

TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Health

FROM: Alexander Summers, Acting Medical Officer of Health; Emily Williams, CEO

DATE: 2022 January 20

**UPDATE ON COVID-19 RECOVERY RECOMMENDATIONS AND PLANNING FOR 2022:
INDIVIDUAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL WELLNESS, AND SUSTAINING POSITIVE CHANGES**

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board of Health receive Report No. 03-22 re “Update on COVID-19 Recovery Recommendations and Planning for 2022: Individual and Organizational Wellness, and Sustaining Positive Changes” for information.

Key Points

- As part of recovery planning, 54 recommendations looking at individual and organizational wellness and opportunities to enhance and sustain positive organizational changes, were approved; this report provides an update on implementation of these recommendations.
- Employee wellness has continued to be a concern and a priority through the extended response to the pandemic.
- The Institute for Healthcare Improvement’s *Framework for Improving Joy In Work* will be used to strengthen efforts to enhance individual and organizational wellness moving forward.

Background

The MLHU Board of Health (BOH) received a report in June 2020 ([Report No. 008-20GC](#)) which outlined the five objectives of COVID-19 recovery planning initiated in May 2020, and information about the Return to Operations dashboard that was developed. In November 2020, the BOH received recovery recommendations related to Emerging and Priority Public Health Issues and approved five priority areas of focus for ongoing recovery ([Report No. 049-20](#)). In May 2021, the BOH received 54 recovery recommendations related to organizational and individual wellness and sustaining positive organizational changes ([Report No. 25-21](#)).

Recovery Planning Objective #3 was “To support employees to achieve optimal physical, mental, emotional, and social health and to facilitate organizational wellness during and after MLHU’s pandemic response.” This also included culture shifts employees recommended the organization introduce or maintain. Twenty recommendations were identified, categorized under: health and safety, recognition, mental health and wellness, connectedness and cohesion, and other. Recovery Planning Objective #4 was “To identify changes to organizational and program structures and processes implemented during the pandemic response that could be advantageous from an organizational and/or client perspective and develop recommendations for sustained or enhanced implementation post-pandemic.” Thirty-four recommendations were identified, categorized as: tools and resources, work processes, communications, human resources, and other organizational changes.

Employee wellness has continued to be a concern and a priority through the extended response to the pandemic.

Update on Implementation of Recommendations

Progress on implementation of the 54 recommendations has been steady and positive. The majority of the recommendations have been implemented partially or fully, although some are yet to be initiated. These recommendations were used to form the basis of the provisional strategic plan, as outlined in [Report No. 10-21GC](#).

Key successes in implementation of recommendations include the following:

- Significant steps to address and strengthen employee health and safety;
- Ongoing, multiple strategies to promote and support mental wellness and to recognize employees;
- Regular, transparent, and timely communication to all employees; and
- Progress on recovery recommendations related to human resources.

An overview of implementation progress for all these recovery recommendations is available in [Appendix A](#) (Individual and Organizational Wellness) and [Appendix B](#) (Sustaining Positive Changes).

In spite of all the efforts to support employee wellness, it is hypothesized that a significant number of employees at all levels are currently experiencing burnout as a direct result of the pandemic and its impact on the public health workforce.

A Framework for Individual and Organizational Wellness

Burnout can directly and/or indirectly result in negative impacts to staff engagement, client experience, empathy, productivity, and workplace safety. With this in mind, it is critical that the organization continues to prioritize and address employee wellbeing. The Institute for Healthcare Improvement's [Framework for Improving Joy in Work](#) will be used at MLHU to support efforts to improve individual and organizational wellbeing. Given the well-documented relationship between leader resilience and engagement and employee engagement and satisfaction, implementation of the framework will begin with the leadership team and subsequently be expanded to all staff. During sessions held in July and September of 2021, members of the MLHU leadership team (MLT) were asked about what matters to them and what impediments to joy in work exist in their local context. These were framed in the nine critical components for improving joy in work, with equity as their foundation: physical and psychological safety; meaning and purpose; choice and autonomy; camaraderie and teamwork; recognition and rewards; participative management; daily improvement; wellness and resilience; and real-time measurement. Feedback was collated and presented back to MLT for validation in December of 2021.

Using this framework will enable MLHU to continue to implement the recovery recommendations already identified, identify additional actions for implementation, and increase intentionality and accountability to individual and organizational wellness across the organization. Improvement science will be used to test approaches to improving joy at work in the organization.

Next Steps

This work will be led by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) to demonstrate unilateral commitment to staff and leader well-being across the organization. In the first quarter of 2022, plans for application of the *Joy in Work Framework* will be established with the MLHU leadership team (MLT) and implementation will begin during the second quarter of the year. Efforts will focus on taking meaningful action. Existing measurement and assessment tools for improving joy in work will be adopted or adapted to support regular and transparent monitoring and reporting of progress. Long-term commitment to supporting individual and organizational wellness will be required by all levels across the organization as all employees at all levels of the organization will be invited to share responsibility for a systems approach to improving joy in work.

This report was submitted by the Chief Executive Officer and the Chief Nursing Officer.

Handwritten signature of Alexander T. Summers in black ink.

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