



Workforce Plan

HR and Community Relations

January 2025

Version History

Version	Authored By	Date	Reason for Revision
1.0	V. Gannon	November 2024	First Draft for Internal Review
1.1	V. Gannon	January 2025	Updated for 2025 – 2029 Financial Plan

1. Department Profile

In 2023, Council identified and adopted the following six priorities:

- Climate Resilience & Environmental Stewardship
- Diversified & Thriving Economy
- Engaged & Healthy Community
- Good Governance & Organizational Excellence
- Housing
- Strong Relationships & Partnerships

The Human Resources and Community Relations leads the following functions:

Services Provided	Related Council Priority
Provide professional and administrative support to hiring managers regarding recruitment and selection	Good Governance & Organizational Excellence
Foster excellent relationships with our Unions	Strong Relationships and Partnerships
Participate in bargaining research and Collective Bargaining	Good Governance & Organizational Excellence
Provide professional support to Managers to ensure accurate interpretation of Collective Agreements	Good Governance & Organizational Excellence
Conduct compensation reviews every four years for exempt staff and for Council	Good Governance & Organizational Excellence
Ensure internal and external equity by participating in organizational redesign and job evaluations of all positions	Good Governance & Organizational Excellence
Develop, implement and manage annual volunteer recruitment fair	Diversified & Thriving Economy Engaged and Healthy Community Strong Relationships & Partnerships
Foster positive Indigenous Relations and lead the annual review of the Indigenous Relations Action Plan, and support indigenous-led initiatives to foster Economic Reconciliation	Strong Relationships and Partnerships
Health and Safety Compliance and Regulatory Oversight	Good Governance & Organizational Excellence

Services Provided (cont'd)	Related Council Priority
Management of WorkSafe and Long-Term Disability (LTD) Claims	Good Governance & Organizational Excellence
Conduct audits and analysis of Township Attendance Management Program	Good Governance & Organizational Excellence
Lead and deliver the implementation of economic development plans, strategies and initiatives to facilitate a resilient and diverse economic environment	Diversified & Thriving Economy
Nurture relationships with local businesses, government, industry groups and stakeholders	Strong Relationships & Partnerships
Create positive change through community development by creating opportunities and fostering social connections to build a healthy and vibrant community	Engaged and Healthy Community
Emergency communications: preparedness messaging and response information	Engaged and Healthy Community; Climate Resilience and Environmental Stewardship
Media relations, public affairs messaging and monitoring	Good Governance & Organizational Excellence
Public engagement campaigns, outreach and project communications	Engaged and Healthy Community; Strong Relationships + Partnerships; Good Governance & Organizational Excellence
Creating annual communications plans and updating related policies	Good Governance & Organizational Excellence
Social media creation and social listening	Engaged and Healthy Community; Good Governance & Organizational Excellence
Corporate branding management and graphic design services for departments	Good Governance & Organizational Excellence
Maintaining website content standards, accessibility and functionality	Engaged and Healthy Community; Good Governance & Organizational Excellence

2. Pressures for Change

2.1 Creation of a New Department and Associated Impacts

From the early 2000's to 2019, the Township had a dedicated, full time Human Resources (HR) professional reporting to the CAO, along with administrative support.

In 2019 HR was integrated with the Corporate Services Department. In 2023, a new department was formed: HR and Community Relations. As part of this organizational redesign, the person responsible for HR has been assigned additional responsibilities including:

- Indigenous Relations
- Volunteer Attraction and Other Events
- Managing Communications
- Managing Economic Development
- Managing Occupational Health and Safety

As a result, the FTE allocated for HR has reduced from one FTE to approximately 0.5 FTE. At the same time, Human Resources demands have grown. In response to this trend, other municipalities have been adding staff, specifically to address HR-related needs. Listed below are the FTE allocations for HR in neighbouring municipalities. Please note that these figures do not include FTE for Occupational Health and Safety (OHS); each municipality has at least one FTE specific to initiatives related to OHS:

	FTE Dedicated to HR
Esquimalt	0.5 FTE
Oak Bay	2 FTE
Central Saanich	2 FTE
Colwood	2 FTE
Sidney	1 FTE

The growth in span of control and responsibilities means that the professional HR services provided to Directors, Managers and staff has dramatically reduced. The impact is that key services, such as recruitment and selection have been decentralized and assumed by responsible departments, resulting in extra work for the other departments, no oversight from a professional HR perspective, a potential loss of top candidates and erosion of best practices. Further, other important services such as attendance management, management development, new employee and management orientation and initiatives relating to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion have received limited attention, resulting in an increase in sick leave and lack of growth opportunities for leaders and staff and opportunities for members of equity deserving groups.

