

OUR PEOPLE, OUR STRENGTH



2015 - 2017

 **Oxford County**
growing stronger...together

TABLE OF CONTENTS



1.	Employee messages	2
	i. Message from CAO	
	ii. Message from Director, Human Resources	
2.	Executive summary	3
3.	About the “Our People, Our Strength” Plan	4
4.	Overview of key actions	5
5.	Roles and responsibilities	9
6.	Looking ahead	10



Message from CAO, Peter Crockett

I am pleased to present the “Our People, Our Strength” plan for 2015 to 2017. This plan was developed through the dedicated efforts of our Vision to Action Employer of Choice staff team. It is a plan that outlines key actions in four focus areas that will lead us towards strengthening our people culture and building a work environment that is able to attract, retain and develop quality staff that has the capacity to meet the current and future needs of our citizens.

Employees at the County of Oxford deliver essential public services to our residents. The talent, dedication, and hard work of all employees are the foundation of our local government and its quality services. Ensuring we have a strong people culture that recognizes and values employees is critical to our continued success.

All employees have a critical role to play in the success of the plan, and I am confident each employee will do their part.



Message from Director of Human Resources, Amy Smith

The “Our People, Our Strength” plan 2015-2017 is our corporate strategy for working towards a County that is an Employer of Choice. The success of the plan is in effective implementation of the key actions.

This plan is the first of its kind for the County of Oxford and, as such, is a learning opportunity for all. The plan follows the results of our first-ever corporate-wide employee engagement survey, in which 68% of employees participated. The results of the survey showed that the County currently has a fairly engaged workforce, which is a very positive result. The survey also presented us with opportunity areas that require focus and effort to increase our levels of employee engagement.

With an already suitably engaged workforce, we are well on our way to having our most valuable asset, our people, capable of meeting the future needs of our organization and the people we serve. This plan focuses on a few key areas that will further increase our levels of employee engagement, and will ensure that we are able to attract, retain, and develop the highest quality workforce that has the capabilities to meet current and future needs.

Oxford County's Strategic Plan represents a roadmap for the organization and communicates its Vision, Mission, and Values. The plan guides Oxford County Administration by identifying the organization's strategic priorities and uniting us in working together to achieve our desired outcomes.

As one of six corporate strategic priorities, "**A County that is an Employer of Choice**" outlines the following:

6. i. **A County that is an Employer of Choice**

- Attract, retain and develop the highest quality staff through:

- *Management and organizational excellence*
- *Open communications, dialogue and understanding*
- *Vibrant and challenging career opportunities*
- *Progressive policies that:*
 - *Value and engage staff*
 - *Provide vibrant careers and quality development opportunities*
 - *Ensure accountability*
 - *Encourage creativity, innovation and problem solving*
 - *Actively promote employee health, safety and wellness*
 - *Provide fair and competitive compensation*
 - *Recognize performance and achievement*

In many respects, Oxford County is already an Employer of Choice; however, there are areas of our people culture that warrant review and strengthening to promote the most engaging work environment possible: one that strengthens our ability to attract, retain and develop the highest quality staff. The "**Our People, Our Strength**" Plan is the roadmap for how we will continue to work towards this strategic priority.

The plan for **2015-2017** focuses on four areas and the key actions necessary in each area. The four focus areas are:

1. Engaged employees: Employees who are involved, proud, and committed to their work and to the County of Oxford.
2. Talent management: High-performing employees with the right skills in the right job at the right time to meet current and future organizational needs.
3. Effective leaders: Managers who have the leadership skills and knowledge to build a high-performing organization that has quality programs for effective delivery of County services.
4. Safe and healthy workplaces: Workplaces that are safe and contribute to overall employee well-being, so that employees are productive and effective in their work and personal lives.

Being an "Employer of Choice" is a dynamic process. Organizations are constantly changing to adapt to both external and internal needs: Oxford County is no exception. For this reason, working towards a County that is an "Employer of Choice" is an evolving process, in which we implement progressive policies and practices, review and amend as necessary to meet our ever changing work environment.

Along those same lines, we expect an adaptable workforce that has the capability and desire to change and grow whenever necessary.

ABOUT THE “OUR PEOPLE, OUR STRENGTH” PLAN 4.



