
Mitigating Voluntary Employee Turnover in Business Systems and Administration, Mental Health and Substance Use, Island Health

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Client Problem and Project Objective

Voluntary employee turnover presents a host of challenges for any organization and is especially problematic if the rate of turnover has a negative impact on business outcomes. This project examines the issue of voluntary employee turnover among administrative support professionals in Mental Health and Substance Use (MHSU), a division of Island Health. The project client, Lynne Hahn, Manager, Business Systems and Administration, commissioned the project to gain a better understanding of what organizational factors are contributing to turnover and what she can do to mitigate turnover and promote retention. The client leads the administrative services portfolio for 25 clinical sites across Vancouver Island and manages a team of four Administrative Coordinators who supervise approximately 85 regular full-time employees and approximately 25 casual employees across three regions: South Island, Central Island and North Island.

In the year 2013, MHSU experienced 20 percent turnover Island-wide. South Island experienced the most acute turnover at 37 percent, while Central and North Island experienced 10 percent and 4 percent turnover respectively. While Central and North Island fared well in 2013, in 2012 Central Island experienced 100 percent turnover at one clinical site and North Island experienced 28 percent turnover. Using 2012 data from the Center for Economic Policy Research as a baseline, the 20 percent voluntary turnover rate experienced by MHSU is approximately 6 percent higher than healthcare average for voluntary quits (14 percent) (cited in Catalyst, 2012). South Island turnover rates at 37 percent are approximately 23 percent above industry average, indicating the problem may be more concentrated in that area.

The client's primary reason for commissioning the project was concern over negative business outcomes, stemming from voluntary turnover, and their impact on the quality of care clients receive at MHSU sites. Some of the negative business outcomes identified by Administrative Coordinators included: a perceived negative effect on the quality and consistency of client service, escalated organizational risk (i.e. poor handling of a crisis call by a new hire), challenges to employee engagement (demonstrated by long-term employee 'training burn-out,' destabilization of site teams, a lack of trust or willingness to engage with new hires for fear they will leave, poor employee perceptions of the value and importance of their role, clinical and medical staff not bothering to learn administrative staff names because "there is no point," etc.) and the high cost to the organization when an employee voluntarily terminates.

One Administrative Coordinator estimated that for each voluntary termination, Island Health expends approximately 100 hours of labour (between the Administrative Coordinator's time, the employee providing training and the new employee). The estimated cost of turnover, as a percentage of annual salary, ranges dramatically in the literature from approximately 30 percent to 150 percent of total salary, with the percentage of salary increasing proportionately to the level

of skill required to perform the job and the amount of organizational responsibility (Hinkin & Tracey, 2006). Assuming the lowest annual salary in the pay range for MHSU administrative professionals and taking the most conservative estimated cost of turnover as a percentage of salary, MHSU administrative professional turnover costs in 2013 could be estimated at \$10,044 per departing employee or \$230,000 when all 2013 departed employees are taken into consideration. Given the potentially negative impacts on business operations and the quality of client care and the high cost of voluntary turnover, the client was keen to better understand what might be contributing to employee turnover and what she can do to potentially mitigate turnover.

Methodology

A vast body of literature is dedicated to the topic of voluntary employee turnover. Within this body of literature there are two primary lines of inquiry: research on what makes employees leave (i.e. turnover antecedents) and research on what makes employees stay (retention practices). An extensive literature review investigating both lines of inquiry was conducted to develop a theoretical framework for the project, shape the project methodology and guide the development of recommendations based on key project findings.

The project applies a mixed methods approach in which both quantitative and qualitative methods are employed to answer the primary and secondary research questions (Hesse-Biber, 2010). Together, the methods will provide answers to the primary and secondary research questions: what organizational factors are driving voluntary employee turnover and what can the client do to mitigate turnover? While the literature provides insight on what the client can do to mitigate turnover, only current and former employees can provide insight on what organizational factors are driving turnover and assist the client in tailoring potential actions to address turnover within the employee group.

As such, an employee survey was used to gather quantitative data and stay and exit interviews were conducted to yield qualitative data. Employee surveys and stay interviews are an effective means of uncovering what makes an employee stay with an employer and what might make an employee leave the organization (James & Matthew, 2012). Exit interviews provide valuable insight on what factors contributed to an employee's decision to leave and assist the employer in determining what factors they may be able to address (Kumar, Dass & Topaloglu, 2014).

While the employee survey is the primary data source for the project, the employee interviews serve a threefold purpose: corroborate the survey findings, provide more robust insight on the topic areas explored in the survey and ensure the survey did not miss any critical issues which might arise in more open-ended questions (Hesse-Biber, 2010).

Key Findings

Analysis of the employee survey and interview results revealed a number of organizational factors contributing to turnover (as identified by research participants):

1. Pay is not perceived as equitable.
2. Career development opportunities and training and development offerings within MHSU are inadequate.
3. Administrative skills and contributions are undervalued (and an absence of formal and informal recognition may exacerbate this perception).
4. Person-job and person-organization fit can be improved as reflected by several measures of individual role perception.
5. Supervisors are providing an unsatisfactory volume of performance feedback (positive or constructive).
6. Opportunities to provide input on decisions and processes which directly impact administrative work are limited.

While the survey and interview feedback highlighted some contributing factors, they also unveiled some organizational retention strengths:

1. Administrative professionals believe they perform meaningful work.
2. Administrative professionals experience a high level of job satisfaction through ownership of their routine work tasks, client interaction and connectivity to MHSU's client service mandate.
3. Supervisors are perceived as supportive by administrative professionals.
4. Administrative professionals believe current scheduling practice allows for work/life balance.
5. Administrative professionals experience high levels of work team attachment (indicating a positive work environment).
6. Positive feedback from clients, colleagues and supervisors motivates, engages and excites administrative professionals.

Recommendations

The project recommendations are designed to assist the client in mitigating voluntary employee turnover by either addressing identified contributing factors or leveraging existing retention strengths. Further, each recommendation is tailored to reflect the client's scope of control and decision-making authority and the environment of fiscal restraint within the Island Health context. The recommendations are laid out in ascending order of priority. Recommendations one through 14 directly address the organizational factors contributing to turnover, while recommendations 15 to 17 assist in leveraging retention strengths. The recommendations are as follows:

- *Recommendation 1: Provide MHSU administrative professionals with a total compensation letter upon hire and when wage increases occur to address negative perceptions of compensation and underscore some of the less visible factors which contribute to total compensation.*
- *Recommendation 2: Create an Island-wide MHSU Administrative Professional Advisory Committee to steward and implement the project recommendations (as appropriate), solicit administrative professional input and/or feedback on organizational changes (as appropriate) and lead other self-identified, practicable initiatives to promote the career development and retention of MHSU administrative professionals.*
- *Recommendation 3: Identify the knowledge, competencies, skills and abilities individuals need to develop to advance to the AS4 Classification or Administrative Coordinator positions and create an internal program for measuring and assessing individual “readiness” to proceed as part of the annual performance planning review.*
- *Recommendation 4: Promote available courses on the Island Health Learning Management System and within the Island Health context, related to desired technical and clinical training, through a monthly communication to MHSU administrative professionals.*
- *Recommendation 5: Distribute semi-annual updates on training and development offered in the last six months.*
- *Recommendation 6: Leverage performance planning conversations to highlight and discuss specific training and development opportunities within the Island Health context related to individual career development plans (i.e. participation on the Advisory Committee, approval to participate in LMS courses or face-to-face training, etc.).*
- *Recommendation 7: Partner with clinical leaders to arrange informal clinical “Knowledge Sharing Sessions” (i.e. in-house clinicians share information and best practices in client interaction in a semi-formal format offered in person and via webinar).*
- *Recommendation 8: Implement an MHSU administrative professional recognition program incorporating informal and formal recognition elements.*
- *Recommendation 9: Establish a campaign to promote awareness of administrative professional individual expertise and backgrounds and share with the entire MHSU team on a monthly basis.*

- *Recommendation 10: Seek senior MHSU operational and medical leadership support in addressing the perception that administrative support skills are not respected or valued.*
- *Recommendation 11: Target candidate pools whose own objectives more closely align with the role and the organization's services to reduce the number of individuals who perceive the role as a job to pay the bills or are not sure how the role fits into their career plans.*
- *Recommendation 12: Investigate and apply screening tools to promote closer person-job and person-organization fit (i.e. personality tests and/or screening assignments) and screen out ill-fitting candidates with a higher probability of turnover.*
- *Recommendation 13: Set formal performance management cycle for MHSU administrative professionals, monitoring and tracking Administrative Coordinator completion of probationary and annual performance planning meetings for each MHSU administrative professional to ensure minimum number of feedback and coaching opportunities are occurring.*
- *Recommendation 14: Invest in performance coaches for Administrative Coordinators to enhance performance management, mentoring and coaching conversation skills.*
- *Recommendation 15: Create and implement an annual retention communications plan to reinforce positive perceptions of the administrative support professional role and highlight individual contributions to the organization's mandate in a methodical and timely manner.*
 - *Recommendation 15(a): Leverage the nascent MHSU Administrative Professionals Newsletter (identified by the client in November 2014) as an internal communications tool, to allow for planned distribution of items likely to leverage key organizational strengths, and promote and profile news and information that supports positive perceptions of the workplace and individual contributions.*
 - *Recommendation 15(b): Generate an MHSU-specific employee value proposition to assist in the recruitment and retention of MHSU administrative professionals.*
- *Recommendation 16: Continuously monitor turnover statistics and adjust retention programs as needed.*

- *Recommendation 17: Communicate which project recommendations are to be implemented to MHSU Administrative Professionals.*

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	i
Executive Summary.....	ii
List of Figures/Tables	x
1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 Project Client and Client Problem.....	1
1.2 Project Objectives	2
1.3 Rationale	2
1.4 Background	3
1.5 Organization of Report.....	4
2.0 Literature Review & Theoretical Framework.....	6
2.1. Antecedents of Employee Turnover.....	6
2.1.1 External Forces	7
2.1.2 Organizational Forces.....	7
2.1.3 Personal Characteristics	12
2.2 Effective Retention Practices	13
2.3 Theoretical Framework	28
3.0 Methods	29
3.1 Methods Overview	29
3.2 Objective	29
3.3 Key Questions	30
3.4 Quantitative Instrument – Survey.....	30
3.4.1 Recruitment Process	31
3.5 Qualitative Instrument – Interviews	31
3.5.1 Stay and Exit Interviews.....	31
3.5.2 Recruitment Process	32
3.6 Study Limitations	33
4.0 Survey Analysis.....	36
4.1 Section One: How You Feel About Your Job	36
4.2 Section Two: Your Work Environment	40
4.3 Section Three: Drivers of Turnover and Retention	43
4.4 Section Four: Your Supervisor.....	48
4.5 Section Five: Demographic Data.....	50
5.0 Employee Interview Analysis.....	52
5.1 Stay Interview Analysis	52

5.2 Exit Interview Analysis	58
6.0 Key Findings and Recommendations	60
6.1 Organizational Turnover Antecedents.....	61
6.1.1. Pay Not Equitable	61
6.1.2 Career Advancement and Training	63
6.1.3 Recognition (and Respect).....	67
6.1.4 Person-Job and Person-Organization Fit	71
6.1.5 Performance Management	73
6.1.6 Employee Input in Decision-Making.....	74
6.2 Organizational Retention Strengths.....	75
6.2.1 Meaningful Work.....	76
6.2.2 Job Satisfaction.....	77
6.2.3 Supportive Supervisor Relationships.....	78
6.2.4 Work/Life Balance.....	79
6.2.5 Work Team Attachment (Positive Work Environment)	79
6.2.6 Motivated by Positive Feedback.....	80
6.3 Inconclusive Findings	80
6.4 Other Recommendations	81
7.0 Conclusion	82
8.0 References	83
Appendix A	93
Mental Health and Substance Use Organizational Chart	93
Appendix B.....	94
Retention Practices Literature Review Key Search Words	94
Appendix C.....	95
Effective Practice Citations	95
Appendix D	99
MHSU Administrative Support Professionals Survey	99
Appendix E.....	110
Stay Interview Questions	110
Appendix F.....	111
Exit Interview Questions.....	111
Appendix G	112
Summary of Recommendations to Mitigate Voluntary Employee Turnover at MHSU.....	112

LIST OF FIGURES/TABLES

<i>Figure 1.</i> Theoretical framework for identifying turnover antecedents and promoting retention.	28
<i>Figure 2.</i> Frequency distribution showing level of agreement by question in ascending order.....	37
<i>Figure 3.</i> Respondent role perception by answer selection.	39
<i>Figure 4.</i> Frequency distribution of intention to stay by role perception.	39
<i>Figure 5.</i> Frequency distribution of responses in ascending order.	42
<i>Figure 6.</i> Frequency distribution of responses in ascending order.	49
<i>Figure 7.</i> Frequency distribution of responses in descending order.	51
Table 1. Effective Retention Practices in Descending Order of Citation Frequency.....	15
Table 2. Responses in Descending Order of Frequency	41
Table 3. Responses in Descending Order of Frequency.....	45
Table 4. Responses in Descending Order of Frequency	46
Table 5. Qualitative Response Theme Frequency in Descending Order	47

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROJECT CLIENT AND CLIENT PROBLEM

Lynne Hahn, Manager of Business Systems and Administration, leads administrative support service delivery for Mental Health and Substance Use (MHSU) – a division of Island Health. As part of her role, Lynne implements strategies across the administrative function to ensure alignment with MHSU's *2012-2015 Operating Plan* and promote compliance with legislative and policy changes as they relate to records management and client care. The administrative services portfolio supports 25 clinical sites, Vancouver Island-wide, providing community-based and in-patient services in collaboration with government and community partners. Lynne manages a team of four Administrative Coordinators who supervise approximately 85 regular full-time employees and approximately 25 casual employees across three regions: South Island, Central Island and North Island.¹ While Central and North Island each have a dedicated Administrative Coordinator, South Island is managed by two Administrative Coordinators whose portfolios are divided by site.

Island-wide, the 2013 voluntary employee turnover rate for the administrative support team was 20 percent (S. Agbay, October 2, 2013, personal communication). Historically, the administrative support team has experienced a high rate of voluntary employee turnover across all regions. However, in 2013 the issue was most prevalent in the South Island where the voluntary turnover rate was approximately 37 percent (M. Jones & M. Brown, personal communication, September 20, 2013).² While the North Island's 2013 rate was 4 percent, it was down sharply from 2012 where the voluntary turnover rate was approximately 28 percent (S. Mehta, personal communication, September 23, 2013). Although a high turnover rate was not identified as an overall issue in the Central Island, where it is estimated that the 2013 turnover was approximately 10 percent, there were concentrated issues in Duncan which experienced 100 percent turnover between 2012 and 2013 (L. Packer, personal communication, September 6, 2013). Despite differing turnover rates across geographical regions, this project will analyze the issue of turnover and generate recommendations for all MHSU regions.

While the client has identified the turnover rate as an organizational problem, workload volume and a scarcity of resources have acted as barriers to a more thorough investigation. As such, the client has commissioned this project to analyze the issue of voluntary employee turnover within the administrative services team. Despite differing turnover rates by region, the client has requested that the project analyze the issue and generate recommendations across all MHSU regions (South, Central and North Island).

¹ South Island (33 full-time, 8 casual), Central Island (39 full-time, 8 casual), North Island (14 full-time, 11 casual).

² This data can be broken down even further: 18.8 percent voluntary turnover in permanent employees and 12.5 percent voluntary turnover in casual employees (S. Agbay, October 2, 2013, personal communication).

1.2 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the project is to investigate employer-influenced causes of voluntary employee turnover and make recommendations to promote employee retention Vancouver Island-wide. The project will pursue answers to primary and secondary research questions. The primary research question being: What organizational factors are driving voluntary employee turnover and employee turnover intentions? The secondary question is: What can the client do to mitigate these factors, reduce employee turnover and address employee turnover intention?

1.3 RATIONALE

Concerned by feedback from the Administrative Coordinators (i.e. line managers) and long-serving employees, the client was eager to gain a better understanding of the organizational factors which may be contributing to voluntary turnover rates and what she might do to reduce or mitigate turnover. Of greatest concern to the client are the potential negative business outcomes, identified by Administrative Coordinators, which may arise from voluntary turnover, specifically a lower quality of client care during periods of staff transition and training. As such, the client commissioned this project to better understand and potentially address the staffing challenge in her portfolio.