With the reorganization, the department has three functions: HR, including Occupational Health and Safety, Economic Development, and Corporate Communications. The department is staffed with a Director (also responsible for providing professional HR services to the organization), a Manager of Occupational Health and Safety, a Manager of Economic Development and a Manager of Communications, along with a single administrative support staff who also serves as a back-up for the licensing clerk, resulting in management spending significant time completing

administrative tasks which limits their ability to dedicate time to strategic planning, program development or delivery.

Two new management positions were created and were staffed in 2023. Both positions, the Manager of Occupational Health and Safety and Manager of Economic Development, were implemented without any budget or additional human resources, including administrative support. The intent was to have the management positions filled, with a staffing needs analysis completed at a later date, which has been included in this plan.

2.2 Corporate Communications - Capacity and Ability to be Responsive

Future Planning. While some departments utilize communications services on an annual and scheduled basis, several departments require support throughout the year for both planned and ad hoc initiatives. Because various departments are operating on their respective independent schedules, it is not uncommon for multiple corporate communications priorities to happen concurrently in addition to day-to-day communications tasks. This makes giving each department 100 per cent attention a challenge.

Executing Existing Adopted Corporate Plans. The Active Transportation Network Plan, Climate Action Plan and other corporate initiatives adopted by council have several communications-related tasks. This will increase as we move forward on our Inclusivity, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility (IDEA) priorities, updating our Emergency Communications Plan, Indigenous Relations priorities, Economic Development plans and more.

Pressure on External Communications. By the end of 2024, there will be ~65 observance days and proclamations acknowledged that cover everything from cultural celebrations to memorial days to days of recognition. (e.g., Holocaust Remembrance Day, Lunar New Year, National Forests Day). These at minimum require specific social media posts that are informative and attractive. Some of these observances also carry extra work with them when there are opportunities for improved community outreach (National Public Works Week, BC Heritage Week, Earth Day, etc.,) Many of these observance days are aligned with other corporate priorities like improving Indigenous Relations. Currently the level of service is sufficient but could be more impactful with more resources and planning.

Pressure to Meet Public Expectations. The public expects information to be readily available on the website and social media. Communications tactics, tools and techniques need to continually evolve with the times for the information to be attractive, easy to find and memorable, this can have life safety implications as well when it comes to emergency planning and emergency response if the public is not previously engaged with township communications. Having information proactively posted in an accessible manner reduces calls to frontline staff and emails to departments. Other municipalities have responded to increased demands for service by adding communications/engagement staff. The table below outlines comparables in the region:

	FTE Dedicated to Communications
Esquimalt	1 FTE
Oak Bay	2 FTE
Central Saanich	2 FTE
Colwood	2 FTE
North Saanich	2 FTE

2.3 Transfer of Special Projects from other Departments

The HR and Community Relations Department has assumed the following responsibilities in the last year:

- **Space Planning for New Office Space.** The revised scope of the Public Safety Building (PSB) has necessitated adjustments to existing staffing plans with a requirement to search for alternate space for office staff, given the anticipated future growth of staff.
- **Street Banner Program.** The department has taken ownership of the Banner Program, overseeing its implementation and ongoing management. This involves coordinating the design, production, and installation of new street banners, as well as ensuring their alignment with organizational branding guidelines and communication objectives.
- **Local Grants.** HR and Community Relations is now responsible for managing local grant programs. This encompasses a wide range of tasks, including:
 - Developing new grant guidelines and application processes
 - Promoting grant opportunities to eligible organizations
 - Evaluating grant applications and making funding recommendations to the Local Grant Committee
 - Monitoring grant recipients' compliance and reporting requirements
- **Business Façade Improvement Program.** This program, originally under the purview of the Finance Department prior to the creation of the Economic Development function, focuses on providing opportunities to local businesses to help increase the aesthetic appeal of their storefront. The department's responsibilities include:
 - Developing program guidelines and eligibility criteria
 - Coordinating the program with the Esquimalt Chamber of Commerce
 - Promoting the program to local businesses
 - Processing applications and managing funding allocations
 - Overseeing project implementation and ensuring compliance with program guidelines
- **Other Projects.** In addition to implementing the 2023-2025 Action Plan, the Economic Development Manager has also been involved in various other strategic projects, including GVHA Planning Committee, Gorge Taskforce and Hotel Taskforce (Destination Greater Victoria)