The “*Our People, Our Strength*” Plan is a framework that outlines key actions the County will accomplish over the next three years to ensure that we are able to attract, retain, and develop the highest quality work force that is capable of meeting the current and future needs of our organization.

The plan identifies key actions within four focus areas that management and staff, in partnership with Human Resources, must participate in and implement to strengthen our workforce and ensure we have the capacity and talent required to meet current and future needs. The four focus areas support one or more key objectives under the Employer of Choice strategic direction.

The need for a plan

There are many challenges facing all public sector employers, including an aging workforce, increasing and changing needs from the public, limits on financial resources, new and changing job skills and knowledge requirements, and greater demand for accountability and transparency. The services provided by our employees plays a large role in how our citizens perceive their municipal government. An engaged work force has a direct positive impact on the service we provide, and ultimately on the public’s trust and confidence in our institution.

This plan focuses our actions on four key areas over the coming years and ensures we have a course of action in place to strengthen our ability to work towards the key strategic priority of *A County that is an Employer of Choice*.

How the plan was developed

In the fall of 2013, County Council endorsed facilitation of a corporate-wide employee engagement survey as the first step to working towards the key strategic priority of *A County that is an Employer of Choice*. Subsequently, a call for staff volunteers was put out and a “*Vision to Action*” (V2A) project team was created with the purpose of evolving the activities and issues outlined in *Strategic Objective 6: A County that is an Employer of Choice*, which identifies the need to attract, retain and develop the highest quality staff.

The V2A: *Employer of Choice* team played a critical role in developing and executing the employee engagement survey, reviewing the results, and now considering action plans to address the opportunities identified through the survey results.

The “*Our People, Our Strength*” Plan focuses on specific areas that contribute to increased levels of employee engagement, and will ultimately ensure that we have a work environment that is able to attract, retain and develop the highest quality staff, ensuring we are able to meet current and future demands.

The following sets out the key actions the County will undertake to implement the “Our People, Our Strength” Plan.

1. Engaged employees

Employees who are involved, proud, and committed to their work and to the County of Oxford

As a public service, it is essential that our employees are proud of their work, committed to the County, and satisfied with their overall quality of work-life. Research shows that an engaged workforce leads to higher levels of service, and ultimately greater citizen trust and confidence in our organization.

Key actions

- Conduct a corporate wide employee engagement survey approximately every three (3) years and report results
- Provide departments with the resources and tools to improve employee engagement
- Implement actions to increase employee engagement corporately and departmentally
- Review and refresh current employee recognition programs, developing new programs where necessary and providing supervisors and managers with tools to recognize work achievements
- Recognize employees as a key stakeholder to engage and inform across all corporate and departmental activities by maintaining consistent, high value internal communication

How will we measure progress?

- Employee engagement survey results
- Employee participation in and feedback on recognition programs

2. Talent Management

High-performing employees with the right skills in the right job at the right time to meet current and future organizational needs

With an aging workforce, it is more important than ever to manage our talent and ensure we are set up to attract and retain a high-performing workforce. Over the next 10 years, 24.9% of our current workforce is eligible to retire with an unreduced pension. Of that total number, 16.5% are members of our current senior or extended management teams. Given these projections, employee attraction, retention, and development are critical to our continued success.

Key actions

- Review and refresh recruitment and onboarding processes, utilizing new tools and approaches to increase the accuracy and reliability of hiring decisions
- Develop and implement a “check in” process with new hires to seek regular feedback during the first year of employment
- Strengthen the exit interview process to ensure information collected is used in a meaningful way
- Develop and implement a succession management program that identifies key leadership positions and potential successors
- Investigate the opportunity for a formalized corporate mentoring program
- Develop a comprehensive leadership program for current and aspiring leaders
- Review and refresh the current performance management program
- Provide the extended management team and all staff with a variety of career development tools

How will we measure progress?

- Turnover rate
- Feedback related to employees onboarding/orientation processes
- Percentage of positions filled internally
- Percentage of performance appraisals completed
- Employee engagement survey results related to career development opportunities
- Participation in and feedback on various career development initiatives

3. Effective leaders

Managers who have the leadership skills and knowledge to build a high-performing organization that has quality programs for effective delivery of County services

The Senior and Extended Management Teams play a key role in leading and engaging our employees to successful outcomes both departmentally and corporately. It is crucial in any organization to have effective leaders who are skilled in motivating and developing their staff.

