

# Making it Work: A Framework for Rural and Remote Workforce Stability

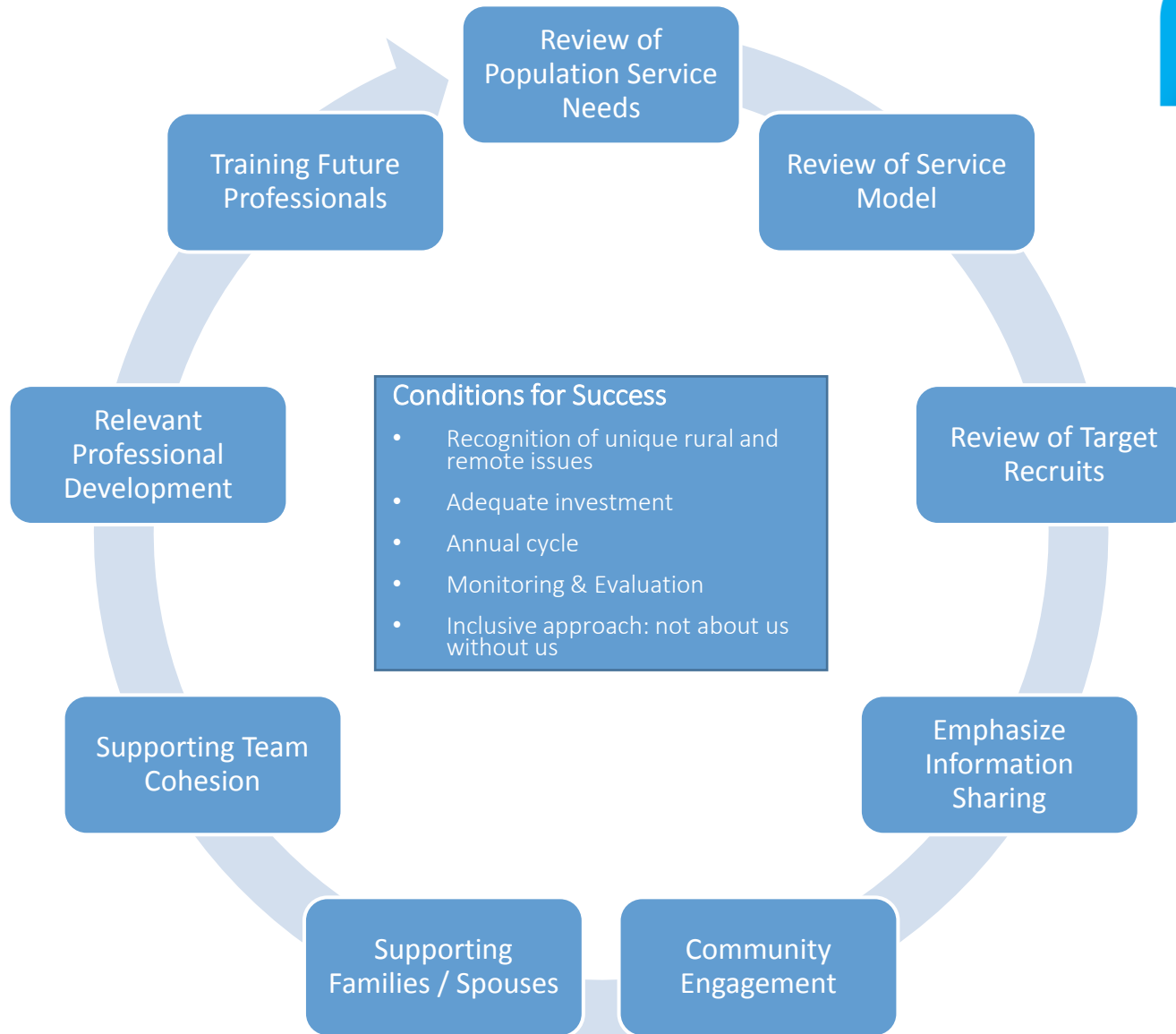


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# Conditions for Success

- Recognition of Unique Rural and Remote Challenges and Issues
- An annual cycle of activities is essential
  - Ensure that the framework elements are integrated in job descriptions, performance standards in your organization
  - If your focus is on “fighting fires” every time there is a vacancy, important retention activities can be forgotten, and you can find yourself continuing to staff positions for a service model that is not effective
- Monitoring and evaluation
  - Adequacy of service levels and effectiveness of recruitment and retention can both be measured and monitored to guide your recruitment and retention targets and activities
  - \*potential for our collaborative to identify indicators / metrics
- Adequate investment
  - The evidence for return on investment is clear.
  - Without sufficient human resources to undertake all elements of the framework, rural and remote locations risk continuing the cycle of a transient workforce and entrenched limited access and quality of services

# Review of Service Needs & Service Model

- Review of Population Service Needs
  - Develop an evidence-informed estimate of the complement of professionals needed to meet the service needs of the population, based on population characteristics, the burden of disease, and other standard indicators
  - Identify and monitor indicators of adequacy and review annually, to confirm whether the complement is appropriate for your service area
- Review of Service Model
  - There may be built-in inefficiencies in the existing model – you may be recruiting positions you don't need, or a different complement of staff may better serve your needs for a similar level of investment.
  - Identify and monitor indicators of the appropriateness of your service model and review annually

# Review of Target Recruits

- Based on exit interviews and other information about your complement of current and past service providers, develop a profile of the recruits you wish to hire.
- In one arctic jurisdiction, they have noted that the physicians who stay are not the ones who are attracted to the adventure of Northern practice, but the ones who are excited by the scope of practice in their environment. They no longer advertise what an adventure it is in that region, but focus on sharing information about the quality of life, and the interesting medical practice



# Information Sharing

- Making a move to a rural or remote location, and building a life there is a major consideration – even recruits from other remote locations will want access to information about
  - The work – the scope of practice, the patient population