2.4 Legislative Changes

WorkSafe BC Bill 41. With the implementation of Bill 41, the Township is now required to promptly offer accommodated work to employees recovering from workplace injuries. This necessitates the creation of a comprehensive repository of potential accommodations for all job roles. Additionally, compliance with Bill 41 introduces a substantial increase in administrative responsibilities to document and demonstrate adherence.

Accessible British Columbia Act. Esquimalt’s Draft Accessibility Plan will need to be implemented which will include a review of all programs and services for accessibility, developing processes and guides for website authors to meet accessibility standards, review recruitment and hiring practices, providing accessible workplaces and tools, and offering disability awareness training to all employees. A broad, integrated approach is required to ensure compliance with the Act and to foster inclusivity across all aspects of the Township’s operations.

Indigenous Relations Action Plan. Esquimalt’s Council adopted “Strong Relationships and Partnerships” as a Council priority, particularly with indigenous communities and organizations. This requires a strong commitment of time and staff resources to develop collaborative, long-term partnerships which will advance reconciliation.

In addition, five of the 94 Calls to Action through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) are within municipal government authority. This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism.

2.5 Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility (IDEA)

Legislation requires that the workplace is free from racism and exclusion. This requirement carries over to the provision of services to members of the public. The Township’s commitment to an environment free of racism requires expertise, collaboration and development of suitable programs to ensure that all employees are aware of their obligations and to ensure that members of equity deserving groups feel welcome and belong. The development and dispersion of these programs would require HR and Communications

2.6 High Turnover and Decentralized Recruitment and Selection Model

Staff turnover is a challenge in all industries, including public service. There were 63 job postings in 2023, and 79 in 2024. Currently, all departments are responsible for recruitment and selection. While it is imperative that hiring managers play the key role in the recruitment process, best practices advise a centralized model to:

- Decrease the administrative workload for hiring managers who already have extensive work pressures
- Ensure expertise and compliance with legislation
- Ensure consistency and reduce risk of bias

2.7 Competition for Talent

Competition for employees is being experienced on a global scale. Applicants are more discerning than ever and are looking for clear articulation of the benefits of working for a given employer, including intangible benefits like an inclusive culture, continuous improvement and high levels of employee engagement. This competition for candidates is further compounded by the fact there are 13 municipalities in the region competing for talent, together with the high cost of living in the Greater Victoria area. To attract and secure exceptional employees, the Township must become an “employer of choice”. This requires an investment in employee engagement and cultural

initiatives such as:

- Opportunities for growth through coaching and mentoring opportunities and a management training program;
- Transparent and fair performance management processes; and
- A workplace culture that is engaging, as measured through objective tools like an engagement survey, the results of which inform other activities such as recruitment, training and management practices.

Employers who are not investing and communicating their commitment to these foundational programs are not likely to attract, secure or retain the talent that they need to deliver on their priorities.

2.8 WorkSafe BC Premiums

The Township currently pays nearly \$1 million annually in WorkSafe BC premiums. Since joining in late 2023, the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Manager has successfully implemented cost-reduction measures, including securing \$150,000 in claims cost relief. This effort reduced the Township's experience rating surcharge for 2025 from a potential 78% to 40.3%, saving \$236,000 in 2024 premiums.

Currently the OHS spends approximately 30% of his time on administrative tasks. To build on this progress of implementing cost-reduction measures, hiring administrative support would allow the OHS Manager to focus more on safety and return-to-work (RTW) programs, reducing premiums by an additional \$75,000 annually by 2028. Adding an OHS Coordinator could further cut claims costs by 15%, resulting in combined annual savings of \$187,000 compared to current trends. These strategic hires would be paid by cost savings from reduced WorkSafe premiums, and would build on the momentum gained since the OHS Manager was hired in 2023, further enhancing workplace safety outcomes.

