

Update on Employment Opportunities for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities

Recommendation:

That the October 5/6, 2015, Corporate Services report CR_2951, be received for information.

Report Summary

On June 30, 2015, Corporate Services report CR_976, - Update on Employment Opportunities for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities was presented to Executive Committee. This report provides updates to be received for information.

Report

Abilities@Work Program:

The Abilities@Work program was initiated in the summer of 2013 and was designed to create meaningful employment opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities at the City of Edmonton. It is widely acknowledged that individuals with an intellectual disability have greater difficulty attaining employment.

The program set a goal to hire 25 individuals into permanent part time positions within a two and half year period. In the initial stages of the program the City formed a partnership with four well-established organizations (Alberta Association of Community Living, Chrysalis Society, Excel Society and Gateway Association). In addition, a Letter of Understanding was signed with civic unions that allowed for a customized recruitment process.

Human Resources works with business areas to identify employment opportunities and involves partner organizations to provide support to fill the positions. The collaboration continues with the review of job duties, scoping out potential work assignments, prescreening candidates, educating City staff and preparing the work environments prior to an employee's start date. A defining strength of the Abilities@Work program is its individualistic approach, where each opportunity explored is unique, as are the individuals being considered for employment. Attachment A provides more information on the Abilities@Work Program.

The program was expanded in March 2014 to include two more partner organizations (EmployAbilities and Goodwill Industries of Alberta). This ensures there is a broad pool of candidates available for all positions and that adequate resources are available from partner organizations.

Between the period of June 2013 (program start) and January 2015, the Abilities@Work Program hired 25 employees across all City of Edmonton departments surpassing the original timeframe by a year. In addition, based on support from partner organizations and business area employees, the program's retention rate is 92 percent.

The review of the Abilities@Work Program, involving partner organizations, business areas and civic unions, commenced in the spring of 2015. The review will be completed by the end of September 2015. To date the focus has been to review the current program. In general, the findings have been favourable with some suggestion to further enhance supports to business areas, new employee and coworkers. The focus of the review will now shift to exploring opportunities for expanding the current program and supporting new initiatives.

Other Initiatives:

Launching and maintaining the Abilities@Work Program has been a primary focus for the Diversity Recruitment Consultant for People with Disabilities. Progress has been made on other initiatives to support individuals with disabilities. The following initiatives are being developed or have already been launched:

- Abilities in Action - (launched) provides individuals with developmental disabilities paid work experience aligned to bus cleaner position.
- Paid work experience for post-secondary students and graduates with disabilities (development).
- Short-term unpaid work practicum (development) through EmployAbilities Entry-Level Skills Training Program.
- AbilitiesConnect (launched) employee resource network group to further explore employment and advancing quality of work life.

Encouraging Other Organizations:

The City as well as partner organizations have promoted and shared the Abilities@Work Program with other organizations. Examples of promoting the program include:

1. Participating in Employment First Webcast (March 2014).
2. Presenting at Alberta Government's 2014 Disability Innovation Symposium.
3. Chairing of the Disability Employer Connections (2014 and 2015 year to date).
4. Responding to requests from other employers.
5. Sharing promotional video.

Most recently, Human Resources staff and several program participants were filmed as part of a documentary on inclusive hiring for Telus and CBC which aired in the summer of 2015.

The Abilities@Work Program has been recognized with a number of awards and nominations. Several of these awards were a result of members of the disability community nominating and/or selecting the program. Attachment B outlines the program awards.

Policy

Policy Number C538: Diversity and Inclusion.

Budget/Financial Implications

Departments are required to find assignments within approved budgets.

Attachments

1. A - Update on Employment Opportunities for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities – Program Outline
2. B - Update on Employment Opportunities for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities – The Abilities@Work Program