Key actions

- Review and refresh the current online supervisory training program for new leaders
- Develop a comprehensive leadership program for current and aspiring leaders
- Implement a more comprehensive performance management program for leaders, investigating options such as 360-degree appraisals

How will we measure progress?

- Employee engagement survey results related to satisfaction with extended and senior management teams
- Interest in and feedback provided on leadership programs

4. Safe and healthy workplaces

Workplaces that are safe and contribute to overall employee well-being, so that employees are productive and effective in their work and personal lives

Safe and healthy employees are productive employees who are continually working towards achieving organizational goals. Providing safe and supportive work environments leads to overall employee well-being, which has positive outcomes for the employee, department, and County overall.

Key actions

- Continue to maintain the highest standards in meeting and exceeding occupational health and safety legislation
- Maintain and continue to promote the Employee & Family Assistance Program
- Continue to develop and promote various wellness initiatives
- Support staff by allowing them the flexibility needed for the demands on them outside of work, while maintaining high service levels
- Maintain comprehensive, cost-effective benefit plans, while providing additional flexibility to meet the varying needs of employees
- Provide supervisory support, information, and training on mental health in the workplace
- Maintain a respectful and inclusive work environment for all staff by strengthening practices related to respect in the workplace

How will we measure progress?

- Employee engagement survey results related to health, safety, wellness, work life balance, etc.
- Number of WSIB claims filed / injury frequency rates
- Participation in Employee & Family Assistance Program
- Participation and feedback on various wellness initiatives

ENGAGED EMPLOYEES

- 1 • Employee Engagement survey every three (3) years
- Management support
- Refresh employee recognition programs
- High-value internal communication

4 SAFE AND HEALTHY WORKPLACES

- Continue to meet and exceed requirements for occupational health and safety
- Maintain and promote employee and family assistance program
- Maintain and promote wellness initiatives
- Support work/life balance in a way that meets needs of both employer and employee
- Management support and training on mental health in the workplace
- Strengthen respect in the workplace policies and practices

Our People, Our Strength

KEY ACTIONS

2 TALENT MANAGEMENT

- Review and refresh recruitment practices
- Support for new hires
- Strengthen exit interview process
- Succession planning
- Explore mentoring program, leadership program
- Review performance management practices
- Offer career development tools

EFFECTIVE LEADERS

- 3 • Review and refresh online supervisory training program
- Develop leadership program
- Implement more comprehensive performance management program

CAO and Senior Management Team

The CAO and Senior Management Team have endorsed the “Our People, Our Strength” Plan and will ensure the necessary actions are supported, that progress is regularly monitored, and that the key actions are achieved.

Extended Management Team

Extended Management Team members will implement the actions outlined in the plan within their divisions. They will ensure that employees on their teams are aware of the plan, how the actions will be implemented, the progress being made, and the key actions achieved.

Human Resources

Human Resources will play a significant role as the steward of the plan and will design and develop corporate programs and tools to support the implementation of the plan. Human Resources will work closely with departments to help support and facilitate the successful implementation of the identified actions and report out to measure progress towards key actions.

Vision to Action Employer of Choice Team

The Vision to Action (V2A) team will monitor the implementation of the actions in the plan and provide input to ensure corporate actions are consistent with the intent of the plan.

Employees

Employees will take measures to review the plan and understand the action items identified and how those items may impact them. They will be open to change and provide input and feedback when requested through focus groups, surveys, and online communications.

Municipalities will be faced with numerous challenges in coming years, and Oxford County is no exception. It is more important than ever that we have a course of action in place to strengthen our ability to attract, retain and develop the highest quality staff.

Over the next three years, we will have developed, refreshed, and reinforced many practices which support our key strategic priority of *A County that is an Employer of Choice*. By 2017, employee engagement levels will have increased as a result of the tools and actions implemented, and employees will have helped to identify solutions and will be aware of the actions taken to increase our levels of engagement. We will also be on the path to facilitating our second employee engagement survey to measure progress on key areas. It is likely that new areas of opportunities will emerge, leading to a refresh of this plan.

People are our greatest asset, and we need to ensure that we continue to have a workforce that has the capabilities required to meet future demands. The *"Our People, Our Strength"* Plan outlines the key actions that will contribute to an even more engaged workforce and enable us to continue to provide the highest level of service to our citizens.

