



Workforce Plan

HR and Community Relations

Version 1.2

October 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
1.2	T Finegan	October 2025	Updated for CAO/Council Report

HR & COMMUNITY RELATIONS DEPARTMENT FUNCTIONS

The department provides strategic direction and operational support for human resources, health and safety, community relations, economic development, and communications. Its mission is to advance Council's priorities in climate resilience, economic vitality, healthy community, good governance, housing, and strong partnerships through exceptional people management, engagement initiatives, and responsive services.

Service Streams: Human Resources & Labour Relations

Scope of Services

- Recruitment and selection of staff across all departments
- Compensation and job evaluation
- Attendance and leave management
- Training, development, and succession planning
- Policy development and compliance with labour and employment law
- Labour relations support in coordination with CUPE and exempt staff

Recent Progress

- Filled five regular positions in 2024, including Out of School Care Supervisor, Gardener II, Purchasing Clerk, FOI Assistant, and Events & Arena Programs Supervisor.
- Updated position classifications and titles (e.g., Planner 1 reclassified to Planner 2; Heavy Equipment Operator reclassified to Senior Heavy Equipment Operator).
- Delivered Bystander Training to 52 staff across Parks, Recreation, and Township operations, strengthening confidence in inclusive workplace practices.
- Records management completed training for HR staff.
- Initiated development of a three-year HR Strategic Plan.

Challenges

- Leadership transitions (departure of HR Director, pending Senior Manager HR hire) leave the function vulnerable to loss of continuity.
- Decentralized recruitment practices increase the risk of inconsistency and potential non-compliance with employment standards.
- Limited administrative support places a strain on professional staff and reduces the ability to focus on strategic initiatives.

Risks if Unfunded

- Fragmented recruitment processes may continue, reducing candidate quality and compliance.
- Gaps in training and succession planning may hinder talent retention and increase turnover.
- Potential for grievances, costly arbitration, and legislative penalties if processes are inconsistent or non-compliant.

Strategic Opportunity

- Centralizing recruitment and building a consistent framework for job evaluation and training would reduce risk, support compliance, and improve the Township's reputation as an employer of choice.

Service Streams: Occupational Health & Safety

Scope of Services

- Claims management for WorkSafeBC and long-term disability (LTD) cases
- Compliance with WorkSafeBC and occupational health legislation
- Joint Occupational Health & Safety (JOHS) committee coordination
- Workplace inspections and risk assessments
- Development and delivery of safety training and talks
- Return-to-work programming and accommodation planning
- Policy development for safe work practices and emergency preparedness

Recent Progress

- Achieved a \$236,000 reduction in WorkSafeBC premiums in 2024 through improved claims management and audit/appeal processes.
- Developed nine new OHS policies and procedures, with four JOHS committees audited and updated.
- Conducted risk assessments for multiple positions and completed inspections across all Township buildings.
- Delivered safety talks to staff in Public Works and other high-risk areas.
- Supported cost relief on past claims, reducing the Township's financial liability.
- 2026 preliminary WorkSafeBC premium rate is 4.61%, down from 5.85% when the OHS manager was hired in 2023. This reduction represents annual savings of approximately \$223,000.

Challenges

- The departure of the inaugural OHS Manager has created a significant expertise gap, as much of the program's foundation and processes were built around their knowledge and leadership.
- Growing administrative burden on claims management and reporting without sufficient support staff.
- With the loss of this startup expertise, the OHS function risks sliding back into a reactive posture rather than advancing proactive, preventative programming.

Risks if Unfunded

- Loss of WorkSafeBC premium savings and potential cost increases in excess of \$180,000 annually.
- Higher risk of staff injuries, illness, and workplace incidents.
- Increased WorkSafeBC penalties and surcharges due to missed compliance obligations.
- Negative impacts on staff morale, trust, and organizational culture if safety commitments cannot be met.

Strategic Opportunity

- Establishing a dedicated OHS Coordinator position would stabilize the program, reduce premiums, and provide proactive safety leadership.
- Continued focus on claims management and preventative programming could make Esquimalt a municipal leader in workplace safety.