  - The work environment – number of co-workers, # beds in hospital, collegiality
  - Available housing
  - Schooling and activities for their children
  - Potential work opportunities for their spouses
- All of this information must be very easily accessible to make your recruits' decision-making much easier.

# Community Engagement

- Every community is unique
- The degree to which recruits are able to become integrated and develop personal relationships in the community is a predictor of retention
- Involve your local community in welcoming and integrating your recruits – build partnerships
  - Someone from the municipal office may be appointed as a “buddy” for your new recruits and help them become acquainted with the community and its services
  - A local restaurant could be asked to put items on the menu that are the recruit’s favourites....
  - Your community will have ideas of its own – reach out and see what you can build together.

# Supporting Spouses / Families

- Spousal employment is known to be a key factor in recruitment of health professionals to rural locations.
  - Dedicating resources to assisting spouses in identifying potential employers will have a return on investment
- Identify a staff member of community partner whose role can be to learn about the family and their hobbies can help them become integrated. If the same hobbies are not available in your town, help them discover other things they will enjoy.





# Prioritizing Team Cohesion

- A major factor in a decision to leave is personal relationships
- Building a collegial team environment is essential.
- Create opportunities for your team to
  - Socialize together
  - Learn together
- Offer your team some control over their work environment
  - Involve them in recruitment decisions
  - Develop issue-specific professional leadership roles

# Relevant Professional Development

- Professional development (PD) is needed to sustain quality services and is a known retention factor
- Often the PD offered in urban centres lacks relevance to rural / remote professionals
- Align PD offerings with the learning needs of your team
  - Consider peer-to-peer learning
  - Create training opportunities that involve learning from other professionals from rural / remote locations

# Training Future Professionals

- There is a clear and substantial body of evidence which confirms that offering health professional training in rural and remote environments leads to increased retention of those professionals.
- Developing an academic mandate in your organization, potentially seeking funds to dedicate time to training professionals of the future. This will lead to a strong return on investment.
- Support access to training programs for local residents for roles your organization needs (these can also be paraprofessional or administrative roles).

