



# COUNTY OF WETASKIWIN NO.10 HUMAN RESOURCES REVIEW

*Executive Summary prepared for Administration*

*(Administration's comments are noted in red)*

January 13, 2021

## 1 Executive Summary

### 1.1 Purpose

The human resource (HR) function in any organization is critical to the effective operation of that organization, and this is certainly true for the County of Wetaskiwin No. 10 (the County).

The intent of this engagement with the County of Wetaskiwin is to present options from this review that will allow the County to maintain a responsive HR function while identifying places where County practice is not aligned with current practice and providing solutions that will challenge the County to innovate in order to close any gaps that are identified. Strategic Steps began with the County's vision – **'Strong Proactive Leadership, Safe Progressive Communities'** and aligned the human resource function to that by asking about how the current function helps the County achieve its vision.

Strategic Steps' relationship with the County of Wetaskiwin is such that we understand much of the culture of the municipal government and can see across functions where there may be efficiencies to be found.

Recommendations provided have leveraged this relationship and have the County's future success in clear focus. Having a high functioning team is particularly important now as the County responds to the current pandemic, and as it faces significant funding changes from the provincial government.

### 1.2 Process

We know that form must follow function, so we began by looking inwards at how the County's HR functions currently operate from a structural, functional, and cultural perspective, and then we looked at the environment in which people must work. Looking elsewhere to identify how others may have addressed similar challenges allowed us to create a gap analysis. The review of that gap analysis has resulted in a set of recommendations for the County to consider as it moves toward the implementation of the results of this Human Resources review.

The full process overview is included in the body of the report.

### 1.3 Recommendations

A series of recommendations appear as the last substantive section of the report, however some of the key recommendations are paraphrased here. The rationale behind each of the summarized recommendations appears in the final section of the report.

The list of key recommendations below is divided into five separate areas determined by a core theme, although there is certainly overlap in those areas. Each of these recommendations have been assigned a relative priority, on the understanding that not all change can happen immediately. Resources ought to be applied to the highest priorities first. To that end, the priority types are shown as:

- **Now** ..... Begin implementation within six months.
- **Next** ..... Begin implementation within 18 months
- **Later** ..... Begin implementation within two years.

This priority list is based on a combination of importance and timeliness. The recommendations are all 'important', but resources such as time, money, effort, and opportunity cost are limited at any given time.

#### 1.3.1 Organizational Change – We recommend that:

What		When
1	<p>Planning for staffing needs be done in a more strategic and focused fashion.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Develop a process that is reliable and consistent when hiring staff, which includes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>i. A uniform and centralized hiring authority, checklist &amp; offer letters</b></li> <li>- <b>ii. Selection criteria and interview tools</b></li> </ul> </li> <li><b>2. Work to build enhanced capacity on job descriptions, which includes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>i. Cascade and Performance Management</b></li> <li>- <b>ii. Creation of an employee portal to automate communications</b></li> </ul> </li> <li><b>3. Work with Managers and Leaders to build capacity, which includes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>i. Reviewing current staffing of operations in conjunction with the succession plan</b></li> <li>- <b>ii. Building in Corporate Culture and communications at onboarding stage</b></li> </ul> </li> </ol>	<b>Now</b>

What		When
2	<p>The County consider partnering with other municipalities to share some HR functions with the aim of gaining economies of scale and developing excellence in delivery.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Explore partnership with City of Wetaskiwin and Norquest College for a municipal training center.</b></li> <li><b>2. Project with MacEwan University to create HR process and audit tool.</b></li> <li><b>3. Explore Tri-Municipal HR opportunities to share resources and tools.</b></li> </ol>	<b>Now</b>
3	<p>Capacity building in some areas, particularly in the leadership group, needs to be enhanced through additional training and development.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Investigate training opportunities to help build capacity including virtually where multiple staff can benefit.</b></li> <li><b>2. Incorporate more cross training within Administration functions.</b></li> </ol>	<b>Now</b>
4	<p>All County HR policies be reviewed for consistency and to ensure that they consider current federal and provincial human resources and human rights legislation requirements.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Complete project with Grant MacEwan University to develop audit tool for this purpose.</b></li> <li><b>2. Continued review of all policies through the Policy Committee.</b></li> </ol>	<b>Now</b>

5	<p>All County policies be provided with a 'review by' date to ensure they are regularly reviewed.</p> <p><b>1. Completed. All policies are now tracked in the Cascade system to ensure a 2 year review cycle is undertaken.</b></p>	Now
6	<p>Succession planning be focused on identifying the specific outcomes and knowledge transfer from the role in addition to a natural progression up a career advancement ladder.</p> <p>This will also help with building internal capacity for future needs.</p> <p><b>1. CAO to meet with management to review opportunities that exist for succession planning.</b></p> <p><b>2. CAO reviews reporting for upcoming retirements to identify areas to explore alternatives.</b></p>	Next
7	<p>The County anticipate and plan for more rigorous expectations in HR legislation in coming years.</p> <p><b>1. Administration will continue to review legislation and evolve processes to ensure that legislation is being met.</b></p>	Next