Preliminary, informal telephone interviews with each Administrative Coordinator illustrated the impacts of turnover perceived by line management within the client's portfolio. Each Administrative Coordinator highlighted negative business outcomes as a consequence of higher turnover volumes, often sharing specific examples or employee comments to illustrate their points. Organizational impacts of higher turnover identified by the Administrative Coordinators in each region included: a perceived negative effect on the quality and consistency of client service, escalated organizational risk (i.e. poor handling of a crisis call by a new hire), challenges to employee engagement (demonstrated by long-term employee 'training burn-out,' destabilization of site teams, a lack of trust or willingness to engage with new hires for fear they will leave, poor employee perceptions of the value and importance of their role, clinical and medical staff not bothering to learn administrative staff names because "there is no point," etc.) and the high cost to the organization when an employee voluntarily terminates (L. Packer, personal communication, September 6, 2013; M. Jones & M. Brown, personal communication, September 20, 2013). For example, the North Island Administrative Coordinator estimates that to recruit, on-board, orient and train one new hire, Island Health expends approximately 100 hours of labour (between the Administrative Coordinator's time, the employee providing training and the new employee) (S. Mehta, personal communication, September 23, 2013).

Using 2012 data from the Center for Economic Policy Research as a baseline, the 20 percent voluntary turnover rate experienced by MHSU is approximately 6 percentage points higher than healthcare average for voluntary quits (14.9 percent) (cited in Catalyst, 2012). South Island turnover rates at 37 percent are approximately 23 percent above industry average, indicating the problem may be more concentrated in that area. While this data provides some quantitative evidence confirming that voluntary turnover is an area warranting attention, the qualitative reasons and costs highlighted by the Administrative Coordinators, noted by longer-serving

employees and well documented in voluntary turnover research, provide the strongest rationale for further investigation and potential action to mitigate potentially avoidable voluntary turnover.

Voluntary employee turnover presents numerous undesirable costs, both tangible and intangible (Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart, Wright & Steen, 2006, p.386). Separation administration, recruitment costs, onboarding, orientation and training costs, lost productivity during role vacancy and new employee onboarding and training are tangible, easily quantifiable factors to be considered when calculating the cost of turnover. While debate exists on how to quantify intangibles when calculating employee turnover costs (i.e. decreased employee engagement and morale, lost human capital, decreased bench strength and impacts to overall quality of client service), there is complete agreement that these voluntary turnover outcomes adversely impact business performance (Noe et al., 2006, p.386). It is important to note that voluntary turnover is distinct from involuntary turnover. Involuntary turnover occurs when an employee is intentionally terminated, while voluntary turnover reflects circumstances where an employee chooses to depart, perhaps for a better employment proposition elsewhere or as a result of retirement (Noe et al., 2006, p.386).

The estimated cost of turnover, as a percentage of annual salary, ranges dramatically in the literature from approximately 30 percent to 150 percent of total salary, with the percentage of salary increasing proportionately to the level of skill required to perform the job and the amount of organizational responsibility (Hinkin & Tracey, 2006). Assuming the lowest annual salary in the pay range for MHSU administrative professionals and taking the most conservative estimated cost of turnover as a percentage of salary, MHSU administrative professional turnover costs in 2013 could be estimated at \$10,044 per departing employee or \$230,000 when all 2013 departed employees are taken into consideration.

While voluntary turnover is inevitable to some extent, it does appear that MHSU is facing higher than industry average turnover, is incurring some potentially avoidable costs and, as discussed above, is experiencing some negative business outcomes as a consequence of turnover. The client will benefit from completion of this project by increasing her understanding of how she might intervene to reduce voluntary turnover among administrative support personnel and mitigate voluntary turnover to reduce potentially negative business outcomes.

1.4 BACKGROUND

MHSU administrative support staff play a critical role in helping fulfill the organization's mandate to provide "appropriate, accessible services for adults with serious mental illness and/or addictions" by supporting the clients, clinical staff and medical practitioners with a variety of time-sensitive tasks including reception services, processing client referrals, appointment and group therapy scheduling, medical records management, client correspondence management (letters to General Practitioners, subsidy forms, program applications, etc.), transcription services and general office administration (Island Health, 2013). Given the nature of the role, the vast majority of MHSU administrative support personnel fall within two British Columbia Government Employees Union (BCGEU) (Community Subsector Agreement) classifications, Administrative Support 3 and Administrative Support 4, and have the title of "Office Assistant" or "Program Assistant" (British Columbia Government Employees Union, 2010). Administrative personnel typically work in small (less than five) administrative teams

supporting one of the 25 clinical sites and report to the Administrative Coordinator who has the worksite within their portfolio (please see [Appendix A](#) to view the organizational chart of the unit). MHSU administrative support staff must demonstrate a high-level of accountability and initiative given the seriousness of the services delivered and the lack of direct oversight they receive (as their supervisors are frequently offsite). Although the personnel are managed by the Administrative Coordinators, they also perform work for and take direction from the clinical staff and medical practitioners on a daily basis.

The MHSU administrative support team is predominantly composed of full-time employees, most of whom belong to the BCGEU, with some regular and some casual status employees. Unlike many public sector organizations reliant on casual or on-call labour to fulfill their service obligations while meeting their budgetary restrictions, MHSU has full-time, regular hours for casual employees. The key differences between regular and casual employees are that Island Health is not obligated to employ casuals in a permanent capacity, although many employees intentionally remain casual for years and have a level of job security comparable to regular full-time employees. Further, Island Health must pay casuals a percentage of their hourly wage in lieu of benefits and statutory holidays (British Columbia Government Employees Union, 2010). The in lieu pay requirement creates a dynamic where some employees would prefer to remain casual rather than enter a permanent position to retain a higher hourly wage (M. Jones & M. Brown, personal communication, September 20, 2013). Additionally, many casuals prefer to remain casual because they are not assigned a permanent phone line at one worksite and experience variety by working at multiple sites delivering different programs (M. Jones & M. Brown, personal communication, September 20, 2013). Given the level of job security, pay incentive structure and role variety presented by casual employee status, administrative employees, more often than not, choose to remain casual rather than compete on regular status positions. In light of the preference for employees to remain casual rather than obtain regular status positions, the project will not distinguish between casual and regular status employees in its analysis as concerns regarding employment status (i.e. casuals desiring regular status) do not appear to be contributing to turnover.

1.5 ORGANIZATION OF REPORT

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

The report begins with a review of the relevant literature to establish a theoretical framework for the project. The literature on employee turnover follows two lines of inquiry: research on what makes employees leave (i.e. turnover antecedents) and research on what makes employees stay (retention practices). Both lines of inquiry are reviewed in detail and summarized within the theoretical framework. In addition to forming the theoretical framework for the project, the review of retention practices also supports the project recommendations.

Methods

Once the theoretical framework is established, the report's methods are reviewed. To assist in answering the primary and secondary research questions, the project employs an employee survey, stay interviews and exit interviews. The methods section outlines the key research

questions to be answered in the data collection phase, describes each method (including response rates), reviews the participant recruitment process and notes the study's limitations.

Analysis

The next section summarizes and analyzes the data gathered through the survey, stay interviews and exit interviews in three distinct subsections.

Key Findings and Recommendations

Key findings and project recommendations follow the analysis section. Key findings are classified as either organizational turnover antecedents (i.e. factors within the organization likely contributing to turnover) or organizational retention strengths (i.e. areas where retention factors are already working to support retention within the organization). Recommendation(s) are paired with each finding and a brief discussion relates each finding and recommendation back to the effective practices identified in the theoretical framework.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW & THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A vast body of literature is dedicated to the topic of voluntary employee turnover. Within this body of literature there are two lines of inquiry: research on what makes employees leave (i.e. turnover antecedents) and research on what makes employees stay (retention practices). The following literature review separately examines each line of inquiry to outline the theoretical framework of the project, support the project methods discussed in the following section and lay a foundation for the client recommendations.

2.1. ANTECEDENTS OF EMPLOYEE TURNOVER

Beginning with March and Simon's (1958) seminal causal model of voluntary turnover, countless studies have since developed and refined causal models of turnover (Russell, 2013). Existing research catalogues the various antecedents or predictors of turnover into groups of related factors theorized to promote turnover. Some research conceptualizes turnover from a "labour market perspective" in which only economic variables external to an organization are theorized to drive turnover, while other studies examine turnover within the "organizational context" analyzing only factors such as employee satisfaction, organizational process and supervisor-employee relations as precursors to turnover (Reiche, 2008, p.677). While the previously mentioned conceptual constructs analyze turnover from an organizational standpoint in which turnover antecedents are seen as either internal or external to the organization, some research approaches the topic from an employee viewpoint in which turnover drivers are theorized to be a set of "push" and "pull" factors for the individual (Allen, Renn, Moffitt & Vardaman, 2007). Push factors are organizational factors which may force an individual to voluntarily turnover (i.e. a negative culture), while pull factors are individual preferences and external forces which may draw the employee away (Allen, Renn, Moffitt & Vardaman, 2007). Some research focuses exclusively on the individual as the unit of analysis and the individual's motivations for leaving or staying. For example, Maertz and Griffeth (2004) developed an exhaustive list of eight "motivational forces" driving turnover that includes employee organizational attachment ("affective forces"), goal realization ("calculative forces"), "psychological contract" ("contractual forces"), "psychological costs of quitting" ("behavioral forces"), "self-efficacy beliefs" ("alternative forces"), "perceived expectations of salient others" ("normative forces"), values alignment between self and organization ("moral/ethical forces") and feelings of affinity and camaraderie with co-workers ("constituent forces").

The majority of recent research on the antecedents of voluntarily turnover maintains an expanded conceptualization to consider the broadest possible spectrum of internal/external factors and push/pull factors influencing turnover. These approaches consider external factors (i.e. labour market, industry, etc.), organizational factors (i.e. culture, human resources practices, career development opportunities, etc.) and "personal characteristics" including age, tenure, sex,

education, experience, marital status and family status (Liou, 1998, p.162; James & Matthew, 2012; Cahalane & Sites, 2008; Iverson, 2000). External factors, organizational factors and personal characteristic factors which contribute to turnover are described and discussed below.

2.1.1 EXTERNAL FORCES

As mentioned, external factors include forces external to an organization or individual that predict turnover. For example, positive “perceptions of the job market” are believed to predict turnover (Iverson, 2000). When an individual’s perception of their ability to “obtain a job as good, better or much better than they presently have” is favourable, individuals are more likely to leave the organization (Iverson, 2000). Perceived “job alternatives” is another external factor linked to labour market supply and demand which enhances the probability of voluntary departure when an employee is confident other opportunities are abundant (Lloyd, Murphy & Price, 2006). Known to influence turnover, these factors are often seen as outside an organization’s direct control and, while noted in causal models of turnover, are not typically the factor of inquiry in studies of voluntary turnover.

2.1.2 ORGANIZATIONAL FORCES

Likely due to the measure of control an employer may exert in this area to mitigate turnover, organizational factors driving turnover appear to be the most frequently studied factor group influencing turnover (as opposed to external or individual factors). While each organizational factor will be discussed in detail in subsequent paragraphs, there are ten frequently cited organizational factors which are typically included or considered in causal models of turnover: work environment and culture, job satisfaction, organizational justice, effective leadership, career development, training opportunities, recognition and rewards, meaningful work and recruitment practices. Before a more thorough discussion of each organizational factor, it is critical to note one of the greatest limitations of voluntary turnover research: while it is possible to identify correlations between singular organizational factors and turnover, it is a significant challenge to attribute causation to any singular organizational factor due to their “overlap[ping]” nature within the organizational context (Maertz & Griffeth, 2004, p.668; Currivan, 1999). Given this challenge, there is no definitive and agreed upon causal model available in the literature. What follows is a discussion of the most prominent organizational factors emerging from a review of the available research.

Negative work environment and culture

In the literature, it is widely accepted that a negative workplace environment and culture is positively correlated with turnover and that positive “organizational and group cultures tend to decrease turnover” (Llorens & Stazyk, 2010, p.116; Dass & Topaloglu, 2014; Kumar, James & Matthew, 2012). Organizational culture is defined as “the core values, beliefs, norms and

perceptions of organizational members that shape their behavior and attitudes,” while work environment or climate is defined as “the prevailing atmosphere that exists in an organization and is an outcome of the culture” (British Columbia Human Resources Management Association, 2014, p.83). Thus, organizational activities to engender a positive culture may be capable of reducing turnover. As noted by Sheridan (1992), employees are more likely to remain with their employer in workplace cultures “emphasizing interpersonal relationships” in comparison to cultures with a higher emphasis on “work task values” (p.1050). Moreover, Paille (2013) concludes that productive, positive and friendly relationships between co-workers are “key factors that reduce intention to quit and increase commitment to the customer” (p.48). Neidermeyer (2004) established workplace optimism and efficiency as turnover antecedents, wherein pessimism and inefficiency can lead to turnover. Numerous studies also demonstrate that positive supervisor-employee relationships are a key component of workplace culture which is negatively associated with turnover (Higgs, 2006; Paille, 2013; Pitts; Marvel & Fernandez, 2011). Importantly, Lloyd, Murphy & Price (2006) state that a positive and “social” work environment is a precursor to job satisfaction – another frequently cited organizational factor known to influence turnover (p. 650).

Lack of job satisfaction

Job satisfaction is another turnover antecedent, heavily influenced by organizational activities, frequently cited in the literature (Blankertz & Robinson, 1997; Cahalane & Sites, 2008; Coombs, 2009; Currivan, 1999; Deery, 2008; Fernandez & Moldogaziev 2013; Haushknecht, Rodda & Howard 2009; Kumar, Dass & Topaloglu, 2014; Liou, 1998; Llorens & Stazyk, 2010; Lloyd & Price, 2006; Pitts, Marvel & Fernandez, 2011). Job satisfaction is defined by an individual’s overall gratification with their role based on their perception of “job-related variables” including, but not limited to, individual “autonomy” (i.e. do they feel empowered or micro-managed?), job variety (i.e. are there a multitude of different tasks to complete or is the work monotonous and standardized?), role clarity (i.e. do they know where their job begins and ends and is their individual contribution clear?), “co-worker support” (i.e. do they have positive relationships with co-workers?) and “supervisory support” (i.e. do supervisors support them personally and professionally?) (Kennedy & Daim, 2010, p.399). Liou (1998) notes that voluntary departure is “negatively correlated” with general job satisfaction (p.161), and Lloyd, Murphy and Price (2006), note in a more recent “meta-analysis” of employee turnover that “a fundamental way of decreasing employee turnover is to raise the level of job satisfaction” (p. 650). In a study of turnover intention, which involved review of survey results for over 25,000 employees at a leisure and hospitality employer, Haushknecht, Rodda and Howard (2009) found that job satisfaction was the most frequently selected reason for remaining with their current employer (p.269).

Weak organizational justice

The concept of organizational justice is another turnover precursor identified in the literature (Cho & Lewis, 2011; Choi, 2010; Hassan, 2012). Organizational justice refers to an employee's perception of their organization's internal practices (i.e. decision-making, promotions, internal communication, allocation of rewards, human resources practices, etc.) (Haushknecht, Rodda and Howard, 2009, p.271). Choi (2010), Cho and Lewis (2011) and Hassan (2013) all highlight the relationship between fair organizational practices and turnover intention. Hassan (2012) notes specifically that "several studies have found a negative linkage between federal employees' perceptions of organizational fairness and their turnover intention" (p.541). A sub-theme in the research on organizational justice focusses specifically on organizational decision-making processes which provide employees with an opportunity to provide input and feedback. Inclusive decision-making processes are known to play a role in either curbing or exacerbating turnover (Grissom, 2011; Higgs, 2006, Kumar, Dass & Topaloglu 2014). For example, Grissom (2011) notes that "giving employees a voice in organizational decisions is associated with increased feelings of empowerment and job satisfaction, which suggests participation may reduce employee turnover as well" (p.401). Practices to promote organizational justice are only as effective in so far as they are properly executed and observed by supervisors and leaders, which is perhaps why effective leadership is also a commonly cited turnover antecedent.

Ineffective leadership

Effective leadership is an organizational turnover antecedent with the ability to influence turnover in its own right, but it also undergirds other turnover antecedents (i.e. organizational justice, workplace culture, etc.) making it an important organizational factor influencing turnover (Cahalane & Sites, 2008; Grissom, 2011; Hickey & Bennett 2012; Lee & Jimenez, 2011; Llorens & Stazyk, 2010; Lloyd, Murphy & Price, 2006). Grissom (2011) states that "effective supervisors have been identified as a strong predictor of employee turnover in both public sector and private sector studies" (p.401). Moreover, employees are more likely to turnover under "ineffective managers" (Grissom, 2011, p.400). Hickey and Bennett (2012) also highlight the importance of effective leadership with their finding that individuals receiving an appropriate amount of performance feedback and recognition from their supervisors are more likely to experience higher levels of job satisfaction and are therefore less likely to turnover (p.16).