Service Streams: Communications & Public Engagement

Scope of Services

- Corporate communications and public affairs, including media relations and Council priority messaging
- Branding, visual identity, and place branding strategy
- Social media management across Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn
- Website content management, accessibility, and digital engagement tools
- Public engagement campaigns and surveys to support finance, corporate services, planning, engineering, and community initiatives
- Event coordination, promotion, and communications support for Township-led and community events
- Internal communications, including staff newsletter and intranet content

Recent Progress

- Delivered over 485,000 annual social media impressions across all platforms, with newsletter open rates averaging above 60% well above municipal benchmarks.
- Supported major corporate initiatives such as the Accessibility Plan, Esquimalt Road Active Transportation Improvements, and the Budget Book.
- Executed communications for cultural and community events, including the Small Business Week campaign, flag-raising ceremonies with Songhees and Kosapsum Nations, and the South Island Powwow.
- Designed and distributed staff newsletter and “Experience Esquimalt” community newsletter to enhance internal and external engagement.
- Participated in multi-agency emergency response scenario planning alongside DND, the Province, and neighbouring municipalities.
- Improved transparency through expanded use of Esquimalt Alert (14 traffic advisories in 2024) and a GIS-based catch basin map for public information.

Challenges

- A growing number of campaigns, observance days, and Council priorities without matching growth in staff capacity.
- Increased expectation for accessible and inclusive communication materials under provincial legislation.

- Limited resources to maintain a high-quality photo and media library, requiring reliance on ad hoc sourcing.
- Lack of strategic oversight since the Director HR/CR position was not replaced, creating a gap in leadership and prioritization.

Risks if Unfunded

- Delays in responding to public inquiries and media, reducing community trust.
- Missed engagement targets on high-profile projects, risking reputational damage.
- Insufficient capacity to manage emergency communications, with direct consequences for public safety.
- Inability to maintain consistent branding, undermining the Township's investment in place branding and corporate identity.

Strategic Opportunity

- Adding a dedicated Communications Specialist would strengthen campaign delivery, corporate branding, and emergency preparedness.
- Aligning communications more closely with Strategic Initiatives and Council priorities would improve visibility and reinforce the Township's reputation as responsive, transparent, and engaged.

Service Streams: Economic Development & Community Relations:

Scope of Services

- Business retention, expansion, and attraction through direct engagement and support
- Investment promotion and place marketing, including the Township's "Esquimalt – The Place to Be" brand and WhyEsquimalt.ca website
- Delivery of grant programs such as the Business Façade Improvement Program and the Local Grants Program
- Regional collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce, South Island Prosperity Partnership (SIPP), Destination Greater Victoria, and other partners
- Coordination with Strategic Initiatives on Indigenous Relations and economic reconciliation

Recent Progress

- Advanced the options analysis for 500 Park Place North to guide long-term use of Township lands.
- Adopted the "Esquimalt – The Place to Be" brand, launched WhyEsquimalt.ca (over 400 businesses registered, on track for 850+), created a digital investment prospectus, and initiated new visitor/investor guides.
- Implemented a CRM system and BRE program, reaching 850+ businesses with targeted newsletters and EDMs; expanded the Business Façade Improvement Program with strong uptake year-on-year; completed a modernized Business Licence Bylaw to reflect current business practices.
- Strengthened collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce, Kosapsum and Songhees Nations (supported by new budget allocations and the Indigenous Business Directory), SIPP (regional

advocacy and Prosperity Index alignment), and Destination Greater Victoria (hotel prospectus, tourism development, mixers).

Challenges

- Lack of dedicated administrative support limits the ability to expand outreach (e.g., business walks and in-depth data collection).
- Indigenous Relations has transitioned to the Strategic Initiatives department, requiring close coordination to ensure economic reconciliation remains embedded in Township priorities.
- Several projects delayed due to resource constraints, including wayfinding/signage, commercial land-use studies, and vision documents for Esquimalt Road, the Business Park, and Town Centre.

Risks if Unfunded

- Failure to sustain funding for SIPP and partner organizations would reduce Esquimalt's influence and access to regional investment opportunities.
- Limited staff capacity may prevent delivery of business walks, volunteer-supported data collection, and expanded façade grants.
- Risk of losing momentum on brand visibility and investor confidence if WhyEsquimalt.ca and related marketing tools cannot be updated and expanded.
- Reduced business confidence in Esquimalt's "business-friendly" environment if bylaw modernization and outreach are not followed by consistent service delivery.

