



TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Health

FROM: Emily Williams, Chief Executive Officer
Dr. Alexander Summers, Medical Officer of Health

DATE: 2023 July 20

MLHU EMPLOYMENT SYSTEMS REVIEW UPDATE: EMPLOYMENT EQUITY AND RECRUITMENT POLICY

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board of Health receive Report No. 43-23 re: “MLHU Employment Systems Review Update: Employment Equity and Recruitment Policy” for information.

Key Points

- The Employment Equity Policy was approved and released to all staff in October 2022.
- Targets and Benchmarks to improve diversity in the workforce at the MLHU as required under the Employment Equity Policy have been established.
- The Recruitment Policy and Procedure was launched and released to all staff in June 2023, which supports reducing bias in hiring to achieve employment equity targets.
- Workforce demographics from the Workplace Census survey at MLHU are outlined in [Appendix A](#).

Background

Turner Consulting Group Inc. delivered the Employment System Review (ESR) as part of the Diversity and Inclusion Assessment in March 2021. In May 2021, the Board of Health committed to the systemic, coordinated, comprehensive and sustained implementation of the ESR. At that time, it was recommended that the 88 recommendations be prioritized, and that a plan for implementation would be led by the Human Resources (HR) Team in close collaboration with the Health Equity and Reconciliation Team (HEART), and that the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) would ensure appropriate resourcing and prioritization of the implementation of approved recommendations. In 2022, an investment was approved for a Diversity and Inclusion Specialist as part of the HR team, which has been a critical driver for this important work. Over the course of the last 6 months, significant work has progressed in the areas of the Employment Equity Policy and Procedures, along with the release of the updated Recruitment Policy and Procedures.

Progress on ESR Recommendation Implementation and Prioritization

The Employment Equity Policy and Procedure includes the establishment of, “targets based on the workforce analysis to achieve reasonable progress towards equitable representation of Designated Groups (Indigenous people, Black and other racialized groups, women, persons with disability, LGBTQ2+ people, and newcomers). The targets will be approved by SLT and will be communicated to all employees”. The HR, HEART, Strategy, Planning and Performance (SPP) and Population Health and Assessment and Surveillance (PHAS) teams collaborated on setting the targets and benchmarks using census data, other relevant population data, industry standards, and historical and predicted turnover rates.

Table 1 in [Appendix A](#) summarizes the 2021 MLHU demographics obtained via the Workplace Census survey, the targets that were developed, and the benchmark data based on the Middlesex London census area. The Workplace Census indicates the MLHU respondents identified as 82% White/European, 14% racialized, <2% North American Indigenous, and 2% preferred not to answer. When analyzing the results within various occupational groups at the Health Unit (Table 2, [Appendix A](#)), the percentage of racialized Public Health Program Staff and Administrative and Support Staff is 20% and 21% respectively. The Nursing and Leadership groups had the least amount of racial diversity with 9% and 8% respectively. Using data from the 2021 Canada Census and Our Health Counts (OHC), 75% of the population in Middlesex London identify as White/European, 20% as racialized, and 5% as North American Indigenous. These figures establish the benchmark that the MLHU workforce ideally would reflect in the long-term, mindful that this demographic picture is changing annually. Understanding that the Health Unit operates within societal structural obstacles, and that the procedural changes that are being implemented in the updated Recruitment Policy and Procedure and through other initiatives will take time to impact the MLHU workforce racial demographics, interim targets have been established to provide measures by which to monitor progress. The Employment Equity targets approved by SLT are: 79% White/European, 18% racialized, and 3% North American Indigenous representation among the MLHU employees by 2025.

The Workplace Census looked at other measures of diversity as well. It found that the MLHU staff report similar levels of disability as the general population. When considering religious diversity, gender identity and sexual orientation, there were no significant differences compared to that of the general population, although like racial identity, there were segments of Health Unit staff that preferred not to answer these questions. Creating and maintaining an equitable and inclusive environment where staff feel safe to answer all questions in the Workplace Census Survey is an underlying goal of all the ESR recommendations.

While the Employment Equity Policy and Procedures formalize MLHU's commitment to an equitable and diverse workplace, the revision and implementation of the Recruitment Policy and Procedures is how the MLHU processes support that commitment. The ESR had 42 recommendations related to Recruitment that have been met through policy and procedure changes released on June 9th, which include:

- a rigorous review of the qualifications, posting, screening and interview tools in a recruitment planning meeting for each hiring process, including consideration of education equivalencies for appropriate positions;
- a structured approach to interviewing to ensure questions asked to have a direct connection to qualifications;
- including an objective guide on required responses within all interview tools; and
- introducing consensus scoring of candidates.

These and other measures serve to broaden the candidate pool to better reflect the demographics of the area the MLHU serves, and to minimize bias in the selection process. The updated Recruitment Policy and Procedure has been well-received by leaders and union partners, and was also reviewed prior to implementation by the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Advisory Committee to obtain feedback.

Risks to Achieving Employment Equity Targets

The size of the organization and potential funding constraints in the next several years could impact the number of actual new hires joining the MLHU. The ability to meet these targets will be further impacted by the racial make-up of the qualified applicant pool, as well as collective agreement limitations that continue to heavily weight seniority in selection processes. With respect to improving diversity within the Health Unit Nursing complement, there remain several 'over-hired' (above base budget) nursing staff. Depending on the racial identity of these staff, it may be difficult to achieve increased diversity in this occupational group as these extra positions are absorbed via attrition.

Given the challenges in recruiting leadership talent across the health sector, the MLHU is committed to developing leadership talent within the organization. The introduction of the Potential Leaders Development Program, which includes opportunities for leadership training for front line staff, supports this objective, and Employment Equity will be considered in selection decisions. It is recognized that this may therefore take some time to see the increase in diversity in this occupational group.

Next Steps

Leaders have been providing teams with a presentation, prepared and supported by the HR Specialist, Diversity & Inclusion, explaining the development and establishment of the targets. Employees will have the opportunity to ask questions about the process. Once all teams have received this presentation, it will be presented in a Town Hall to all staff in late July.

The outstanding recruitment and other ESR recommendations will be addressed in the coming months. Auditing, monitoring, and making necessary adjustments to the application of the Recruitment Policy and Procedure will be important next steps in meeting the Employment Equity targets.

The next ESR and Workplace Census Survey is scheduled to be completed in 2025 and will provide the MLHU with data by which to determine progress in achieving the targets set. In the event the targets are not achieved, an analysis report will include recommendations for actions in the following cycle for consideration and approval by the SLT. The analysis report and approved action items (if applicable) will be provided to the Board of Health at that time.

This report was prepared by the Human Resources Team, Healthy Organization Division.



Emily Williams, BScN, RN, MBA, CHE
Chief Executive Officer



Dr. Alexander Summers, MD, MPH, CCFP, FRCPC
Medical Officer of Health