Numerous other studies have proven a link between effective leadership and turnover and identified specific aspects of the supervisor-employee relationship that are critical in this regard. In their study of United States federal public service employees, Lee and Jimenez (2011) found that "performance-supporting supervision" positively influences "employees' attachment to their organizational units" (p.179). Llorens and Stazyk (2010) found "supportive supervision and management tend to decrease turnover" (p.116). Van Dyk and Coetzee (2012) highlighted that the most effective aspect of supervisor support is the provision of "recognition and feedback" (p.4). Finally, a link has been demonstrated between manager and supervisor emotional

intelligence and employee retention rates, further underscoring the critical role of effective leadership in managing employee retention (Palmer & Gignac, 2012).

Absence of career development opportunities

Perhaps the most intuitive turnover antecedent, career development is another organizational factor influencing turnover. There is ample research confirming the relationship between career development opportunities and employee turnover: employees are less likely to turnover when they perceive their current employer as able to offer future career development (Blankertz & Robinson, 1997; Cho & Lewis, 2011, Hannay & Northam, 2000; Llorens & Stazyk, 2010; Pitts, Marvel & Fernandez, 2011; Lloyd, Murphy & Price, 2006; Van Dyk & Coetzee, 2012). Cho & Lewis (2011) found that “public sector employees are less likely to leave their jobs...when they are satisfied with their opportunities for advancement” (p.7). Private sector studies confirm the same relationship between development and turnover (Van Dyk & Coetzee, 2012). Hannah and Northam (2000) propose that employees define future possible opportunities with their employer more broadly than a promotion (p.67). They suggest that employees consider “additional responsibilities, more interesting and challenging responsibilities, more money, promotional opportunities, more respect and autonomy” as forms of career development.

Limited training opportunities

Like career development opportunities, the availability of training opportunities is another organizational precursor to voluntary turnover (Cho & Lewis, 2011; Deery, 2104; Shuck, Twyford, Reio Jr. & Shuck, 2014). Cho and Lewis (2011) highlight that “employees who receive training express lower intentions of quitting” (p.6). Deery (2008) reports similar findings, noting that “training new employees significantly mitigates their desire to leave the organization” (p.793). While not given as much attention as career development in the literature, training opportunities receive mention and do factor into most causal models of turnover. Although training opportunities are not given as much discussion in the literature as other organizational factors leading to turnover, literature on employee retention practices suggests that training programs are a valuable strategy in managing turnover (Hinkin & Tracey, 2010; Hughes & Rog, 2008; James & Matthew, 2012; McGahern, 2008; Posthuma, Campion, Masimova & Campion, 2013; Thite & Russell, 2010; Vega, 2009; Von Achen, 2010).

Absence of recognition and rewards

Recognition and rewards are also organizational factors included in causal models of turnover discussed in the literature. Recognition refers to both formal (i.e. a company program) and informal (i.e. a manager providing verbal positive feedback) modes of valuing and appreciating employees for their contributions, while rewards refers to specific tangibles given to acknowledge good performance (i.e. a paid day off, a performance bonus, etc.). Hickey and Bennett (2012) established a “statistically significant, strong positive relationship” between “people who get adequate recognition from their supervisors” and individual organizational

commitment (p.16). Further, Cho & Lewis (2011) conclude that in order to retain United States federal public service employees, “federal managers can probably have their most important impact on retention...through [human resources management] practices that make employees feel valued and fairly treated” (p.6). Like training opportunities, recognition and rewards receive less attention in the literature on turnover precursors; however, they are featured prominently in literature on employee retention as critical areas for organizational focus to mitigate turnover (Deery, 2008; Hausknecht, 2009; Hinkin & Tracey, 2010; Huselid, 1995; James & Matthew, 2012; Kim & Lee, 2007; Whittington & Galpin, 2010).

Meaningless work

Closely related to job satisfaction, meaningful work is another organizational factor in models of voluntary employee turnover. Linkages between employee perceptions of meaning in their work and intent to turnover have been established (Cho & Lewis, 2011; Cahalane & Sites, 2008; Iverson, 2000; Naff & Crum, 1999; Shim & Rohrbaugh, 2011). Cho and Lewis (2011) assert that “meaningful work that promotes intrinsic motivation can discourage turnover” (p.7). Shim and Rohrbaugh (2011) make a similar statement “stronger government career commitment was linked to reports of greater job involvement, more organizational commitment and lower turnover intention” (p.263). Supporting employees in seeing the meaning in their work, through either highlighting their role in the bigger organizational value chain or helping them see the value of their work for clients is a preeminent employee retention strategy suggested in employee retention literature, further underscoring its status as a turnover antecedent (Alonso & Lewis, 2011; Ban, Drahnak-Faller & Towers, 2003; Bart & Baertz, 1997; Brown & Yakisoba, 2003; Cahalane & Sites, 2008; Cartwright & Holmes, 2006; Coombs, 2009; Frey & Bayón, 2014; Hausknecht, 2009; Kim & Lee, 2007, Monsen & Boss, 2009; Naff & Crum, 1999; Thite & Russell, Whittington & Galpin, 2010).

Poor recruitment practices

The final organizational turnover antecedent emerging from a review of the literature is recruitment practices. Effective recruitment practices, resulting in a strong person-job and person-organization fit, are negatively correlated with voluntary turnover (Bright, 2008; Hickey & Bennett, 2012; Carr, Pearson, Vest & Boyar, 2006; Hendrick & Raspillar, 2011; Lloyd, Murphy & Price, 2006). The concepts of person-job and person-organization fit refer to:

an employee’s perceived compatibility or comfort with an organization and with his or her environment...an employee’s personal values, career goals, and plans for the future must fit with the larger corporate culture and the demand of his or her immediate job (job knowledge, skills, and abilities) (Erez, 2011, p.1104).

Thus, effective recruitment and selection tactics can have a direct impact on employee turnover by selecting candidates whose needs and preferences align with those of the role itself and the employer. The importance of selecting candidates with strong person-job and person-

organization fit is a firm conclusion in the employee retention literature (Bhatnagar, 2007; Borzaga & Tortia, 2006; Carr et al., 2006; Hannay & Northam, 2000; Hendrick & Raspillar, 2011; Span, 2013; Thite & Russell; Whittington & Galpin, 2010).

2.1.3 PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

As noted, certain individual characteristics are also highlighted in the literature on turnover antecedents. Studies have demonstrated that age, family responsibility, role tenure, gender and training level all have an impact on voluntary turnover.

Age and family responsibility

There is strong agreement in the literature that age and family responsibility are predictive of turnover (Cho & Lewis, 2011; Hannah & Northam, 2000; Iverson, 2000; Kumar, Dass & Topaloglu 2014; Liou, 1998; Pitts, Marvel & Fernandez; Van Dyk & Coetzee 2012; Wu, 2012). This literature either directly or indirectly references what is known as the “life cycle stability hypothesis” wherein “older and more settled employees with family obligations are less likely to quit” while less settled younger workers are more willing to change roles to seek out better “person-job fit” or better “person-organization fit” (Cho & Lewis, 2011, p.8). However, family obligations may contribute to turnover if organizations do not effectively enable employees to balance work and life commitments through their culture and policies (James & Matthew, 2012).

Role tenure

Role tenure, related to age, is also predictive of turnover as “employees who are older and who have greater years of service have greater investments (i.e. side-bets or sunk costs) in organizations. These may take many forms such as skills or fringe bets which lock employees in the organization” (Iverson, 2000, p.401).

Gender

Earlier turnover research on gender once concluded that women were more likely to resign than men, however more recent research has demonstrated that men are more likely to resign than women (Iverson, 2000; Kumar, Dass & Topaloglu 2014; Moynihan and Landuyt, 2008).

Training level

Finally, training level has also been correlated to employee intent to quit (Grissom, 2011; Kumar, Dass & Topalaglu, 2014). Employees who have received extensive training, are satisfied with training offerings and who perceive themselves as technical experts are less likely to turnover (Thite & Russell, 2010).

2.2 EFFECTIVE RETENTION PRACTICES

Given the deleterious impacts of undesired employee turnover on an organization, it is unsurprising that a significant body of literature exists on the topic of organizational employee retention practices (i.e. what an organization can do to encourage employees to stay). While there are an abundance of peer-reviewed studies testing the efficacy of particular practices, there exists no singular meta-analysis identifying a specific set of practices as preeminently effective in promoting employee retention. Huselid (1995) has previously noted the challenge of identifying best practices in human resources management more broadly as “the efficacies of any practices can only be determined in the context of a particular firm’s strategic and environmental contingencies,” but contended that it “should be possible to identify the best [human resources management] practices, those whose adoption generally leads to valued firm-level outcomes” (p.643). While some meta-analyses identifying best practices in general human resources management exist, there is a dearth of peer-reviewed work identifying a set of organizational best practices for promoting employee retention. However, as mentioned, there are many peer-reviewed studies focusing on individual organizational practices promoting retention.

To impose order on the literature and identify those themes most commonly cited as effective in managing retention from an organizational standpoint, the researcher decided to partially adopt an approach developed by Posthuma, Campion, Masimova and Campion (2013). To address the challenge of limited agreement in the human resources management literature on the definition of high performance work practices (HPWP), Posthuma et al. (2013) developed a “taxonomy” of HPWPs by ranking identified practices based on the frequency of their citation in the literature, and a number of other factors. HPWPs were then classified as “core,” “broad” and “peripheral” depending on the regularity of their appearance in the literature (Posthuma et al. 2013, p. 1191). Borrowing from Posthuma et al.’s method of organizing and analyzing human resources practices, the researcher developed a list of practices emerging from the employee retention literature using frequency of citation to rank the practices in descending order from most cited to least frequently cited.

To yield the maximum possible number of peer-reviewed sources for inclusion in the review, Google Scholar and University of Victoria Summon 2.0 were used to scan the available body of literature. Google Scholar was used first to conduct a broad scan across a multitude of disciplines. The Public Library of Science (2014) estimates that Google Scholar can access 80 to 90 percent of all articles on the Internet published in English, making it an effective means of scanning for academic literature (Khabisa & Giles, 2014). University of Victoria Summon 2.0 was used to conduct a scan of the entire University of Victoria Library collection, including books and scholarly journals. Summon 2.0 enables the researcher to locate relevant content through one search across all databases available at the University of Victoria, including, but not limited to: Academic Search Complete (EBSCO), Business Source Complete (EBSCO),

Cambridge Journals Online, Canadian Public Policy Collection, JSTOR, PsycINFO (EBSCO) and SAGE Journals Online (University of Victoria, n.d.). Boolean search combined with advanced search capabilities were leveraged in both search mediums to narrow the findings and yield high-relevance sources. Please see [Appendix B](#) for the complete list of search terms used to identify sources for inclusion in the review of employee retention practices. In the first scan, emphasis was placed on finding research conducted in a public or non-profit context. Following a review of initial findings, most peer-reviewed work investigating public and non-profit sector employee retention appeared to rely on and build on employee retention research across all sectors, indicating that research on the subject does not typically distinguish by sector. As such, the search was eventually expanded to include research conducted across all employment sectors by removing the sector-specific search word(s). In total, 38 peer-reviewed studies were identified for inclusion in the review.

Given the wide array of terms used to reference the same or highly similar or mutually reinforcing practices (or groups of practices) in human resources management, applied thematic analysis was used to group practices identified in the literature into broader groups (Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2012). Microsoft Office Excel was used to note, track, collapse and refine the qualitative data and the following bullets describe the process applied by the researcher:

- All sources were read and notes on recurring effective practices were made as they arose; similar themes were noted as such and clustered together.
- During the second reading, clear themes were formally named and placed in groups, and previously identified themes were collapsed and worked into parent themes.
- In the third reading, theme occurrences were counted providing a basis for ranking in the taxonomy and noted by source and theme within the worksheet.
- As the development of themes is an iterative process, the third reading also resulted in a final collapsing and refining of identified themes within the worksheet.

The full worksheet of identified theme groups is located in [Appendix C](#) for further reference. The employee retention practices are summarized in Table 1 and are discussed and unpacked in thorough detail below.

Table 1. Effective Retention Practices in Descending Order of Citation Frequency

Practice	Citation(s)
Highlight how the work is meaningful.	15
Market employer brand and employee value proposition internally and externally.	12
Provide opportunities for career advancement and development.	12
Empower employees and gather employee input in decision-making.	8
Offer a recognition program.	8
Provide training and development opportunities.	7
Train managers to enhance their performance management, coaching and mentoring skills.	7
Establish person-job and person-organization fit.	7
Facilitate a positive work environment and culture.	7
Employ a highly selective recruitment process.	5
Ensure work/life balance is supported.	4
Monitor and analyze turnover patterns and adjust programs continuously.	3
Explore under-utilized talent pools with higher retention rates.	3
Establish a formal internal communications program.	2
Ensure external pay equity.	2

2.2.1 Highlight how the work is meaningful

The most frequently cited practice for promoting employee retention, was the imperative that organizations highlight the meaning of the work employees perform. The purpose of this organizational activity is to foster positive perceptions of the work in the individual employee by highlighting personal contributions to the organization and linking individual contributions to positive organizational outcomes. As discussed in the first half of the literature, job satisfaction and meaningful work are drivers of turnover and it appears that assisting employees in seeing how they contribute to the bigger picture in a positive manner addresses these turnover drivers and promotes retention. The literature clearly indicates that employees are most likely to stay or express a commitment to stay when organizational strategies support one or more of the following: a strong normative belief in the organization's mission; a feeling of pride in the value of the service individual employees provide to organizational clients; individual employees feeling as though their personal contributions have an impact on positive organizational outcomes (Alonso & Lewis, 2001; Ban, Drahnak-Faller & Towers, 2003; Bart & Baetz, 1998; Blankertz & Robinson, 1997; Brown & Yoshioka, 2003; Cahalane & Sites, 2008; Cartwright & Holmes, 2006; Coombs, 2009; Frey & Bayón, 2013; Hausknecht, Rodda & Howard, 2009; Kim & Lee, 2007; Monsen & Wayne, 2009; Thite & Russell, 2010; Whittington & Galpin, 2010).

This theme emerged in investigative works and case studies on efforts to stem high turnover in private and public sector settings. Thite and Russell's (2010) research on employee retention in call centres, notorious for high turnover rates when compared to other work environments, indicated that a strong positive correlation exists between positive employee perception of their specific skill sets, their ability to deliver positive outcomes for customers and individual employee commitment. Frey and Bayón (2013) established a linkage between "employee

satisfaction and retention” and “customer satisfaction” finding that the more employees felt they directly impacted client satisfaction and the more satisfied clients were, the more likely employees were to express intention to stay (p.509).

Blankertz and Robinson (1997) identified that the role of “intrinsic rewards” is a critical retention factor and that “staff stay in the field of [psychosocial rehabilitation] because of the fulfillment that comes from helping individuals with severe mental disabilities and because their job is an important step in their career” (p.527). Coombs (2009) studied IT professionals in the United Kingdom public sector and found, overall, that “identification with the organization...had a statistically significant relationship with intention to stay” (p.233); further, they found that individual IT professionals indicated that “feeling what [they] do matters” and “perceived [that the] value of the IT work in improving patient care may be viewed as a role with greater value and more worthwhile than performing a similar role in a profit making company” (p.239).

Cartwright and Holmes (2006) highlighted that younger workers were more inclined to stay onboard with an organization and contend that it was a “good job” when they “considered the work interesting,” felt a sense of “accomplishment” and felt they “added something to peoples’ lives” at work (p.199). The literature noting this practice is especially salient for younger generations. A Canada Public Policy Forum (2010) publication on retaining Generation Y workers noted that younger workers are more motivated, than previous generations, to work for ethically responsible organizations and make a difference through their work.

While the different variations of this practice do not exist in a vacuum from other human resources practices and most of the literature was careful to note that positive employee perceptions of their work and/or the work of their organization does not replace other important considerations for promoting employee retention (i.e. external pay equity, advancement opportunities, etc.), its dominance in the literature nonetheless underscores its status as a critically important lever in promoting employee retention.