Strategic Opportunity

- Administrative support would enable proactive business engagement, more efficient delivery of grant programs, and timely updates to investment promotion tools.
- Continued alignment with SIPP and Destination Greater Victoria amplifies Esquimalt's local priorities on a regional stage, driving stronger advocacy and investment readiness.
- Building on the success of the new brand and website, Esquimalt can strengthen its competitive position and continue attracting businesses, investors, and visitors.
- By maintaining momentum from 2023–2025 achievements, the Township can position itself as a regional leader in resilience, partnerships, and community vitality.

Metrics, Outputs & Outcomes

Metrics and detailed performance outcomes are reported separately through the departmental period reports. The Workforce Plan focuses on long-term strategic alignment, risks, and resourcing needs.

2026 Priorities (Strategic Alignment)

- Restore direct strategic oversight of Communications and Economic Development functions following the Director HR/CR vacancy (not being replaced).
- Expand proactive communications and engagement, including emergency preparedness and corporate branding.

- Centralize HR recruitment/selection to improve consistency, candidate quality, and compliance.
- Sustain and build on WorkSafeBC premium savings by investing in OHS staffing capacity and claims management strategies, ensuring the Township continues to realize annual cost reductions and improved workplace safety outcomes.
- Deliver unfinished Economic Development Action Plan priorities, including wayfinding and signage, commercial land-use studies, vision documents, business walks, and expanded support for the Business Façade Improvement Program. Ensure WhyEsquimalt.ca and the investment prospectus remain current and responsive to business needs.
- Advance IDEA (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Accessibility) objectives with dedicated resources and program development.
- Support Indigenous Relations through collaboration with the Strategic Initiatives department, which now leads the Indigenous Relations Action Plan.

Staffing Options & Impact

Proposed Budget Year	Position	Need	Impact if Unfunded
2026	HR Advisor	Recruitment/Compliance	A fragmented approach; compliance, engagement risks. Reduce risk to the organization by implementing a standardized format for Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for each department.
2027	Communications Specialist	Campaigns/Branding	Missed opportunities, lagging in responsiveness, no buffer for strategic and innovative comms.
2028	OHS Coordinator	Safety/Claims Management	Higher premiums, lost savings, and elevated staff risk.

Main Risks

- Increased employee turnover, persistent high sick leave, and elevated burnout levels.
- Continued decentralized recruitment dilutes consistency; added risk of legislative non-compliance.
- Failure to fund key OHS positions would jeopardize the Township's ability to sustain WorkSafeBC premium savings, leading to higher costs and elevated workplace safety risks.

- Growing gap between Council/public expectations for communications and deliverable outcomes.
- Missed opportunities for business engagement, partnership-building, and corporate reputation enhancement.

Success Highlights

Human Resources & Labour Relations

- Modernized job titles and classifications, improving role clarity and alignment with organizational needs.
- Launched corporate-wide Bystander Training, advancing inclusion and equity across departments.

Occupational Health & Safety

- Secured \$236,000 in WorkSafeBC premium savings in one year, proving that strategic claims management delivers direct financial returns.
- Strengthened safety culture by developing nine new OHS policies and fully updating all four JOHS committees.

Communications & Public Engagement

- Produced cornerstone publications including the Annual Report, Council Priorities Plan, and Budget Book, ensuring clear, accessible communication of the Township's strategic direction and financial planning.
- Achieved exceptional community engagement with newsletter open rates exceeding 60%, well above sector averages.

Economic Development & Community Relations

- Elevated Esquimalt's investment profile through the launch of WhyEsquimalt.ca and the digital investment prospectus.
- Supported local business vitality with the Business Façade Improvement Program, now recognized regionally for visible corridor renewal.

Resource Needs & Investment Summary

Strategic investment in key positions and administrative support will yield clear compliance, financial, and operational benefits—protecting the Township's capacity to deliver on Council's priorities while controlling risk. Required roles are cost-neutral or self-funding in several cases due to operational savings (e.g., OHS Coordinator through WorkSafe reductions)