

Workforce Demand Forecaster Tool: Health Human Resources' Recruitment Crystal Ball?

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As the growing human resource (HR) shortage continues to affect healthcare organizations, new approaches are explored to shift traditionally reactive hiring practices into proactive gear. To help quantitative forecasting data drive recruitment planning, six Ontario healthcare organizations and one academic partner teamed up to investigate the applicability of an Excel-based forecasting tool, the Workforce Demand Forecaster developed by the Advisory Board Company (the Tool). The Tool is a data collection spreadsheet that stores historical HR data, consolidates multiple quantitative variables that impact future workforce needs (e.g., budgeted full-time equivalent (FTE/headcounts), turnover, transfers etc.), and enables one- to five-year forecasts to inform recruitment strategies.

This project was the first in Ontario to implement the Tool and evaluate its applicability across multiple settings. It involved assessing the Tool's interface potential with existing HR processes, assessing the Tool's ability to increase interaction and collaboration between hospital operations and human resources, making recom-

mentations for system adoption in Ontario healthcare environment, and sharing learning/promoting knowledge transfer.

Project Learnings

Working through the forecasting process together has been an invaluable opportunity to learn about primary HR data collection, understand each organization's different employee data collection resources and approach, and trial, learn and improve the process.

Key project findings are:

1. Strengths of the Tool include:

- A comprehensive data collection spreadsheet that capture all required data elements to develop forecasts
- A straightforward, step-by-step forecasting process (not necessarily the data gathering process)

2. Prerequisites to use the Tool include:

- Advisory board membership (annual fee) arranged through the Ontario Hospital Association
- Human Resources Information System
- Designated HR analyst for data collection, input, analysis and maintenance; level of support required varies by sophistication of the HR system
- Availability of all required data elements and validated workforce growth/reduction assumptions
- Tool learning and implementation time

3. HHR workforce planning at a regional or provincial level requires consistent data definitions, common data elements captured and reported in a consistent way using a common HR information system (HRIS) platform or compatible HRIS systems.

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