2.2.2. Market employer brand and employee value proposition internally and externally

The practice of marketing employer brand and employee value proposition internally and externally is not necessarily an intuitive employee retention strategy. This practice involves the use of aggressive marketing communications campaigns designed to highlight what the organization offers employees through an employer value proposition statement. The purpose being to retain current employees and capture committed new talent through appealing to current and prospective employees as an employer of choice. There is a high level of agreement in the literature that this is an effective practice for influencing employee engagement and/or employee retention both in how it attracts individuals who will be an organizational fit and in promoting existing employee buy-in and commitment (Hughes & Rog, 2008; Kim & Lee, 2007; Whittington & Galpin, 2010; Hausknecht et al., 2009; Cahalane & Sites, 2008; Cartwright &

Holmes, 2006; Coombs, 2009; Frey & Bayón, 2013; Bart & Baetz, 1998; Blankertz & Robinson, 1997; Bhatnagar, 2007; Hinkin & Tracey, 2010).

Hughes and Rog (2008) recommended adopting the marketing of employer brand not only as a method of recruiting future talent but also as a means for “help[ing] employees internalize the organization’s mission, vision and values” and instilling mission attachment (p.753). They contended that this marketing should contain an employee value proposition which “makes clear to the employee ‘what’s in it for them’ or what extrinsic and intrinsic benefits they will receive in exchange for their labour, both now and in the future” (p.753). Whittington and Galpin (2010) also noted the importance of selling potential hires *and* recent hires on the employer value proposition statement to promote engagement and retention (p.15).

Hausknecht et al. (2009) highlighted the importance of developing employee perceptions of “organizational prestige” as a tactic to promote retention and contended that positive perceptions of employer exclusivity or “prestige” are influenced by a number of factors including the competitiveness of the recruitment phase and perceptions stemming from effective internal/external marketing of employer brand (p.289).

Cahalane and Sites (2008), in their study of child welfare workers in the United States, argued that a lack of “prestige in the community and tendency for negative publicity” had significant impacts on worker willingness to remain with their service organizations and noted the government imperative to invest in positive marketing to enhance the public and potential/current employee perception of the value and professionalism of the child welfare discipline (p.105). Similarly, Coomb’s (2009) study of UK public sector IT professionals, notes the imperative of senior public service leaders to tap into public service motivation as a retention lever by providing organizational reinforcement of the notion that “IT professionals are building and maintaining systems that help save lives” and that this lever can be tapped through internal marketing to employees (p.239). Frey & Bayón (2013) identified a strong positive correlation between client and employee satisfaction, and suggested that human resources and marketing departments, while distinct disciplines, must ensure they partner regularly to showcase client satisfaction to employees in an effort to support engagement and retention (p.503).

2.2.3. Provide opportunities for career advancement and development

Fairly self-explanatory, the practice of providing opportunities for career advancement and development received robust support in the literature as an effective practice for promoting employee retention. All sources citing this practice noted the perceived and/or demonstrated positive correlation between career development programs and employee retention rates (James & Mathew, 2012; Oladapo, 2014; Hughes & Rog, 2008; Luna-Arocas & Camps, 2008; Kim & Lee, 2007; Whittington & Galpin, 2010; Hausknecht et al., 2009; Hannay & Northam, 2000; van Dyk & Coetzee, 2012; Glen, 2006; Blankertz & Robinson, 1997; Thite & Russell, 2010).

Providing career development opportunities refers to human resources management programs and tactics which result in employee perception that there is room for them to grow within the company, or, stated differently, a clear career path in which individuals in entry level roles can grow into intermediate roles and eventually senior roles, provided they meet readiness performance benchmarks.

While existence of a career path within the organization was a clear theme, the importance of also retaining employees by providing opportunities for enhancing “employability...[to become] more entrepreneurial and pursue their own self-managed or boundaryless careers” through professional development in their current roles was also given significant weight in the literature (Cartwright & Holmes, 2006, p.196); the traditional, stable career pattern of an individual dedicating most of their career to one organization is no longer considered the norm; employees expect development in their current role for their next role (not necessarily in the same organization) and will leave sooner than planned in an environment bereft of career development opportunities. The means of developing employees for the next step in their careers, whether internal or external to the organization are highly varied and dependent on the unique structure and services provided by each organization, but some frequently cited means included:

- Job rotation or cross-training, practices which offer employees opportunities to grow their skills, challenge their abilities and enhance their understanding of organizational operations by having them work in a number of, more or less, lateral roles.
- Job enrichment in which roles are either expanded laterally to include a larger variety of tasks or stacked vertically to enhance decision-making and autonomy.
- Opportunities to network.
- Participation on project teams or work on special assignments.
- Participation on cross-organizational committees.
- Providing vacation coverage in the absence of supervisors.

It’s important to note that sources citing this practice noted the importance of career development programs dovetailing with the organizational performance management systems and the provision of manager training to meaningfully discuss career development with employees (management training is a distinct practice in itself and is discussed below).

2.2.4 Empower employees and gather employee input in decision-making

Empowering employees and gathering employee input in decision-making where possible emerged as an effective practice in the literature. Sources citing some variation of this practice note the impact of participative decision-making and employee empowerment initiatives on either overall engagement (driving retention) or retention specifically and offer encouraging support for initiatives to expose employees to business planning processes (i.e. budgeting, generating strategic business plans, etc.) and solicit employee input and feedback on changes and decision-making that will impact them individually and/or within their smaller, respective

business units (Posthuma et al., 2013; Hughes & Rog, 2008; Monsen & Wayne Boss, 2009; Whittington & Galpin, 2010; Hannay & Northam, 2000; Huselid, 1995; Cahalane & Sites, 2008; Grissom, 2011; 2004). This theme is conceptually linked to the practice of management training (explored below) because, together, the themes reinforce the outcome of creating a culture of employee empowerment.

Posthuma et al. (2013), generated a high performance work practices taxonomy and noted that “decentralized participative decisions” are a “core” high performance work practice when it comes to job design, based on their analysis of the entire high performance work practices literature (p.1194). Hughes and Rog (2008) emphasized the need to empower employees with “appropriate decision-making authority” as a key driver of employee retention, noting that when developing an employer brand statement the ability to showcase a culture of empowerment can be a powerful selling tool for employers (p.763). Grissom (2011) studied participative decision-making in the United States public service and his study supports previous findings that providing employees with the opportunity to participate in “organizational decision-making” has a direct impact on “employee-level outcomes such as job satisfaction” (p.400).

2.2.5. Offer a recognition program

Sources reviewing the practice of offering a recognition program explain that employers would be wise to invest in recognition/reward programs, providing extrinsic (i.e. performance bonuses, incentive compensation, employee stock options, on the spot rewards, compensation, etc.) and intrinsic rewards (i.e. recognition of achievements, performance-based recognition, job feedback, positive and supportive work environment, etc.) in support of employee engagement, and, by extension, employee retention (James & Matthew, 2012; Kim & Lee, 2007; Posthuma et al., 2013; Deery, 2008; Whittington & Galpin, 2010; Hausknecht et al., 2009; Huselid, 1995; McMullen & Royal, 2011).

Virtually all sources engaging with this theme were careful not to overstate the role of extrinsic rewards in employee retention, in alignment with generally accepted human resources management theory undergirded by Herzberg’s Motivation-Hygiene Theory.³ For example, Oldapo (2014) noted that “pay and benefits initially attract employees, [but] it is not the primary reason given for retaining them” (p.30). In Cahalane and Sites’ (2008) study of federally employed American child welfare professionals, a lack of recognition or acknowledgement for positive outcomes was identified as the primary reason for employee turnover, even though dissatisfaction with pay was prevalent among the research participants (p.91).

³ Herzberg noted that workers have hygiene and motivation needs, hygiene needs refers to things like compensation, working conditions and status and motivation needs referring to things like recognition, achievement, training and challenging work. Herzberg found that meeting hygiene needs does not mean that employees will be satisfied by their work, only that they will not be dissatisfied. Thus, highlighting the importance of motivation needs where hygiene needs were once privileged (Noe et al., 2006, p.87).

The non-profit and public sector literature discusses tactics for administering reward and recognition programs, in a fiscally strained environment, to tap extrinsic and intrinsic motivation by ensuring both line managers and senior leadership partner to provide: special performance recognition on a regular basis in department meetings (with symbolic on-the-spot rewards provided), hosting special off-site events on a quarterly basis, offering paid time off (i.e. a half day for meeting a performance target or birthdays off) and team celebrations for personal milestones where appropriate (birthdays, work anniversaries, promotions, departures, etc.), personalized letters from senior leadership when on-boarding and for employment anniversaries, notes to employee files (with a copy to the employee) for positive achievements or going above and beyond, sharing good-news stories across the organization and frequent individualized and informal praise when warranted (Kim & Lee, 2007).

This theme is tangentially linked to the most frequently cited practice: highlight how the work is meaningful. A strong and effective reward and recognition program is one of the primary means by which an employer can leverage this retention driver by highlighting and reinforcing the impact employees (can) have on positive organizational outcomes on an individual basis.

2.2.6 Provide training and development opportunities

Providing training and development opportunities is similar to the practice of providing opportunities for career advancement and development, but is categorically different. The provision of training and development opportunities as a retention strategy supports employees in enhancing their personal and professional capabilities to support performance in their *current role* by improving their sense of confidence, effectiveness and productivity; factors which stem early turnover but can also contribute to career advancement and development. Creating opportunities for career advancement and development as a retention strategy emphasizes providing learning and applied opportunities to *stretch* an employee's performance to develop *readiness for the next step*, and, where possible, have positions to support career progression within the company. Numerous sources cited provision of training and development opportunities as an important retention initiative (Thite & Russell, 2010; Posthuma et al., 2013; James & Mathew, 2012; Hughes & Rog, 2008; Whittington & Galpin, 2010; Hinkin & Tracey, 2010).

The literature reviews a number of effective mediums that organizations can adopt to enhance employee retention and organizational performance through the provision of training and development opportunities, beyond basic, preliminary on-the-job training. The mediums are effective for both technical training opportunities to support employees in carrying out specific job tasks (i.e. sales techniques, records management, using a database, leveraging advanced reporting functionalities, etc.) and competency development training opportunities to enhance behavioural competencies (i.e. communicating effectively, consensus building, time management), and include: online learning modules (typically accessed through a company intranet or web portal), classroom style lectures/courses/sessions (onsite or offsite), attendance at

industry/trade conferences, task delegation and the availability of job-aids (i.e. positions manuals to provide assistance executing tasks).

The literature offers substantive support for the provision of training and development opportunities as a means to reduce employee turnover across all sectors and industries. Thite and Russell (2010), in their work on call centres, found a strong positive correlation between worker satisfaction with training and development opportunities and “intention to stay” (p.363).⁴ In their study of the effects of common retention strategies on employee intention to stay, James and Matthew (2012) established a link between the provision of training and development opportunities, when bundled with other retention strategies (i.e. career development, rewards and recognition, etc.), and employee intention to stay (p. 84). Hinkin and Tracey (2010) conducted an analysis of Fortune 500’s “Best Companies to Work For” to investigate the human resources management practices of the hospitality, food service and health care organizations which made the list. They selected those industries because they share similar people management challenges, namely “long operating hours, relatively high turnover, and relatively low pay” (p.158). One of the primary findings was the hospitality, food service and health care organizations which made the list had human resources management practices in common, including “training programs that are viewed as an investment in people with emphasis on career tracks and[/or] promotion” (p.168).

2.2.7 Train managers to enhance their performance management, coaching and mentoring skills

The literature citing the practice of training managers to enhance performance management, coaching and mentoring recommends investing in line manager training on the topics of emotional intelligence, relationship building, assertive communication, employee career and personal development, performance management (i.e. providing constructive and future-focussed feedback), coaching, mentoring and conflict resolution as critical activities to support retention, especially the retention of high performers (Deery, 2008, Whittington & Galpin, 2010; Huselid, 1995; Van Dyk & Coetzee, 2012; Grissom, 2011; Palmer & Gignac, 2012, Blankertz & Robinson, 1997).

Works concluding that investments in managerial training have a positive impact on employee retention almost all underscored the relationship between management awareness and training (in the areas of performance management, coaching and mentoring) and the ability of an organization to successfully implement retention strategies and shift the manager/employee relationship paradigm so that employees feel engaged, empowered and accountable. For example, Huselid (1995) noted that the adoption of so-called “high performance work practices”

⁴ Also note that Thite and Russell (2010) established a strong positive correlation between employee perception of their individual skill level (in relation to positive customer outcomes) and “intention to stay,” indicating a three-way link between the provision of training (i.e. improving employee perception of their subject matter expert), positive employee perception of their contributions and intention to stay (p.363).

at the organizational level to promote employee engagement and retention are only effective to the extent that line managers are trained and able to oversee them at the departmental level (p.643). Many of the sources citing strategies and programs promoting the development of skilled and adept people managers noted the colloquial adage that employees don't quit their jobs, they quit their managers.

Numerous articles in the private and public sector literature stressed the role that effective management training (i.e. where training transfer actually occurs) can have on the manager-employee relationship and subsequently engagement and/or retention rates. Van Dyk and Coetzee (2012) emphasized investing in managerial training to coach employees on career and personal development and support employees through personal and professional challenges as a critical layer in a comprehensive retention strategy. Palmer and Gignac (2012) endorsed investment in “[emotional intelligence] development as a strategy to improve employment brand, talent retention and productivity” (p.10). They found a strong positive correlation between managers with higher levels of emotional intelligence and self-awareness (i.e. the ability to “perceive and understand the feelings of others” and “regulate and manage their emotions”) and talent retention (p.10). In a case study reviewing Barclaycard's (a large, UK-based, international credit card company) successful efforts to address costly and severe call centre turnover rates, McGahern (2008), reviewed the series of talent retention initiatives deployed by the credit card giant and noted that the critical success factor underpinning the entire talent management program was the development of a “coaching culture” and ensuring that “managers had the skills to coach” through extensive training (p.32). The business justification to invest in the training was a desire to shift the “parent-child relationship, within which people were just told by their manager what to do, to one in which people were taking responsibility for their own development” (p.32).

An oft noted challenge in public sector human resources is the perceived lack of individual or even team control over outcomes given the often highly varied and complex stakeholder groups teams serve (i.e. what is a successful outcome?), the massive cross-functional work teams deployed to deliver government initiatives, programs and services, and the hierarchical decision-making and agenda-setting structure. Interestingly, Grissom's (2011) study of employee empowerment through organizational decision-making participation (among United States public sector employees) undercuts any argument that a lack of employee empowerment, accountability and individual control are engagement and retention issues inherent to public service and not feasibly addressed: he found that “employees are less likely to turn over under effective managers regardless of their degree of organizational policy influence,[but] under ineffective managers turnover increases as employees' perceived influence increases” (p.400). The study recommended investments in enhancing managerial people leadership competencies through training (p.400).

2.2.8 Establish person-job and person-organization fit

The literature touching on the practice of person-job and person-organization fit offers encouragement for organizations to assess their recruitment, orientation, on-boarding and training, change management and organizational effectiveness programs, activities and initiatives to ensure they are effectively leveraging them as strategies for reducing negative employee turnover (Whittington & Galpin, 2010; Hannay & Northam, 2000; Hendrick & Raspiller, 2011; Carr, Pearson, Vest & Boyar, 2011; Borzaga & Tortia, 2011; Bhatnagar, 2007). This practice is closely linked with a less prevalent practice, a highly selective recruiting process (to be discussed shortly), but remains conceptually distinct in that establishing person-job and person-organization fit extends far beyond the recruitment and selection phase of an employee's relationship with the organization and highly selective recruiting practices serve a dual process: to screen out weak candidates *and* to generate a positive successful candidate perception of the prestige of their new role and organization.

Recruitment is a powerful opportunity to promote employee retention through the use of screening criteria designed to select the candidate(s) who have the right knowledge, skills, abilities and competencies to be successful and comfortable in the role (an important factor in stemming early turnover) but also to enhance the probability that successful candidates will remain in the role and/or the organization by examining their fit both for the job (i.e. is the work something they will enjoy based on personal preferences and does it fit into their personal plans?) and with the organization (i.e. What do they think about the mission? How do they see themselves contributing to the bigger picture? What is important to them in a work environment?). While recruitment is an opportunity to screen out individuals who demonstrate weak person-job and person-organization fit, thus promoting employee retention when executed effectively, orientation, on-boarding and training, change management and organizational effectiveness are human resources management areas that can be leveraged to enhance employee organizational fit (and promote fit over time) through illustrating how employees personally contribute to the organization and where they fit into the organizational mission (especially as these typically change over time).

