

# 12 KEY INSIGHTS GATHERED TO INFORM A TALENT MANAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR MANITOBA'S HEALTH CARE SECTOR



Sixty-eight health care decision makers attended the November 24, 2015 LEADS workshop and participated in breakout groups – called cafés – to discuss the implementation of the LEADS in a Caring Environment leadership capabilities framework in Manitoba. What follows are the key themes that arose from those discussions.

## 1. Need to Conduct an Organizational Needs Assessment and Talent Audit

Participants from several cafés identified the need to understand: the current state of our system, our talent inventory (talent mapping), and what drives the success of incumbents.

## 2. Need for a Shared Vision and a Shift in Culture

Several groups believed LEADS, applied effectively, could create irreversible momentum toward a culture designed to attract, grow and retain leaders – an environment characterized by open, honest and transparent communication between leaders and staff. Cafés heard the need to eliminate blame while providing staff with opportunities to learn from their mistakes. One group dared leaders to step out of their comfort zones and challenge themselves.

## 3. Need to Understand the Barriers to Change

Before implementing a province-wide change, one café highlighted the need to address three potential barriers to LEADS uptake: lack of awareness of what LEADS really means for various roles in healthcare, the conflicting priorities or sheer size of a manager's span of control, and poor staff orientation and restricted access to education (due to technological or accessibility issues in some regions).

## 4. Need for an Sustainable Overarching Strategy

To ensure its sustainability, one group argued the principles of LEADS should be ingrained within our core values. They proposed the LEADS framework should permeate through all levels of leadership and define clear expectations of leaders, as guided by organizational objectives. Key concerns raised include: ensuring the organization is “all-in” on the initiative (i.e. not adding to the list of siloed programs we do just a little bit of), how organizational impact would be measured, and committing to proper follow up and resources to refine initiatives when they aren't successful. The group questioned who should be charged with developing the provincial template, and whether it should accommodate for differences across regions. Also discussed at length to ensure sustainability was the need for the development and stewardship of a change management strategy.

## 5. Need to Define the Talent We Are Looking For

To help identify future leaders, participants stressed the need for a clear vision of realistic desired traits or skills, perhaps guided by evidence-based leadership assessments. It was felt that too often, leaders tend to attract/recruit specific types (alike). Also discussed were the challenges related to retaining talent, and how they often vary between urban and rural sites.

## 6. Need for Focussed Recruitment

An extension of defining what we are looking for, cafés heard the need for a focussed hiring process that considers employees' fit within the system as a whole, and not just the immediate role (recruiting for talent, hiring for fit). Suggestions included rolling out leadership-based interview questions, and embedding the LEADS framework into job descriptions, performance tools, etc.

## 7. Need for Talent Assessment

One group indicated the need to recognize that technical ability does not necessarily equate to effective management. Another group suggested the need to invest in competency appraisals for relevant roles/jobs. A final group added the need to not only recognize talent within an organization, but to have the necessary mechanisms in place to develop and promote those individuals.

## 8. Need to Provide Mentorship

One pronounced theme proposed reframing the learning model to one of mentorship, coaching, and modelling. Participants posited that expectations would need to be set for mentors and mentees in such an environment. One café played with the idea of new hires undergoing orientation through all departments to gain a macro perspective of their role. Another emphasized the need to get leaders to understand their roles in transferring knowledge.

## 9. Need for Performance Assessment

Rather than becoming its own standalone tool, participants suggested LEADS should align with preexisting ones, including: boot camp for managers, new employee orientation, succession planning, and mentorship programs. Many acknowledged performance evaluation should be an ongoing process based on goal-setting and attainment, with feedback throughout the year. Others suggested managers may need training in how to offer constructive feedback (and staff how to have those productive, yet difficult conversations), that this model may not be sustainable for managers with large oversight responsibilities, and that grading may still be necessary for disciplinary backup.

## 10. Need to Invest in Development

One café heard how amalgamation has made the RHAs lean, lessening the opportunities to learn. Ideas raised to overcome this shortfall included: 1) executives having the freedom to travel to learn from peer leaders in other provinces, 2) a provincial internship program which would see participants rotate through various roles within the region, 3) supporting employees to self-identify their strengths (what you don't know won't help you grow) and help them develop skills relevant to their interests and the organization's goals.

## 11. Need to Engage Staff in LEADS

As previously outlined in *culture shift*, several groups stressed the need for LEADS to become a shared language and common vision. Suggested tactics included fostering effective communication skills, providing purposeful education, and promoting self-awareness and engagement. Key themes included: the need to make time for these efforts, and recognizing staff's ability to be informal leaders and experts in their own right. One particularly poignant question raised was "as we become further informed about what LEADS truly is, what does it look like for my role?"

## 12. Need to Empower Staff with Distributed Accountability

Beyond mere *engagement*, participants discussed the role of leaders as enablers, rather than controllers. They felt many staff recognize issues but don't feel they have licence to think critically or speak up. It was felt too often, issues were "delegated up", when in fact managers should be trained to be comfortable with delegating responsibility the other way. One group suggested that once staff are provided with the necessary supports (education, time, funding, opportunity, and understanding for the need and value for change) and are allowed to take ownership of their work, they would begin to take more initiative. One group noted that too often, individuals willing to ask the hard questions that threaten the status quo are crushed by prevailing norms.

# NEXT STEPS

One overarching theme that weaves through the 12 insights above is *alignment* – of vision, of effort, and of resources and tools – to amplify the impact of LEADS and support its sustainability. Toward that goal, the George and Fay Yee Centre for Healthcare Innovation (CHI) and LEADS Canada have developed a central online portal for information related to LEADS Manitoba. Please feel free to contact any members of the steering committee listed below regarding the LEADS Provincial Leadership initiative.

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