2.9 High Sick Leave

As outlined in 2.1, with the reduction in FTE for HR professional services, important services including attendance management have received limited attention. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the Township has experienced a substantial increase in sick leave and medical appointment absences. For the one-year period from September 1, 2023 to August 31, 2024, the Township recorded a total of 10,702.85 hours in paid sick leave, excluding sick leave without pay and Long Term Disability (LTD). This equates to 5.88 FTE, on the basis of a 7-hour day. This high rate of absenteeism, coupled with the need to backfill many positions, has led to rising costs and decreased productivity.

Investing in additional staffing will allow staff to implement strategies to address the current high sick leave issue, with the intent of improving employee engagement and enhancing productivity.

2.10 Other Challenges

There is a considerable amount of work driven by external pressures such as the need to provide

advice, research or investigative support that significantly challenges staff’s ability to develop and deliver appropriate plans and programs, provide service in a timely fashion and provide for staff training.

The tempo of the work environment (under current conditions) is stressful and often overwhelming, resulting in retention challenges that could be alleviated with adequate resourcing.

3. Existing Positions

Roles	Current # of FTE Positions
Director of HR and Community Relations	1.0
Manager of Occupational Health and Safety	1.0
Manager of Economic Development	1.0
Manager of Communications	1.0
Administrative Support and Event Management	1.0
Total Current FTEs	5.0

4. Additional/New Positions Required

Positions	Reason for Increase	Forecasted Position Needs			
		2025	2026	2027	2028
Administrative Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased support to managers to enable centralization of the administrative aspects of recruitment and selection Admin Support for OHS including pulling payroll data for claims, completing template letters and WorkSafeBC forms Support for website and social media Support for Economic Development including data entry into CRM system and creation of monthly Economic Development newsletter Support with Staff Newsletter 	+1	0	0	TBD

Positions	Reason for Increase	Forecasted Position Needs			
		2025	2026	2027	TBD
HR Advisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HR & LR support to managers including recruitment and selection, job evaluations, contract interpretation Bargaining research and preparation Succession planning for HR Allow Director to focus on Indigenous Relations, EDI, Bargaining, Management Development Program and Management Orientation Program 	0	+1	0	TBD
Occ Health and Safety Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Likely self-funded through reduction in WorkSafeBC premiums Support for LTD and WorkSafe Claims and attendance mgmt Required for Certification of Recognition (COR) (currently only Saanich is certified) 	0	+1	0	TBD
Communications Specialist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To support the execution of communications-related Council priorities and departmental initiatives To support website and branding training for staff and quality control To support social media design and monitoring and ensure corporate branding 	0	+1	0	0
Indigenous Relations & EDI Advisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased economic reconciliation projects Continued growth and support for EDI and Accessibility programs impacting employees 	0	0	+1	0
Total New FTE		1.0	3.0	1.0	TBD

5. Identified Risks

The following are identified as gaps and risks in the department:

5.1 Reduction in HR Services as a Result of Growth in Span of Control and Other Responsibilities

If the organization continues to have reduced resources for HR, with important services such as recruitment and selection, attendance management, management development, new employee and management orientation receiving limited attention, the following risks have been identified;

- *Increased Employee Turnover and Inability to Attract Talent*

Retention of employees is of growing importance. Although reasons why employees leave differ, anecdotal evidence (not specific to the Township) points to reasons such as lack of growth opportunities, workload and workplace stress. The Township's lack of resources and inability to measure engagement and support succession planning with integrated training, performance management and workplace health and wellness initiatives is likely to result in lack of ability to attract external talent, and continued or increasing employee turnover which, in turn results in a disruption of services to the public and increased cost of replacing these employees.

- *Continued High Sick Leave*

If high sick leave persists, the Township risks facing increased operational costs due to the frequent need to backfill critical positions, leading to unplanned expenses and potential budget overruns. Productivity will likely decline as persistent absences disrupt workflows, delay project timelines, and overburden remaining staff. Employee morale may also suffer, as staff required to cover for absent colleagues could experience burnout, dissatisfaction, and disengagement, further affecting retention and performance. Finally, high absenteeism threatens to weaken the Township's health and safety culture, undermining efforts to create a supportive and engaged workplace and jeopardizing long-term organizational stability.