The literature indicates employers should utilize testing, where feasible, to assess fit and bear in mind some important predictors of fit to support successful organizational socialization. Hendrick and Raspiller (2011) tested the effectiveness of multiple "preemployment assessments" and their impact on employee turnover in community colleges. They found a particular testing package (Work Keys Skills Assessment Battery), designed to uncover person-job and person-organization fit, yielded candidates who remained with the organization for a longer period of time than those successful candidates who were hired without the use of the fit test (p.895). Carr et al. (2011), investigated the influence of person-job-organization fit on retention; their findings indicated that

experience and levels of fit are significantly related, thus...with greater experience in an occupation, including a greater wealth of job-related knowledge and work-related contexts, veteran newcomers may develop a more well-informed perspective on fit and value congruence than their less experienced counterparts (p.355).

Some of the literature also suggests that tailoring roles to suit the individual preferences and needs of high performers, by expanding job tasks and enhancing individual decision-making authority, is an effective means of enhancing person-job-organization fit over time as employees grow into roles (Borzaga & Tortia, 2006, p. 230; Hannay & Northam, 2000, p. 67).

2.2.9 Facilitate a positive work environment and culture

The literature citing this practice illuminates the interplay between individuals and their managers, the work environment and their colleagues to suggest that employers should strive to create and implement strategies, programs and tactics to reinforce a positive work environment and enhance the valence or strength of interpersonal relationships, as a positive work environment and strong interpersonal relationships are high ranking drivers of employee retention (Cartwright & Holmes, 2006; Brown & Yoshioka, 2003; Hinkin & Tracey, 2010; Sheridan, 1992; Coombs, 2009; Ban, Drahnak-Faller & Towers, 2003; Bhatnagar, 2007).

In theory, it seems obvious that a positive work environment and the development of strong interpersonal relationships are drivers of engagement and issues an employer should aim to support through programs, policy and practice, but, in reality, what practical steps can an organization take to accomplish that? The peer-reviewed literature lists two tactics an employer may adopt to support the interplay in ways that maximize retention:

- Develop a corporate or business unit values statement to shape and support corporate culture, the statement should cascade from the business/business unit vision/mission/strategy (Sheridan, 1992, p.1050).
- Ensure that organizational socialization opportunities are included in new hire onboarding programs to promote work team and organization bonding (Bhatnagar, 2007, p. 660).

2.2.10 Employ a highly selective recruitment process

A highly selective recruitment process was another commonly cited practice in the literature. Sources along this vein cited the need to put potential hires through a series of interviews and/or testing as means of promoting employee retention through strong hiring practices, not only to ensure that successful candidates possess the necessary knowledge, skills, abilities and competencies to perform the full measure of the work and to assess person-job-organization fit to promote success in the role, but also to enhance the successful candidate's perception that they are joining an elite organization that places a high value on people (Posthuma et al., 2013,

Whittington & Galpin, 2010; Huselid, 1995; Hendrick & Raspiller, 2011; Hinkin & Tracey (2010); The Alberta Council of Disability Services, 2006).

2.2.11 Ensure work/life balance is supported

The employee ability to practice work/life balance supported by the organizational culture (manifested through values, policies, practices and managerial support) and the availability of scheduling flexibility was noted as an effective retention practice in the literature (James & Matthew, 2012; Hughes & Rog; 2008, Deery, 2008; Hinkin & Tracey, 2010). Flexible scheduling practices refers to work arrangements that support work/life balance by providing employees with greater control over their ability to deal with personal commitments during their regular work week, rather than just during regularly scheduled vacation or days off, with the aim of reducing employee stress and unproductive time at work. It includes practices such as:

- Shorter or compressed work weeks (i.e. daily shifts are extended, but fewer days worked in a typical work week);
- Flexdays (i.e. a nominal increment of time is added to daily shifts in a fixed period so that a day off is accrued every few weeks);
- Flextime (i.e. employees permitted to report to work in a fixed window in lieu of a rigid start time);
- Telecommuting or working from home; and
- Permitting employees to attend appointments during regular work hours wherever possible.

While many organizations strive to create a corporate culture that supports work/life balance, the literature notes that this effort can be undermined at the line manager level when managers do not support work/life balance as a talent management strategy by discouraging employees from taking vacation and days off and/or refusing to implement flexible scheduling practices when available or practicable (Hughes & Rog, 2008). Organizations place themselves at a competitive disadvantage when it comes to retaining talent if they overlook the importance of creating a culture of work/life balance, supported at all levels of the organization and flexible scheduling arrangements, because lack of work/life balance and/or scheduling flexibility is often cited as a motivating factor in employee turnover (Oldapo, 2014).

2.2.12 Monitor and analyze turnover patterns and adjust programs continuously

Conducting on-going analysis of factors driving turnover and tailoring talent management programs to fit organizational needs was cited multiple times as an important organizational step in effectively managing retention. The sources citing this theme noted the importance of routinely conducting employee assessments through practices like surveys, stay interviews, exit interviews and performance reviews and analyzing the data to test effective practices in retention (i.e. did the investment do what we hoped?), identify new troubled spots and take action and/or

go in a different direction in relevant areas (James & Matthew, 2012; Kumar, Dass & Topaloglu, 2011).

2.2.13 Explore under-utilized talent pools with higher-retention rate

Exploring under-utilized or untapped talent pools with higher retention rates is one of the last practices cited with enough frequency to warrant inclusion in the literature review. Authors and researchers citing the practice promoted the hiring of two groups as an effective practice in managing employee retention: underemployed groups and students/inexperienced college graduates (Fuqua, 2011; Hannah & Northam, 2000; Hinkin & Tracey, 2010)

Hannay and Northam (2000) noted that “older workers are less likely to voluntarily leave the organization” and that “tapping into the underused pool of older workers may have a positive impact on employee retention in the organization” (p.65). Similarly, Hughes and Rog (2008), note that “the pursuit of non-traditional labour sources,” including seniors, partially retired individuals and parents providing domestic care but also seeking flexible work, is a pragmatic approach to reducing turnover.

The Alberta Council of Disability Services (2006), in a report containing recommendations to address untenable turnover in Alberta Disability Services, set out several steps to tap underutilized talent pools ranging from seniors seeking employment to establishing coop/internship bridging programs for post-secondary students, tactics proven effective in similar contexts. Siggar (2008), in an analysis of retention challenges in the British Columbia social services sector, recommended that the sector adopt coop and internship opportunities and a bridging program as a means of garnering commitment from permanently on-boarded new hires coming out of post-secondary programs (p.35).

2.2.14 Establish a formal internal communications program

Works naming internal communications programs as a critical initiative in driving employee engagement and retention highlighted the importance of having a formal system for sharing information, promoting two-way conversation (up and down the chain of command) and providing avenues for feedback (Posthuma et al., 2013; Ban, Drahnak-Faller & Towers, 2003). A formal internal communication programs refers to the practice of communications planning in human resources management (i.e. the systematic determination of who, what, when, why, how and by whom information will be communicated to employees). In many ways, formal internal communications undergirds almost all the effective practices in employee retention discussed: the absence of effective communications planning, at the appropriate organization level, presents serious challenges in ensuring employee awareness and understanding of their value to the organization, their role in the organization, their contributions to the organizational outcomes and performance, career development and training programs, the employer brand/value proposition, all programs, activities and initiatives in support of rewarding and recognizing performance and

work/life balance, the means by which decision-making is made participative (i.e. surveys, focus groups, etc.), etc.

Posthuma et al (2013) found that an established “formal information sharing program” is a “core” high performance work practice widely cited in the human resources management literature (p. 1193). Ban, Drahnak-Faller and Towers (2003) in their work on employee retention in United States health services and community development non-profits, determined that internal communications was key in leveraging public service motivation and securing employee commitment because of internal communication’s critical role in promoting employee understanding of the “mission, vision, strategy and objectives” of the organization (p.143).

2.2.15 Ensure external pay equity

External pay equity is the final practice cited frequently enough to warrant inclusion in the literature review. As previously stated, almost each source mentioning rewards, recognition, compensation and benefits was careful not to overstate the role of compensation in employee retention, noting that pay is often overstated as a driving factor in employee turnover. However, there was agreement in the literature that ensuring external pay equity is an effective practice in employee retention (Posthuma et al., 2013; Hughes & Rog, 2008, Scott, McMullen & Royal, 2012). External pay equity means that similar positions, within the same job family and within the same industry, are remunerated similarly. External pay equity is typically determined through industry pay scale surveys, participation in industry information sharing or, in public sector, available publicly in many cases through either collective agreement wage administration and/or tax payer transparency for excluded managers. Employee perception of external pay equity is important for managing employee engagement and retention, employees who do not perceive their compensation as fair for the work they do are less likely to exert discretionary effort and express organizational commitment.

It is critical to note that while external pay equity is important, increasing pay does not equal better retention. According to Gaertner (2000)

there is no statistically significant relationship between pay and job satisfaction/organizational commitment. [While] [t]hese findings might be surprising, they confirm earlier qualitative reviews of the relationship between pay and the turnover process...almost 20 years of research...[has] found that pay is not appreciably related to job satisfaction or other turnover process variables....(p.490).

Further, work by Llorens and Stazyk (2011) investigating the relationship between wage rates and turnover in the United States public service confirms that “contrary to conventional wisdom, results suggest that public-private wage equity does not significantly influence voluntary separation rates” (p.111).

2.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As noted in the literature review, the body of literature dedicated to the topic of employee turnover is substantive and comprised of two lines of inquiry: what makes employees leave (i.e. turnover antecedents) and what makes employees stay (retention practices). Both lines of inquiry have been thoroughly reviewed to outline the past research and conclusions on the topics of voluntary employee turnover and organization retention practices to provide insight into the project’s methods and lay a foundation for the client recommendations.

Figure 1 synthesizes the theoretical framework upon which the project rests and notes the organizational turnover antecedents and retention practices considered in the project’s examination of turnover in MHSU. As discussed in the literature review, the concepts overlap and reinforce one another but limited agreement exists as to what extent. This lack of agreement makes it challenging to depict relationships between factors and between the lines of inquiry (what makes employees leave and what makes employees stay). Therefore, the factors are depicted with positive or negative signs to illustrate their relationship to voluntary turnover.

Organizational Turnover Antecedents What Makes Employees Leave?	Organizational Retention Practices What Makes Employees Stay?
- Negative workplace culture	+ Highlight how the work is meaningful.
- Lack of job satisfaction	+ Market employer brand and employee value proposition internally and externally.
- Weak organizational justice	+ Provide opportunities for career advancement and development.
- Ineffective leadership	+ Offer a recognition program.
- Absence of career development opportunities	+ Provide training and development opportunities.
- Limited training opportunities	+ Train managers to enhance their performance management, coaching and mentoring skills.
- Absence of recognition and rewards	+ Establish person-job and person-organization fit.
- Meaningless work	+ Facilitate a positive work environment and culture.
- Poor recruitment practices	+ Employ a highly selective recruitment process.
- Policies and programs which fail to account for individual differences in:	+ Ensure work/life balance is supported.
o Age	+ Monitor and analyze turnover patterns and adjust programs continuously.
o Family responsibility	+ Explore under-utilized talent pools with higher retention rates.
o Role tenure	+ Establish a formal internal communications program.
o Gender	+ Ensure external pay equity.
o Training level	

Figure 1. Theoretical framework for identifying turnover antecedents and promoting retention. Organizational factors known to contribute to turnover are shown with a negative sign (-), while organizational factors known to promote retention (i.e. retention practices) are presented with a (+) sign.

3.0 METHODS

3.1 METHODS OVERVIEW

The project applies a mixed methods approach in which both quantitative and qualitative methods are employed to answer the primary and secondary research questions (Hesse-Biber, 2010). Together, the methods will provide answers to the primary and secondary research questions: what organizational factors are driving voluntary employee turnover and what can the client do to mitigate turnover? While the literature provides insight on what the client can do to mitigate turnover, only current and former employees can provide insight on what organizational factors are driving turnover and assist the client in tailoring potential actions to address turnover within the employee group.

As such, an employee survey was used to gather quantitative data and stay and exit interviews were conducted to yield qualitative data. Employee surveys and stay interviews are an effective means of uncovering what makes an employee stay with an employer and what might make an employee leave the organization (James & Matthew, 2012). Exit interviews provide valuable insight on what factors contributed to an employee's decision to leave and assist the employer in determining what factors they may be able to address (Kumar, Dass & Topaloglu, 2014).

While the employee survey is the primary data source for the project, the employee interviews serve a threefold purpose: corroborate the survey findings (i.e. is the survey data reflective of the qualitative data collected during the interviews?), provide more robust insight on the topic areas explored in the survey (i.e. if the survey data reveals employees do not feel empowered, an interview could unveil in what specific area and context this perception is being created) and ensure the survey did not miss any critical issues which might arise in more open-ended questions (Hesse-Biber, 2010).

To support the project's mixed methods approach, the researcher examined the data with both a Post-Positivist and Hermeneutic approach because the methods selected require an acceptance of the validity of quantitative data gathered through a non-iterative method (Post-Positivist) and a belief in the validity of qualitative data yielded through interaction with a variety of groups and an understanding of their unique perceived realities (Patterson & Williams, 2002).

3.2 OBJECTIVE

The project's objective is to assist the client in determining which organizational factors are driving turnover and what actions the client might take to mitigate turnover. As such, project data collection focuses on the issue of voluntary turnover primarily through the organizational lens (i.e. work environment, supervisor-employee relations, etc.) and only considers individual factors (i.e. age, tenure, gender, etc.) insofar as they may inform organizational practices to promote retention (i.e. recruitment strategy, flexible scheduling policies, etc.). Reiche (2007) notes the efficacy of this approach by stating "there [are] a wide area of organizational turnover determinants that can be explicitly controlled to manage withdrawal intentions" (p.676). External factors contributing to turnover are not considered in this project.

3.3 KEY QUESTIONS

The key questions, answered through project data collection, are grounded in the organizational turnover antecedents and retention factors outlined in the literature review and summarized in the theoretical framework:

- Is the work environment a factor in voluntary turnover?
- Is job satisfaction a factor in voluntary turnover?
- Are poor perceptions of organizational justice contributing to voluntary turnover?
- Is ineffective leadership a problem which may be leading to turnover?
- Are career development opportunities sufficient for discouraging turnover?
- Do enough training opportunities exist to discourage turnover?
- Do inadequate recognition and rewards contribute to turnover?
- Do employees feel the work is meaningful?
- Are recruitment practices yielding candidates with satisfactory person-job and person-organization fit?
- Is work/life balance supported by scheduling policy?

3.4 QUANTITATIVE INSTRUMENT – SURVEY

The literature review identified organizational factors that when present (or absent) can drive turnover and/or promote employee retention. The survey design groups related factors into five sections, clustering questions testing the similar factors together. In total, respondents were required to answer 37 questions. The complete survey is available for review in [Appendix D](#).

Section One, “How You Feel About Your Job” tests known turnover-drivers related to the specifics of a given job, including individual job satisfaction, training, role perception and career path perception, but also tests the extent to which employees perceive their work as meaningful. Section Two, “Your Work Environment” assesses the overall work environment and culture, factors which, according to the literature review, are organizational intangibles with a significant impact on employee willingness to depart or remain.

Using factors identified in the literature review, Section Three, “Drivers of Turnover and Retention” looks to uncover the most common reasons why MHSU administrative support professionals would consider departing (and staying) but also provides an opportunity for open-ended responses. Section Four, “Your Supervisor” focuses exclusively on the employee-supervisor relationship, a turnover antecedent or retention strength, identified in the literature.

Finally, Section Five, “Demographic Data,” is intended to provide a snapshot of respondent’s location, age, family care obligations, marital status, employee status (i.e. permanent or casual) and role perception to ensure that the survey responses reasonably reflect the research population and to ensure any potential project recommendations align with workforce demographics.

The majority of survey questions ask respondents to select a single response from a five choice Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, somewhat agree, disagree, strongly disagree). This particular Likert scale was chosen to prompt respondents to express an opinion in lieu of providing a

neutral option or two “somewhat” options. A “do not know” or “not applicable” option was not provided as all respondents experience the organizational factors being tested, making its inclusion redundant. This model was chosen by the researcher based on applied experience as a human resources practitioner, but presents numerous limitations (discussed in the limitations section of the report). The researcher’s intent was to force respondents to reflect and make a choice, yielding a higher number of usable responses (Wivagg, 2008). In addition to the Likert scale questions, many questions require respondents to select a single response from a list of nominal responses, rank nominal responses or provide a qualitative answer to an open-ended question.