### 1.3.2 Leveraging Technology

**We recommend that:**

	What	When
1	<p>Exploring remote work capacity be further studied and advanced. COVID-19 has shed a light that indicates that the County may be able to expand on its remote work ability.</p> <p><b>1. Review 2020 experiences with the IT department to develop strategies should this trend continue.</b></p>	Now

What		When
2	<p>The County explore the potential untapped value in existing HR technology and identify new opportunities in this area.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Review existing HR software to determine whether use would create efficiencies in Administration.</b></li> <li><b>2. Maximize the tools available in Cascade's Performance Management such as competency evaluation.</b></li> </ol>	<b>Now</b>

### 1.3.3 Alignment to County Goals

**We recommend that:**

What		When
1	<p>The leader of the human resource function should attend County strategic planning workshops.</p> <p><b>The CAO does not agree with this recommendation as there are few HR issues discussed at Strategic Planning. The Executive Assistant, who is the leader of the human resource function, will be included in the future to be able to update the Strategic and Tactical plan in a more efficient manner.</b></p>	<b>Now</b>
2	<p>County staff performance be measured, in part, with ties to achieving corporate strategic and personal development goals.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. The development of Performance Management tools and inclusion for performance appraisals in the collective agreement will help the overall organization to grow in a positive direction.</b></li> </ol>	<b>Next</b>

What		When
3	<p>Skills development and training be leveraged to better accomplish County strategic goals.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Ensure that required training aligns with succession planning.</b></li> <li><b>2. Goals from the performance appraisal will help drive skill development, either through in-house training or use of specialized trainers.</b></li> </ol>	Next
4	<p>Strategic plans in the County continue to recognize the ongoing transition towards a method in which value is provided through alternate ways of delivering services.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Council will provide direction through the annual strategic planning process for levels of service.</b></li> <li><b>2. Administration will develop tactical and operational plans in order to best meet the level of service in the most efficient way possible.</b></li> </ol>	Next

#### 1.3.4 Relationships

**We recommend that:**

What		When
1	<p>Internal relationships continue to enhance value and performance (assuming clarity in goals and expectations in those goals).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Continue to use the performance management system that outlines to staff on an annual basis of the requirements from their job description.</b></li> <li><b>2. Further enhance the goals and expectations outlined in the Performance Appraisal.</b></li> </ol>	Now

What		When
2	<p>The County seeks to explore innovative methods of HR service delivery be it at a regional, local, or County scale.</p> <p><b>1. Continue to communicate with all our local municipalities to explore opportunities to share resources, training and tools.</b></p>	<b>Now</b>
3	<p>Options that introduce or increase external partnerships of HR service delivery with existing municipal partners be considered.</p> <p><b>1. Investigate options available through Provincial organizations such as RMA, AUMA and the AMSC.</b></p>	<b>Now</b>
4	<p>The County explore leveraging an external professional HR advisory resource for professional consultation where there is value and an opportunity for the County to take a sector leadership role.</p> <p><b>1. In 2021, Administration will be focused on a review of the current HR processes including an analysis of the roles within the organization.</b></p> <p><b>2. Once all the 'Now' recommendations are complete, Administration will develop a plan for the overall HR function. This may include new partners, shifting roles within the organization or the addition of an external agency to fill in the gaps identified.</b></p>	<b>Next</b>



### 1.3.5 External Engagement

**We recommend that:**

What		When
1	<p>Opportunities to enhance the local or multi-municipal HR function, and to develop new and innovative concepts, be explored with other municipalities, other orders of government, and post-secondary education institutions.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Investigate options available through Provincial organizations such as RMA, AUMA and the AMSC.</b></li> <li><b>2. Continue to communicate with all of our local municipalities to explore opportunities to share resources, training and tools.</b></li> <li><b>3. Explore partnership with City of Wetaskiwin and Norquest College for a municipal training center.</b></li> <li><b>4. Explore Tri-Municipal HR opportunities.</b></li> </ol>	<b>Now</b>
2	<p>The County works with local government managers' associations to pilot innovation in the provision of the HR function across the sector.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Looking outside the box, the development of an Alberta wide HR/Policy identity may benefit a large number of smaller organizations in providing a centralized resource to access.</b></li> </ol>	<b>Later</b>

The recommendations in the report speak to the list above and go into greater detail as to expected stakeholder involvement, timing, and potential results to be realized.

This report also contains an 'implementation roadmap' in Section 7. This roadmap provides a more granular process and some tools to implement many of the recommendations outlined above.

## **1.4 Conclusion**

Strategic Steps' team recognizes that significant effort went into this review from County staff and we would like to offer our thanks for the engagement and openness. The ultimate goal of this review was to dive into how the County is meeting its human resource management needs and through that function, how it is providing the best, most responsive, service it can to Council, County residents, and businesses and organizations that operate in the County.

The suite of recommendations that appear above and in the full report are all designed to stimulate thought and to help County decision makers design any changes that are necessary to have one of its core internal services operate as well as possible.