- *General HR and Labour Relations Support*

Currently the Director is the only person in the organization who has experience and expertise in Human Resources and Labour Relations, posing a risk to the organization and increasing the risk of oversight, disruptions and non-compliance.

- *Continued Use of Decentralized Recruitment and Selection Model*

With limited HR Resources, the Township will continue to utilize a decentralized model for recruitment and selection, despite the fact that best practices advise on a centralized model, as outlined in 2.6 (page 8).

5.2 Noncompliance with Legislation

Failure to comply with legislative requirements in areas such as health and safety, recruitment, accessibility, and Indigenous relations can lead to the following legal, financial, and reputational risks.

Health and Safety: WorkSafeBC Bill 41

- Fines and penalties from WorkSafeBC.
- Legal challenges from employees.
- Reputational damage and increased regulatory scrutiny.

Indigenous Relations: TRC Calls to Action

- Damaged relationships with Indigenous communities.
- Public criticism and missed recruitment opportunities for Indigenous candidates.
- Lack of education for staff on Indigenous history and inability to foster reconciliation efforts.

Accessibility: Accessible British Columbia Act

- Legal consequences and reputational harm.
- Exclusion of people with disabilities, reducing community engagement.

Recruitment and Workforce Impact

- Attracting diverse candidates.
- Limitations on equity and diversity efforts.

5.3 Inability to Lower WorkSafe BC Premiums

Without adequate resources, the Township risks maintaining or increasing its WorkSafeBC premiums, which are currently close to \$1 million annually. Delays in managing claims or preventing workplace injuries are expected to result in additional costs.

If current health and safety trends under the OHS Manager continue, premiums are projected to decrease to \$748,000 per year by 2028. With the addition of an Administrative Support position, premiums are expected to drop further to \$673,500 annually. By also adding an OHS Coordinator, premiums could be reduced to \$561,000 per year by 2028, achieving significant long-term annual savings.

5.4 Corporate Communications - Reduction in Service Delivery

Pressure to meet a high standard of communications continues to increase as service demands grow in the organization. The demand for quality communications is in itself not problematic—the issue is that the Township risks lagging behind public and Council expectations of service levels.

Example functions:

- **Public Engagement**

Competing priorities may take away planning and execution ability to sufficiently run a fulsome campaign that satisfies the needs of Council and expectations of the public

- **Public Affairs Readiness**

Preparing media messaging or research for Mayor/Council takes efforts away from existing tasks; being continuously occupied with other work takes away ability to monitor and be strategic about emerging issues.

- **Gaps in brand continuity**

This risks a lack of professionalism when it comes to potential business engagement or new residents, lack of engagement from residents who may not recognize a Township initiative or project; lack of influence when it comes to outreach due to disjointed/unsophisticated visual communications.

- **Missing strategic community partnerships opportunities**

Missed opportunities to collaborate with outside agencies in a way that reinforces Esquimalt's values and elevates Esquimalt's visibility to residents and regional partners (e.g., proactively reaching out to the library in advance of Heritage Week to arrange for Esquimalt Archives booth).

5.5 Economic Development Service Delivery impacts

As there is limited to no administrative support currently for the Manager of Economic Development, this limits her ability to dedicate time to strategic planning, program development and delivery affecting local businesses that rely on timely support including:

- Reduced ability to engage in proactive long-term visioning, economic planning and outreach, hindering the Township's competitiveness in attracting new businesses and retaining existing ones.
- A potential erosion of trust among businesses and community partners due to unmet expectations or delays in promised services.
- Inability to create and promote an Investment Prospectus to further investment attraction.
- Reduced ability to work with First Nations communities promoting economic reconciliation and collaborative economic development opportunities.
- Reduced ability to enhance placemaking and community identity and work more closely with community groups to grow community development.

6. Summary

- 6.1 By strategically addressing these risks and challenges, the Township can reduce costs, improve operational efficiency, and build a resilient and supportive workplace culture that aligns with our organizational values and growth objectives. This proactive approach mitigates potential issues, enhances employee satisfaction, and ensures sustainable growth while creating a positive and motivated work environment.