3.4.1 RECRUITMENT PROCESS

The client sent the survey to the entire MHSU administrative support team by way of email in August 2014. Participants accessed the survey through the email and were directed to the FluidSurvey site where the questions were located. The online survey data collection method was chosen because it presented minimal risk and inconvenience to participants (they were permitted to complete the survey at work), and, as a consequence, was more likely to yield a higher response rate than other data collection methods such as focus group sessions or individual interviews. Overall, a high proportion of the research population participated in the survey. Seventy of a possible 112 employees responded to the survey, yielding a 63 percent response rate and making the survey results reasonably generalizable (Johnson & Wislar, 2012, p.1805).

3.5 QUALITATIVE INSTRUMENT – INTERVIEWS

3.5.1 STAY AND EXIT INTERVIEWS

The stay interviews were comprised of 14 questions and each telephone interview took approximately 30 minutes to complete. During the calls, the researcher typed notes using the question template for each interview. As mentioned in the overview section, stay interview questions were intended to act as a check on the survey data, provide a more nuanced understanding of issues flagged in the survey, uncover the primary reasons an employee would choose to continue working for MHSU and determine the primary reasons an employee might leave MHSU. The complete set of stay interview questions is available for review in [Appendix E](#).

The exit interviews were comprised of 13 questions and each telephone interview took approximately 30 minutes to complete. During the calls, the researcher typed notes using the question template for each interview. The exit interviews served the same purpose as the stay interviews but, in addition, were designed to provide the critical information current employees simply cannot provide: specific reasons why the decision to leave was made and acted on. The complete set of exit interview questions is available for review in [Appendix F](#).

When the project methodology was first conceived, the researcher aimed to conduct 20 interviews, 10 stay interviews and 10 exit interviews to ensure a variety of viewpoints were

captured and considered. Twenty interviews were deemed sufficient because the survey, as previously mentioned, was intended as the primary data source for analysis.

3.5.2 RECRUITMENT PROCESS

To recruit participants for stay interviews the client sent an email to the entire MHSU administrative distribution list encouraging potential participants to express their interest via email to the researcher in November 2014. Once the expression of interest period ended, the researcher followed up with volunteers to obtain their informed consent and schedule the interview. Had the researcher received more than 10 expressions of interest, the researcher would have employed simple random sampling in Microsoft Office Excel to select the interview participants.

To recruit participants for exit interviews the client asked the Island Health Human Resources Business Partner assigned to MHSU to reach out to Island Health Information Technology Services to identify email addresses for all administrative support workers who voluntarily resigned in the last two years so the Business Partner could send them an email inviting them to participate in an exit interview and encourage them to contact the researcher should they be interested. The exit interview recruitment email was sent in November 2014. As with the stay interviews, had the volume of expressed interest exceeded 10 participants, simple random sampling in Microsoft Office Excel would have been utilized to select interview participants.

While the project methodology aimed to conduct 10 interviews of each interview type, significant changes to the initially proposed recruitment methodology were required following feedback from the Joint University of Victoria and Island Health Human Research Ethics Board in February 2014 and the required changes presented some recruitment obstacles. As a consequence, the researcher was only able to conduct 15 interviews (12 stay interviews and three exit interviews), falling shy of the desired 20 interview target.

Despite receiving organizational approval (in January 2014) and ethics approval (in July 2014) to proceed with the project, the required changes to recruitment methodology created significant delays in the project timeline as the researcher was dependent upon multiple Island Health business units (human resources and information technology services), that do not work for the project client, to execute non-urgent deliverables for an external party. Between August 2014 and November 2014, each Island Health business unit worked to obtain approval from their respective department leadership and required additional assurances from the client and the researcher before even exploring their required action. For one party, an additional privacy review was required further delaying the project. Given these challenges and delays, and the mandated recruitment methodology, engaging in an additional recruitment campaign to increase the interview numbers would not likely yield an improved response rate and would further delay the client from receiving the desired recommendations to address an organizational challenge.

Overall, the stay interview recruitment campaign resulted in 18 expressions of interest from a 116 person research population (the total number of administrative professionals in November

2014 when the expression of interest email was disseminated). From that initial response, 14 individuals returned consent forms and agreed to participate in the interview and 12 stay interviews were scheduled and ultimately conducted in December 2014. The South, Central and North Island regions were all represented in the sample.

In the end, the exit interview recruitment email was sent to 27 former MHSU employees who departed voluntarily in the last two years (whom Island Health Information Technology Services was able to identify an email address for) in November 2014. Four individuals expressed interest in participating, with three eventually following through on the interview. The response rate was disappointing, especially following significant efforts to adjust the recruitment methodology following feedback from Human Research Ethics, but was ultimately anticipated given the lack of incentive for exit interview participants to give their time (i.e. not paid to participate, incur the cost of a potential long distance phone bill, etc.) and the likelihood that the recruitment email (in lieu of a phone call) went unseen or was filtered to junk mail. South and Central Island had representation in the exit interviews, but there was no representation from North Island. Exit interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes and participants answered a total of 13 questions.

3.6 STUDY LIMITATIONS

Overall, the survey response rate renders the research results reasonably generalizable (to the research population). The interview results do appear to confirm the findings of the survey (in that no inconsistencies or contradictory information arose) and the survey and interview appear to corroborate one another in that questions testing the same factor presented similar findings. However, it is important to note the study is subject to some limitations.

The originally proposed project timeline (approximately eight months) was significantly protracted (approximately 12 months) due to challenges receiving ethics approval, and, following an adjusted recruitment methodology, organizational approvals from multiple Island Health business units unaffiliated with the project client that became engaged as a condition of ethics approval. Following initial ethics feedback in February 2014, an acceptable compromise was reached and the project received ethics approval in July 2014. The process of submitting multiple proposals and then several sets of revisions resulted in a significant delay between the initial commissioning of the project and data collection from project participants. While the survey was deployed in August 2014, interview recruitment began in November 2014 with interviews conducted in December 2014. Ultimately, the delay in reaching out to current and former employees presents a risk that organizational challenges and issues which were front-of-mind (that may have led to higher than desirable turnover in 2013) were not front-of-mind and went unarticulated during data collection in the summer and fall of 2014. However, the researcher feels the probability of this risk impacting the key findings to be unlikely as questions did not constrain participants to consider a fixed time period and numerous open-ended questions were asked in which participants could have given feedback on a concern from the prior year.

The forced-choice Likert scale employed in the employee survey is subject to numerous limitations and has the potential to introduce measurement and nonresponse bias into the survey results, undermining the quality of the data (Wivagg, 2008). The omission of either a neutral and opt-out option in this approach can create a disconnect between how respondents answered the question and how they truly feel, thus leading to skewed survey results (i.e. measurement error) (Wivagg, 2008). While “somewhat agree” is treated as a neutral response in the researcher’s analysis, it is possible that more participants selected “disagree” in lieu of a “somewhat disagree” option skewing the results toward a more negative response.

As mentioned, there is also a risk some participants may have been frustrated by the lack of opt-out options (i.e. do not know or not sure) and quit the survey prior to completing all the survey questions, introducing some non-response bias where the absence of non-responder viewpoints skews survey results by reflecting only the views of respondents (Wivagg, 2008). While 98 employees (of a possible 112) accessed the survey and answered some questions, 70 employees completed the entire survey yielding a 71 percent completion rate. The number of responses to specific questions ranged between 64 and 69, with the exception of the single qualitative question and the demographic section. The qualitative questions received 47 responses and for the demographic section the number of responses for each question decreased to 59. However, this is to be expected for a demographic section, where, understandably there is typically a perceived increased risk to participant anonymity.

It is challenging to determine why not all respondents who accessed the survey failed to complete, but it is possible respondents refused questions as a result of non-opt out options (Wivagg, 2008). As participants completed the survey in their work environment, other factors which may have contributed to the completion rate could have included: a lack of privacy to complete the survey, workplace interruptions or concerns regarding the sensitive nature of some questions.

The use of self-selection sampling used in both survey and interview recruitment does present some disadvantages, as the data could reflect a level of participant bias in that only employees with very positive or negative feedback might take the time to participate, therefore introducing bias into the results because the feedback given is not necessarily reflective of the entire research population (Olsen, 2008, p.809).

The small sample of exit interviews conducted presents a risk that the researcher missed out on information not unveiled through the original research with current employees which would assist in answering the research questions. The three exit interviews conducted did not bring to light any new themes or areas of concern beyond what was already uncovered and did not contradict any concerns or issues which arose in the study of the current employee population. However, it is entirely possible there are other organizational factors contributing to turnover which a larger sample of exit interviews may have identified.

Further, the Island Health Human Research Ethics Board required the researcher to withhold inter-region survey and interview findings from the report due to concerns that the smaller population numbers in the Central and North Island Regions would compromise participant anonymity and confidentiality. For the same reason, casual and regular status employee data is not compared or discussed in the report. The lack of an inter-region comparison resulted in Island-wide findings (in lieu of area-specific findings) and there is no differentiation between casual and regular status employee experiences in the project. Together, these constitute additional limitations which bear consideration.

Finally, the use of thematic analysis in the interpretation of qualitative survey answers and interview responses could lack reliability due to reliance on the researcher's subjective interpretation of the data, thus raising a concern that some of the findings might not be replicable (Hesse-Biber, 2010).

4.0 SURVEY ANALYSIS

4.1 SECTION ONE: HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT YOUR JOB

This survey section tests known turnover-drivers related to the specifics of a given job, including individual job satisfaction, training, role perception and career path perception, but also tests the extent to which employees perceive their work as meaningful.

Questions asked in this section included:

1. My work is meaningful. (Likert scale response)
2. My work has a positive impact. (Likert scale response)
3. At the end of the day I feel good about what I do. (Likert scale response)
4. Developing a rapport with clients is important to me. (Likert scale response)
5. I understand how my role positively impacts others. (Likert scale response)
6. I understand how my role supports the objectives of MHSU. (Likert scale response)
7. Non-administrative support staff (i.e. Social Workers, Psychiatrists, etc.) understand how my role supports the objectives of MHSU. (Likert scale response)
8. Clients understand how my role supports them. (Likert scale response)
9. I have the resources/tools I need to do my job. (Likert scale response)
10. I have received the right training to feel confident in my role. (Likert scale response)
11. I enjoy executing my routine job functions/tasks. (Likert scale response)

Overall, this section highlights some clear organizational strengths and some opportunities for improvement in relation to employee retention. Figure 2 illustrates the frequency distribution of responses to questions one to 11 with level of agreement indicated in ascending order.⁵ The statements receiving the highest levels of agreement tested the extent to which employees see their work as meaningful, while the lower scoring questions test job-specific perceptions related to turnover (i.e. training, challenging work, etc.).

⁵ For the purposes of this analysis, level of agreement refers to the overall proportion of responses indicating “strongly agree” or “agree” and level of disagreement refers to the overall proportion of responses indicating “disagree” or “strongly disagree.” Somewhat agree is considered a neutral response indicating that respondents were unable to state full agreement or full disagreement with the question stem.



Figure 2. Frequency distribution showing level of agreement by question in ascending order.

The statement my “work is meaningful” received 91 percent agreement indicating that respondents see significance in what they do. Further support for the conclusion that MHSU administrative support workers see meaning in their work are the high levels of agreement expressed for the following statements “I understand how my role supports the objectives of MHSU” (88 percent), “I understand how my role positively impacts others” (85 percent), “My work has a positive impact” (81 percent) and “Developing a rapport with clients is important to me” (80 percent). It is worth noting that 49 percent of respondents strongly agreed that building client rapport was important to them. While the question did not have the highest level of agreement in the section, it is one of the only questions in the survey to receive such a strong positive response from such a high proportion of respondents.

As mentioned, most of the questions which indicate a lower level of agreement tested job-specific turnover drivers with responses revealing some potential opportunities for improvement for the organization. The statements receiving the lowest levels of agreement included: “Non-administrative support staff (i.e. Social Workers, Psychiatrists, etc.) understand how my role supports the objectives of MHSU” (57 percent), “I have received the right training to feel confident in my role”(64 percent) and “I have the resources/tools I need to do the job,” (64 percent). The question “Clients understand how my role supports them” received 37 percent

agreement highlighting a potential opportunity for the organization to reinforce the meaningful nature of the work and enhance employee retention.

The second question cluster in Section One: How You Feel About Your Job, seeks to establish role perception, and assess turnover intention as it relates to role perception, by asking the following questions:

12. Which of the following answers best describes how you perceive your role:

- This is my vocation/professional field of choice.
- I see my current position as a stepping stone in my career.
- I see my current position as a job to pay the bills.
- I am not sure how this role fits into my life/career plans.

13. Depending on how you answered the last question (Question 12), please estimate how much longer you see yourself working at MHSU.

	3 Years +	2 to 3 Years	1 to 2 Years	Less than 1 Year	Less than 6 Months
This is my vocation/professional field of choice.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I see my current position as a stepping stone in my career.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I see my current position as a job to pay the bills.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am not sure how this role fits into my life/career plans.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

As discussed in the literature review, individuals who perceive themselves as highly skilled in their role are more likely to express intention to stay (Thite & Russell, 2010) and career status is a predictor of retention in that entry level and novice workers are more likely to voluntarily turnover than other groups of workers (Cho & Lewis, 2012). As such, Question 12 seeks to uncover the individual role perceptions of MHSU administrative support workers and question 13 asks them to estimate how much longer they plan to remain with MHSU. Figure 3 illustrates respondent role perception by answer selection and Figure 4 provides a frequency distribution of responses by perception of role.

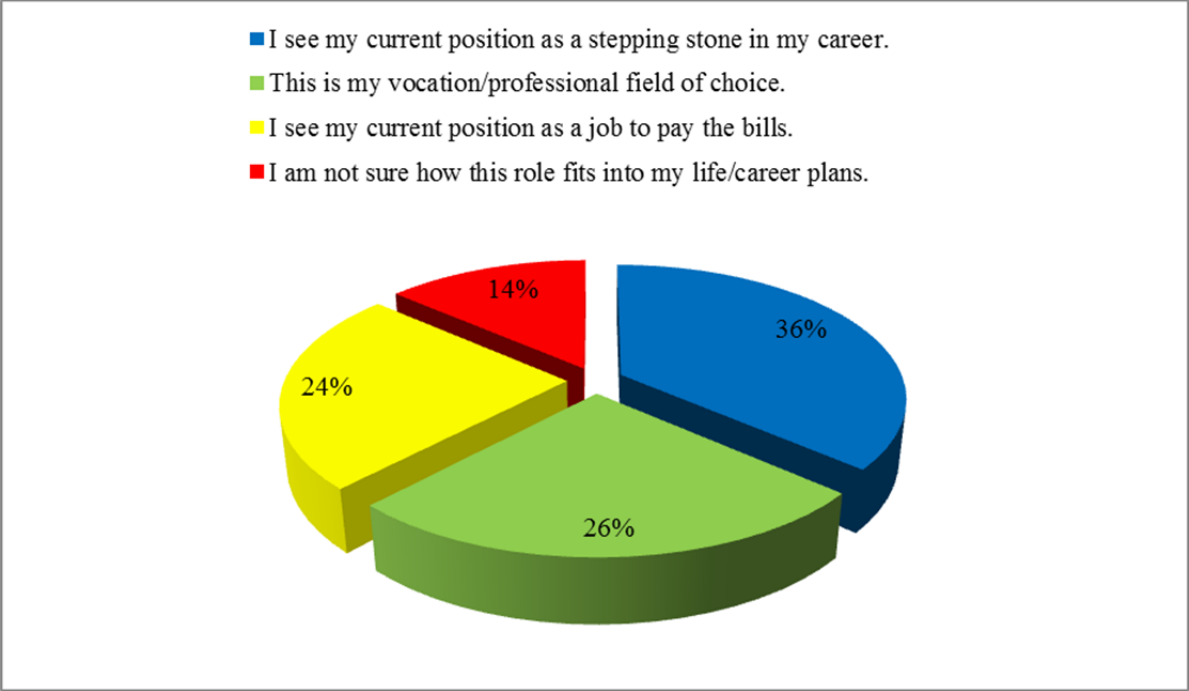


Figure 3. Respondent role perception by answer selection.

