Temporary Assignments to include employees from other geographic locations. Requires ministry direction in order to provide some form of living allowance for bargaining unit positions.
6. Develop cross training initiatives between BCTS/FS/Protection to enhance staff knowledge and skills. Prepare MOU identifying mutual benefits. In some districts protection staff are hired as auxiliaries in FS through out the winter. The employees' accumulate seniority in two different seniority units.
7. Develop and cross train administration staff.

RETENTION OPTIONS

1. Responsibility centers ensure employees have a current and meaningful EPDP's
2. Create a link to the regional website to post regional developmental opportunities and temporary assignments
3. Create specific bridging or development positions or programs
4. Provide training to enhance staff skill (from harvesting to silviculture)
5. Identify staff interested in Development.
6. Develop job shadow, coaching, mentoring, participation on provincial groups or other programs
7. Develop succession plans for each critical position in the region. Identify who will fill the gap by balancing business needs with employee initiative and how employees will enter the process:
 - management identifies “the chosen one” (top-down approach);
 - employees are invited to apply with their manager's recommendation (bottom-up and top-down approach) the region develops a pool of trained candidates
 - employees identify themselves (bottom-up approach)
 - develop an inventory of employees' competencies
8. Develop list of courses/development needed for advancement of leaders
9. Increase awareness of Corporate Mentoring program. Enhance the corporate program or develop a regional one
10. Employees should be trained on the staffing process to make sure they understand their responsibility as well as the process itself. This can be done through courses, mentoring, coaching, and participation in selection panels. Staff need to be confident that they have the ability, the skills, and the knowledge to be successful at competitions and that we have the best employees for the job.

RESPONSIVE TO CHANGE

1. Changes in ministry goals - connect with Road Ahead initiative.
2. Changes in employees' wants and desires: work/life balance; challenging work; diversity; flexibility.
3. Changes in employee skills required because of more professional reliance, less government involvement, area-based management, etc.
4. Changes in where work will take place.

Some of the above may require a smaller work force for the north and the ministry.

REDUCTION IN TIME AND COST OF PRESENT AND FUTURE STAFFING

1. Reduce staffing time from the present 4 months to 8 weeks (time frame is calculated from posting to advising successful applicants).
2. Reduce cost by identifying opportunities for collaboration.

OUT-OF-SERVICE STAFFING OPTIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATION

1. Staffing actions need to be planned - may be beneficial to staff vacant positions in hard to recruit locations first.
2. Post competitions for STO/LSO every six months, screen, test and interview applicants, establish eligibility list. Competition could be for the region, for geographic pods (Peace, central, west) or individual locations. This option has been used successfully in the past.
3. Develop an ongoing posting process for the region as a whole, sub regional groups such as Peace, Central and West or individual locations:
 - *Attachment 10* is an example of an ongoing posting for Resource Technician; location preference and tracking form is also attached.
 - *Attachment 11* is an example of an ongoing posting for entry level Forester; location preference and tracking form is also attached.
 - As vacancies occur, districts access the pool of applicants who expressed interest in that location. Applicants could be pre-tested or the district would test and interview only those applicants interested in the location.
 - The pool could also be used to hire auxiliaries.
 - Applicants would not be eligible to re-apply for 6 months (or more) if they fail the knowledge test or interview.
 - The ongoing posting process will require a single point of administration
4. Establish a growth position for Resource Technicians in hard to recruit to location:
 - There are no collective agreement restrictions for the establishment of growth positions. The ministry needs to develop job descriptions, get them classified and define how employees will move from one level to the next.
 - Growth positions for the Resource Technician would be similar to the LSO 1 under-implemented forester position. In the organization chart, the Resource Technician position is established at the STOR18 level; however, the incumbent may be classified at the STOR13 or STOR15 level.
 - The growth position is intended to be staffed by a geographically restricted competition. The appointment level depends on the successful applicant's education, training and experience.
 - The newly appointed under-implemented technician has a realistic development plan and will advance through the successive pay levels as he/she acquires practical experience, skills and pre-determined education and/or training.
 - Another method of advancing through the successive pay levels could require passing a standardized test.
 - Regardless of the advancing method used, the incumbent must meet the basic requirements of diploma plus 2 years of experience or 4 years of experience to be fully implemented at the STOR18 level.
 - The ministry must be cautious in its use of growth positions, keeping in mind the future requirements for Resource Technician to be registered or eligible to register as RFT.

Attachment 12 ➤ outlines a matrix for different levels of Resource Technician positions.
5. Increase the use of High School work study programs (3 weeks work program for students). This is a good opportunity to expose students to the ministry and useful for developing future auxiliary pools, YEP and Coop opportunities.
6. Tap into colleges who run Business Office skills training. This provides a good pool for

- auxiliary staffing for administration positions.
7. Advertise Coop and YEP work in January of each year for the whole region.
 - Work that can be performed by Coop and YEP must be defined independent of functions identified in the respective collective agreement
 8. Develop a link on the ministry's public website to the NIFR on going posting for STO and LSO positions.
 9. Develop a link on the PSA Postings website to provide information to prospective candidates concerning the nature of work associated with entry level STO and LSO positions.
 10. Advertise Technical and Professional vacancies on the ABCFP website or magazine.
 11. Districts/region should develop a higher profile in their communities by guest lecturing in schools, meeting with career counselors, providing information about job opportunities with the ministry and increasing participation in career fairs, National Forestry week and community events.
 12. Become an employer of choice in the north - people want to work for us because:
 - We put people first
 - We support and train staff
 - We encourage and enable staff to meet their potential
 - We have a strong tradition and culture
 - We treat people fairly and equitably (from our first meeting at a competition)
 - We invite diversity and develop it
 - We provide meaningful and challenging work
 - We offer a flexible work environment

STAFFING STRATEGY TEAM MEMBERS

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