

Pandemic Emergency Management – Challenge & Tested Solution

Challenge identified:

Planning

Solution:

Toronto Sector Pandemic Planning Initiative (SPPI)

- The SPPI was established in March 2020 by the Toronto District Service Agencies (TDSA) and Service Providers to address pandemic safety, staffing, training, operations, service quality, and legal and ethical issues in DS arising from the pandemic.
- The SPPI is made up of volunteer staff from 28 DS agencies in Toronto
 - o It enables leaders to come together and provides a platform to dialogue, exchange and forecast pandemic-related issues (i.e., staffing shortages)
 - o Prepares and executes key deliverables, inclusive of papers, research, webinars, and in the case of the current (fifth wave) circumstances, a sector staffing pool in conjunction with DS sector staffing agencies
 - o Demonstrates a collective impact
- The SPPI consists of a Project Management Office, a Steering Committee chaired by two Executive Directors, and several working groups. During the height of the pandemic, these various entities met daily in some cases. Currently, the HR working group (HR Committee) is the most active as it pertains to addressing acute staffing issues during the fifth wave.

Steps to Implement:

1. Appoint a DS leader(s) to head up the initiative
2. Solicit members from across participating agencies to comprise a Steering Committee (SC)
3. Set up a Project Management Office (PMO) ideally with dedicated administrative resource capability if not also project management
4. Establish a mandate, goal set, working group/committee structure, and timeline for approval by the SC
5. Convene the participating agencies (SPPI community) to approve these elements and to populate committees
6. Initiate work leveraging the committee structure to ensure holistic integrated deliverables

Date: January 13 & Jan 20, 2022

Person(s) Consulted: Marg Stanowski, ED, Springboard Services,
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7. Secure SC approval and distribute/implement
8. Keep the community regularly apprised (At the height of the fifth wave, DS agency leaders met and were updated by the HR Committee daily)

Results

1. How effective was this?
 - Very, the SPPI issued some 31 papers prepared by 7 workgroups. It developed and ran many webinars for the sector. It's a great collaborative model on which the Toronto staffing pool is predicated.
2. Was this efficient? Was it quick to implement?
 - Yes. The structure and processes are designed for agility, simplicity, and collaboration
3. Would you recommend this to other agencies?
 - Yes

Additional Considerations (if any):

- Legal: include an employment lawyer (if not also corporate lawyer) on the HR Committee if they are not on the SC
- HR: populate the HR Committee by HR managers/directors from participating DS agencies. Approximately 6 to 8.
- Communication: include a communications expert from a participating DS agency and keep the community closely apprised.
- Other: utilize project management methodology to run the initiative and keep it on track

Lessons learned:

- This planning initiative enabled action at the higher end: what is it that the sector needs? How can we accomplish this?
- Subgroups (i.e., HR working group/committee) took these initiatives further to develop and operationalize the plans, deliverables. In the case of this fifth wave deliverable, this involved establishing a *sector-wide retainer-based contingency staffing pool with staffing agencies bound by legal agreements and enabled by a centralized staffing request/response mechanism*. Treating this as a partnership and continuing to adapt based on lessons learned

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