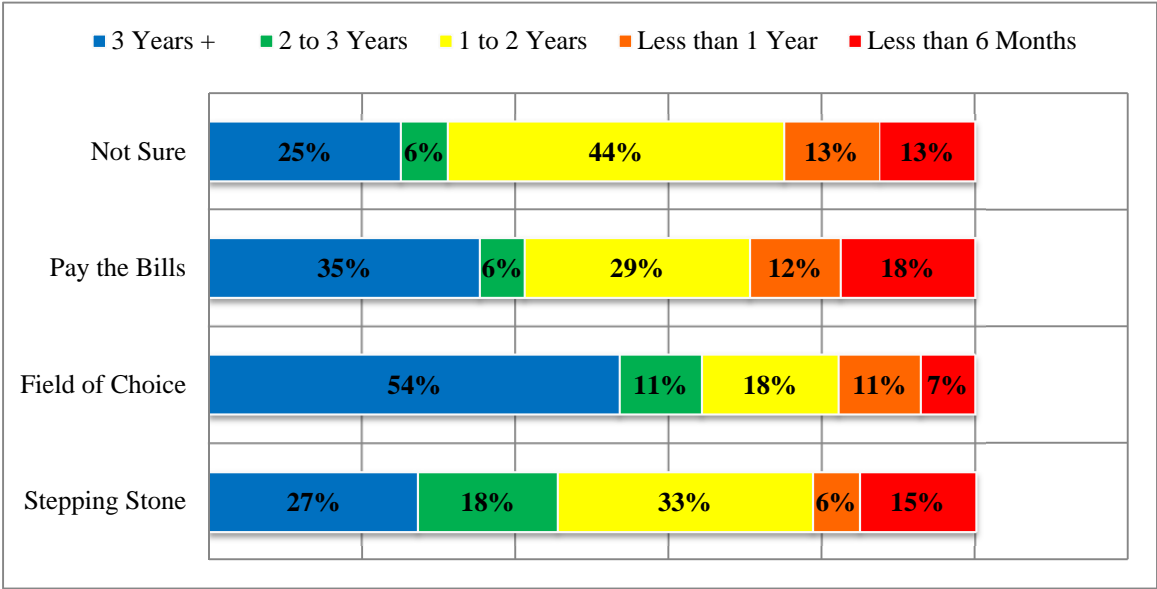


Figure 4. Frequency distribution of intention to stay by role perception.

4.2 SECTION TWO: YOUR WORK ENVIRONMENT

Section Two investigates administrative support worker perceptions of their work environment as the literature indicates that positive relationships with work colleagues and peers and perceptions of employee attitude, general optimism and workplace productivity have demonstrated effects on employee turnover and turnover intention (Paille 2014; Tuten & Neidermeyer 2004). The literature also suggests that environments where employees feel empowered in their roles and openly engaged in decisions which directly affect their work are less likely to turnover; as such, Section Two also poses the following questions to assess respondents on these factors:

12. Which of the following combinations best describes the work environment at the site where you most often work? (choices: Friendly/Efficient, Friendly/Inefficient, Civil/Efficient, Civil/Inefficient, Unfriendly/Efficient, Unfriendly/Inefficient)
13. I feel respected at work. (Likert scale response)
14. My workplace opinions, ideas and/or input are valued by my peers. (Likert scale response)
15. I feel valued by colleagues at all levels within my team (i.e. Program Assistants, Office Assistants, Coordinators, Social Workers, Therapists, Counsellors, Psychiatrists, Psychologists, etc.). (Likert scale response)
16. I am asked to provide input on decisions or projects that affect me. (Likert scale response)
17. I get along with other administrative support staff. (Likert scale response)
18. I do not feel micro-managed/scrutinized by others on my team. (Likert scale response)
19. Everyone around me has an optimistic outlook. (Likert scale response)

Table 2 summarizes the responses to question 12 in which respondents were asked to describe their work environment by choosing from six descriptive combinations. Sixty-six percent of respondents indicated that they perceived their work environment as “friendly/efficient,” with smaller proportions indicating that the work site was “civil/efficient” (13 percent), “friendly/inefficient” (9 percent) and “unfriendly/efficient” (8 percent). Overall, the responses to question 12 do not indicate that employee perceptions of an unfriendly and/or inefficient work environment are organizational factors driving turnover.

Table 2. Responses in Descending Order of Frequency

Answers	Count	Percentage
Friendly/Efficient	42	66%
Civil/Efficient	8	13%
Friendly/Inefficient	6	9%
Unfriendly/Efficient	5	8%
Unfriendly/Inefficient	2	3%
Civil/Inefficient	1	2%
Total	64	100%

Figure 5 depicts a frequency distribution of responses to Questions 15 to 21. Given the majority of responses to question 14 it is unsurprising that the statement “I get along with other administrative staff” received the highest level of agreement (88 percent) in the section. The second highest-level of agreement in the section, in response to the statement “I do not feel micro-managed/scrutinized by others on my team,” received 74 percent agreement indicating that within work teams the majority of individuals feel reasonably empowered in their roles (without scrutiny or interference from colleagues). However, the other facet of employee empowerment is whether or not employees feel they have a reasonable opportunity to provide input into decisions which may affect them and the statement “I am asked to provide input on decisions or projects that affect me” received 45 percent agreement and was the second lowest scoring question of the section; this may illustrate a potential organizational contributor to turnover.

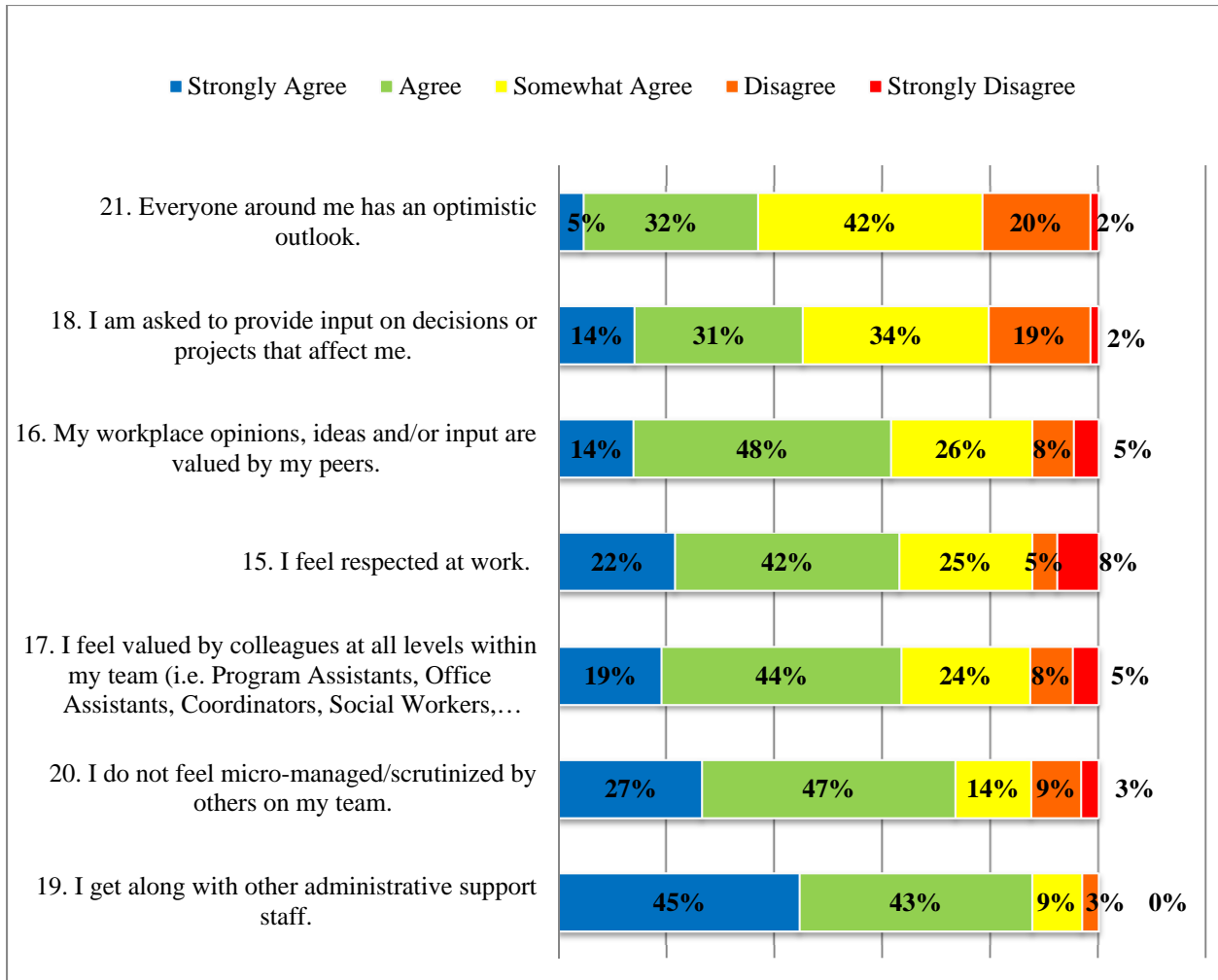


Figure 5. Frequency distribution of responses in ascending order.

The level of agreement trend in the question cluster testing whether or not employees feel respected and valued at work, core tenets of a positive work environment, highlight an organizational factor which may exacerbate turnover, especially when the level of agreement in this question cluster is compared to other survey sections: Consider the following levels of agreement:

- “I feel respected at work” (64 percent);
- “I feel valued by colleagues at all levels within my team (i.e. Program Assistants, Office Assistants, Coordinators, Social Workers, Therapists, Counsellors, Psychiatrists, Psychologists, etc.)”(63 percent); and
- “My workplace opinions, ideas and/or input are valued by my peers” (62 percent).

The question testing employee perception of colleague outlook was the lowest scoring question in the section with the statement “everyone around me has an optimistic outlook” receiving 37 percent agreement.

Overall, when compared to the Likert scale questions in Section One (testing employee perceptions of their role and public service motivation), Section Two’s Likert scale questions have a much lower overall level of agreement on each question with a sharp decline in level of agreement after the statement receiving highest agreement. The median level of agreement in Section One is 80 percent, while the median level of agreement in Section Two is 64 percent. While Section One illustrates some organizational strength which could be used as a lever to enhance retention, Section Two uncovers some areas where improvement initiatives may be warranted to address organizational factors at play which are known turnover antecedents.

4.3 SECTION THREE: DRIVERS OF TURNOVER AND RETENTION

The questions in this section drive at the heart of the primary and secondary research questions: what organizational factors are driving voluntary employee turnover and what can the client do to mitigate these factors, reduce employee turnover and address employee turnover intention? Question 22 asks respondents to rank the top three reasons they would consider leaving MHSU, while question 23 asks them to rank the top three reasons they would consider staying. Question 24 asks respondents to provide a qualitative response to the question “what do you think MHSU leadership could do to enhance the retention of administrative support professionals?” The questions were posed to participants as follows:

22. Of the following statements describing reasons you might consider resigning from MHSU, pick your top three using the selection boxes.

- A lack of developmental opportunities or on-going professional development.
- I don't feel my work is meaningful.
- Poor orientation and training programs.
- I feel undervalued and/or disrespected.
- A lack of recognition for good work.
- My work schedule does not work well with my personal life.
- I dislike my supervisor.
- Negative work environment/pessimistic energy.
- I am not satisfied or challenged by my job functions/tasks.
- I do not feel a sense of belonging within my work team.

Organizational decision-making processes are unfair.

23. Of the following statements describing reasons you would continue to work at MHSU, pick your top three using the selection boxes.

I am satisfied with the developmental/professional development opportunities available.

My work is meaningful and helps others.

I feel a sense of commitment to clients.

I feel fully trained and confident in my ability to perform the full measure of my work.

I receive regular, positive (or constructive) feedback on my performance.

I receive recognition for a job well done.

My work schedule works well with my personal life.

I like working for my supervisor.

Positive work environment/optimistic energy.

I enjoy executing my job functions/tasks.

I feel a sense of belonging in my work team.

Organizational decision-making processes are fair and transparent.

24. What do you think MHSU leadership could do to enhance retention of administrative support professionals?

As illustrated by Table 3, the most frequently cited drivers of turnover according to survey respondents include “a lack of developmental opportunities and/or on-going professional development,” (20 percent), “I feel undervalued and/or disrespected” (19 percent), “I am not satisfied or challenged by my job functions/tasks” (16 percent) and “negative work environment/pessimistic energy” (13 percent).

Looking at this data set through a different lens illustrates some organizational strength in relation to turnover. For example, negative employee-supervisor relations do not appear to be an organizational factor contributing to turnover with only one of 176 responses in the ranking exercise selecting the option “I dislike my supervisor” as a reason they would consider leaving. It can also be extrapolated from the data that scheduling challenges/lack of scheduling flexibility, weak orientation and lack of training programs, poor team social dynamics or a perception of meaningless work are not contributing to turnover. While a lack of recognition for good work received very few responses in this question, other question clusters in different sections

examining this same factor paint a different picture and indicate there is room for improvement in this area, thus compromising the accuracy of any conclusion that soft recognition practices are not contributing to employee turnover at MHSU (when this question is analyzed in context). Overall, the pattern of responses to question 22 appear to have internal consistency as the broad patterns are consistent with answers to question clusters testing the same factors in other sections.

Table 3. Responses in Descending Order of Frequency.

Of the following statements describing reasons you might consider resigning from MHSU, pick your top three using the selection boxes.		
Statement	Count	Percentage
A lack of developmental opportunities or on-going professional development.	35	20%
I feel undervalued and/or disrespected.	33	19%
I am not satisfied or challenged by my job functions/tasks.	29	16%
Negative work environment/pessimistic energy.	22	13%
Organizational decision-making processes are unfair.	14	8%
My work schedule does not work well with my personal life.	11	6%
A lack of recognition for good work.	10	6%
Poor orientation and training programs.	8	5%
I do not feel a sense of belonging within my work team.	7	4%
I don't see feel my work is meaningful.	6	3%
I dislike my supervisor.	1	1%
Total	176	100%

Responses for Question 23 appear more evenly distributed between factors than Question 22, but the data still underscores some strong points and some potential gaps. Table 4 shows the frequency with which retention factors were cited by respondents. The most often ranked retention factors included “my work is meaningful and helps others” (15 percent), “positive work environment/optimistic energy” (14 percent), “my work schedule works well with my personal life” (12 percent) and “I feel a sense of belonging in my work team” (10 percent). The least frequently selected reasons administrative support professionals continue working at MHSU included “organizational decision-making processes are fair and transparent” (2 percent) and “I am satisfied with the developmental/professional development opportunities available” (3 percent), “I receive regular, positive (or constructive) feedback on my performance” (5 percent) and “I receive recognition for a job well done” (6 percent). Like Question 22, the data is consistent with question clusters testing the same factors elsewhere in the survey.

Table 4. Responses in Descending Order of Frequency

Of the following statements describing reasons you would continue to work at MHSU, pick your top three using the selection boxes.		
Statement	Count	Percentage
My work is meaningful and helps others.	29	15%
Positive work environment/optimistic energy.	26	14%
My work schedule works well with my personal life.	23	12%
I feel a sense of belonging in my work team.	18	10%
I like working for my supervisor.	17	9%
I feel a sense of commitment to clients.	16	8%
I feel fully trained and confident in my ability to perform the full measure of my work.	15	8%
I enjoy executing my job functions/tasks.	14	7%
I receive recognition for a job well done.	12	6%
I receive regular, positive (or constructive) feedback on my performance.	10	5%
I am satisfied with the developmental/professional development opportunities available.	6	3%
Organizational decision-making processes are fair and transparent.	3	2%
Total	189	100%

The volume and detail of qualitative answers provided to question 24 surprised the researcher.⁶ Overall, 70 percent of survey participants chose to answer the question and the majority of answers were lengthy and well-articulated, generating 81 categorically distinct comments. Individual responses were exported from Fluid Survey into Microsoft Office Excel. Using applied thematic analysis, singular responses noting multiple factors (i.e. categorically distinct comments) were parsed and separated out (i.e. a response citing issues with pay, a lack of performance management and problems with favouritism was broken into three distinct excerpts) (Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2012). Once single responses were broken down, all 81 categorically distinct comments were grouped into themes with themes being continually refined and reduced into the themes reflected in Table 5.

⁶ In the researcher’s experience administering employee surveys, a small minority of respondents will take the time to answer qualitative questions, let alone provide detailed descriptions of their position.

Table 5. Qualitative Response Theme Frequency in Descending Order

What do you think MHSU leadership could do to enhance retention of administrative support professionals?		
Response Theme	Count	Percentage
Increase pay	31	38%
Create opportunities for career advancement	11	14%
Intensify performance management of poor performers	7	9%
Offer more/enhanced role training opportunities	6	7%
Create more flexible work arrangements	5	6%
Improve and encourage employee communication and consultation	5	6%
Reassess recruitment practices	5	5%
Improve employee recognition	3	4%
Alter organizational design/role structures	3	4%
Eliminate favouritism	1	2%
Uncategorized Comments	4	5%
Total*	81	100%
*47 question respondents provided 81 categorically distinct comments.		

While the qualitative answers overwhelming indicate dissatisfaction with pay as the primary factor MHSU leadership could address to enhance retention, with 39 percent of all comments noting the perception that pay was insufficient for the work performed, specific questions related to pay were intentionally omitted from the research design by the researcher for empirical reasons and due to organizational politics. Both reasons for the omission are discussed below. Based on preliminary interviews with the Administrative Coordinators and the client, the researcher did anticipate this issue arising in response to an open-ended question.

However, from an empirical standpoint, as outlined in the retention practices review, pay was excluded because satisfaction with pay is not an established turnover antecedent and nor do increases to pay equal better retention rates (Gaertner, 2000; Llorens & Stazyk, 2011). Further, while designing the survey and interviews, the researcher established that MHSU administrative professionals are paid above market median for their work ruling out external pay equity (an established effective retention practice) as a legitimate organizational factor contributing to turnover.⁷

In addition to the lack of empirical support for including pay in the research design, the client specifically requested that questions regarding pay be omitted from the research. The client’s position is that dissatisfaction with pay is an organizational factor outside her scope of control or

⁷ Analysis of MHSU administrative support professional pay does indicate they are paid above market median for office assistant, program assistant, administrative assistant and other similarly titled roles. The pay range for the AS3 Classification (covering virtually all administrative support position in MHSU) is \$17.77 to \$18.95, while market median for similarly titled roles in Canada is \$13.00 for Office Assistants and \$15.00 for Medical Office Assistants (PayScale.com, 2014).

sphere of influence (i.e. process of collective bargaining itself and political decision-making at the Island Health board of directors level, etc.) and that asking employees questions about the issue (in a survey which layers on top of other organizational employee satisfaction and engagement surveys) may spur ‘false hope’ that something might be done or exacerbate negative perceptions of the issue.

Despite pay’s omission from the questions posed to employees, the findings indicate this is an issue employees feel strongly about.

The only other significant theme emerging from the qualitative responses is the perceived need to create opportunity for career advancement/development. Like the theme of pay, this was an anticipated response, based on preliminary interviews with MHSU administrative leadership, and the strength of the response is consistent with other question clusters probing the same issue.

Outside the response themes of pay and better opportunities for career advancement, there were few themes that came through with strength and the researcher is hesitant to draw any conclusions from the remaining themes.

4.4 SECTION FOUR: YOUR SUPERVISOR

Section Four sets out to assess whether or not supervisor performance and supervisor-employee relationships are organizational factors contributing to turnover; as discussed in the literature review and theoretical framework, positive supervisor behaviours and supervisor-subordinate relationships have a significant impact on intention to stay and negative behaviours and supervisor-subordinate relationships have a preeminent impact on intention to depart (Grissom 2011; Lee & Jimenez 2011). Section four assesses whether or not supervisors are contributing to turnover or retention by asking the following questions:

25. My supervisor is supportive. (Likert scale response)
26. I can approach my supervisor with problems. (Likert scale response)
27. My supervisor cares about my professional growth. (Likert scale response)
28. My supervisor cares about me personally. (Likert scale response)
29. My supervisor is fair. (Likert scale response)
30. My workplace opinions, ideas and/or input are valued by my supervisor. (Likert scale response)
31. I receive regular feedback from my supervisor. (Likert scale response)

Based on the frequency distribution of responses outlined in Figure 6, MHSU Administrative Coordinators are perceived positively in several areas and are widely regarded as approachable (87 percent agreement with the statement “I can approach my supervisor with problems”), supportive (82 percent agreement with the statement “my supervisor is supportive”) and fair (78 percent agreement). These results indicate that the Administrative Coordinators are not perceived as engaging in supervisor behaviours which are associated with turnover (i.e. acting in a

standoffish or unfriendly manner, displaying obvious favouritism or being perceived as cold and uncaring).

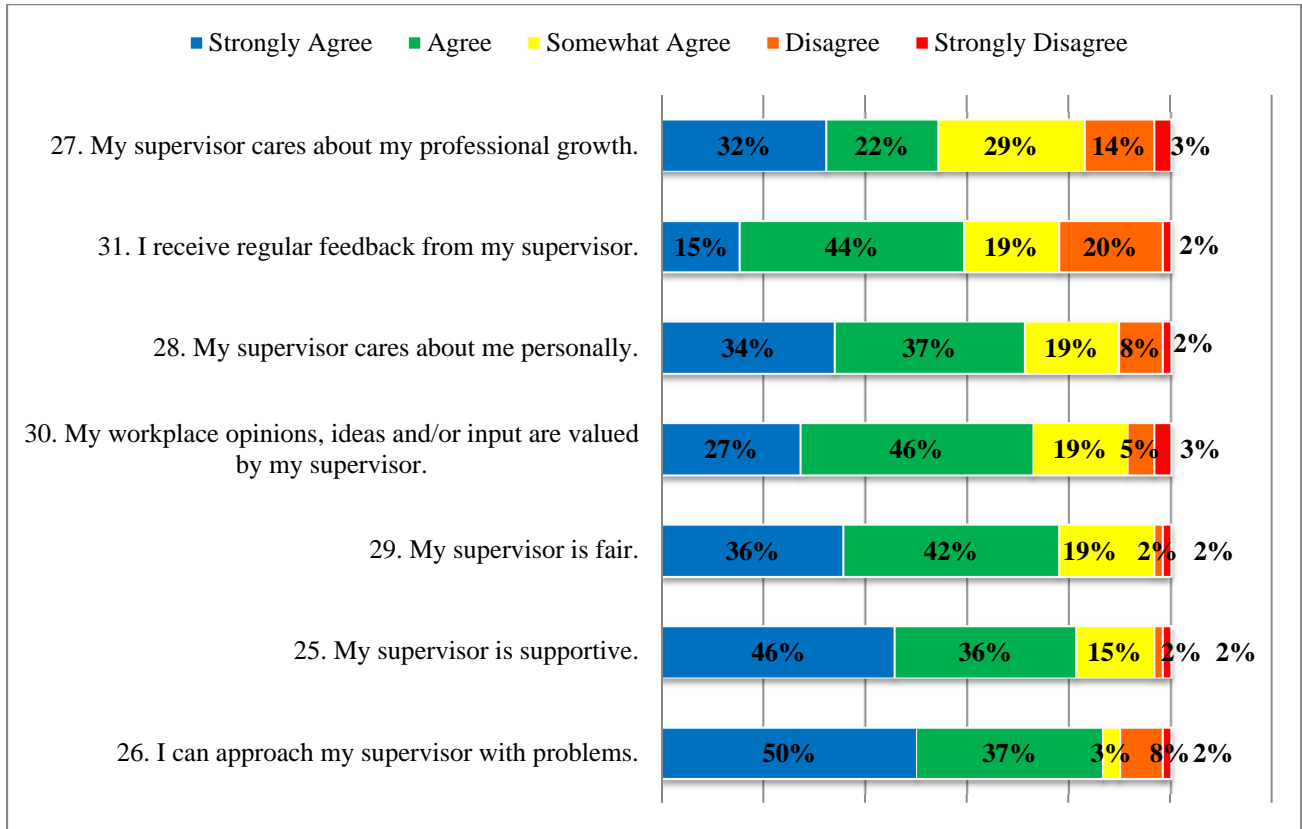


Figure 6. Frequency distribution of responses in ascending order.

Some clear opportunities for improvement in the supervisor-employee relationship are highlighted by the low level of agreement to the statement “my supervisor cares about my professional growth” (46 percent of respondents indicate that they somewhat agree, disagree or strongly disagree) and responses to the statement “I receive regular feedback from my supervisor” (41 percent of respondents either somewhat agree, disagree or strong disagree). As outlined in the literature review and theoretical framework, employee perceptions of feedback, performance management and career development can have an impact on turnover.

Question 28 “my supervisor cares about me personally” and question 30 “my workplace opinions ideas and/or input are valued by my supervisor” received 71 percent and 70 percent agreement. Given the size, scope and complexity of Island Health as an organization and some of the organizational challenges which complicate addressing low scores to the statements “my supervisor cares about my professional growth” and “I receive regular feedback from my supervisor” (i.e. limited time and resources, rigid and entrenched job classifications, etc.) the responses to questions 28 and question 30 may offer some ‘low hanging fruit’ for Administrative

Coordinators to address turnover and enhance employee relations as these questions fall more solidly within their sphere of individual control.

Reflecting back on the other survey sections (“How I Feel About My Job” and “Your Work Environment”), this section has a higher overall median level of agreement (71 percent) than “Your Work Environment” (64 percent). However, “How I Feel About My Job” received the highest medial level of agreement at 80 percent. Overall, these results indicate that work environment factors and supervisory factors are the areas where the most significant opportunities for improvement exist, while how employees feel about their jobs appears to be an organizational strength for retaining employees.

4.5 SECTION FIVE: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

The rationale for including questions about demographics was two-fold: collect data to assess whether or not the survey respondents were representative of the research population and ensure that any potential recommendations were made in alignment with widely recognized and empirically demonstrated preferences and/or needs associated with demographic groups. The following questions were asked of each participant:

32. Which region do you work in? (South Island, Central Island or North Island)
33. Which age bracket do you fall into? (Under 25, 25 to 35, 35 to 45, over 45)
34. Do you currently have family care obligations (i.e. caring for young children or an elderly parent)? (yes, no)
35. What is your marital status? (single, common law, married, separated/divorced)
36. Are you a permanent or casual employee?
37. How would you describe your level of proficiency in your current role? (novice, intermediate, experienced, technical expert).

To protect the anonymity and confidentiality of research participants, the Joint University of Victoria Island Health Human Ethics Research Board requested that the data summary be omitted from the final research product. As such, only a brief and general description of the data is summarized below.

Overall, each MHSU region (South, Central and North Island) was well represented in the survey with a survey response rate for each region almost directly proportional to the percentage of employees from each region. Based on the question to assess age, all age groups are well represented based on the estimated workforce proportions. Casual employees made up approximately 40 percent of responses, confirming that the responses reflect both employment types (permanent and casual employees).

The questions requesting personal information to ensure recommendation alignment with demographics illustrated that approximately 50 percent of MHSU administrative support professionals have family care obligations (“caring for young children or elderly parents”) with approximately 70 percent of respondents indicating they have a married or common law marital

status. The sole purpose of these questions was to support any potential recommendation to improve or build on flexible workplace practices, as such practices are widely regarded as effective methods of reducing turnover among individuals with family obligations; however, the survey results indicate a high level of satisfaction with present flexible workplace policies.

In the final question, respondents were asked to describe their level of proficiency in their current role by selecting one of the following options: experienced, intermediate, technical expert or novice. This section tested individual perception of skill level as studies outlined in the literature review indicated that perceptions of personal proficiency is a predictor of turnover probability: if an individual feels they are highly experienced and/or a technical expert in their role they are less likely to turnover. As an individual’s self-perception does not always align with reality and responses do not necessarily identify length of service or other attributes which could compromise participant confidentiality and anonymity, data from this question is illustrated below in Figure 7. Overall, the majority of respondents saw themselves as “experienced” and the second largest proportion identified as “intermediate.”

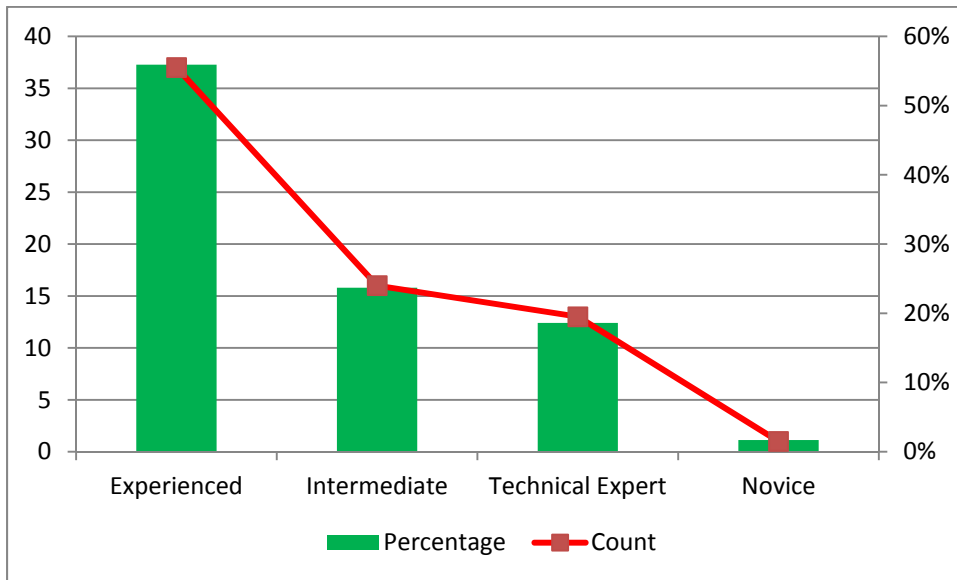


Figure 7. Frequency distribution of responses in descending order.

5.0 EMPLOYEE INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

5.1 STAY INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

The stay interviews were comprised of 14 questions and each interview took approximately 30 minutes to complete. During the calls, the researcher typed notes using a question template. Where necessary for subsequent data analysis, applied thematic analysis was conducted to identify themes in interview responses (Guest, MacQueen & Namey. 2012). However, as requested by the Human Research Ethics Board, interview transcripts and analysis tables are omitted from the report. The stay interview questions are included in [Appendix E](#) and are also listed below:

1. What site do you work at?
2. Briefly describe which program of MHSU you work for to help me understand the service provided there.
3. Do you feel that your work contributes to the greater good or benefits the community?
4. What keeps you working for MHSU?
5. If you resigned, what would you miss the most about working for MHSU?
6. How could your current job be more exciting?
7. What do you like the least about working for MHSU?
8. What aspects of the work environment do you enjoy?
9. Are you satisfied by your current job functions and tasks? If no, what would make your work more enjoyable or satisfying?
10. Do you feel that your supervisor is supportive of you personally and professionally?
11. If MHSU could make a single change to better support administrative professionals, what do you think that change should be?
12. What do you think about the training/professional development opportunities available through MHSU? What type of training/professional development would you like to see more of?
13. Tell me a story about the most exciting, energizing and motivating situation you have ever experienced in your job at MHSU. What happened? Describe the situation step-by-step as it unfolded. What made this situation so motivating for you?
14. Do you have any other feedback/comments to help me gain a better understanding of why you continue to work for MHSU?

To provide structure for the reader, the above-noted questions will be used as headings for the following discussion.

What site do you work at? Briefly describe which program of MHSU you work for to help me understand the service provided there.

When asked to describe the MHSU program participants worked for, the research participants demonstrated a high level of engagement and interest in their work as they answered this question. Each provided a highly detailed description of both their MHSU program's services and their own contribution to the provision of those services.

This question was asked to ensure that MHSU administrative support workers possessed an understanding of how they contribute to MHSU objectives, an important aspect in triggering and engaging public service motivation, for consideration in the recommendation section of this report. Based on the responses to this question, it does not seem that MHSU Administrative Support Workers lack an understanding of how they contribute to the bigger picture and the value of their work in providing effective and efficient services.

Do you feel that your work contributes to the greater good or benefits the community?

This question was designed to test another important aspect of employee retention: is the work perceived as having positive value and impact? All but one of the interview participants expressed a strong positive view of their work. With just one exception, each participant provided a client-centered response outlining empathy, concern and care for clients and an appreciation of how their role supports clients. Many participants shared stories of how they feel they have personally helped clients. A majority of participants expressed personal concern over what they perceived to be a lack of funding and resources for mental health and substance use care resulting in long wait times, and noted that this reality motivates them to do everything they can to facilitate client access to appointments expeditiously and be pleasant and caring with clients.

What keeps you working for MHSU?

Participants were asked this question to ascertain what the organization is doing well to retain and engage employees and identify areas that can be enhanced and leveraged to promote retention. Five themes, two dominant and three latent, emerged from responses to the question. Forty-two percent of responses touched on the theme of dedication to client service. As illustrated by one answer, this research participant specifically sought out MHSU as an employer because they "wanted work where [they] could have direct contact with clients and could see the benefit that [their] services have for the public." Present in 30 percent of answers, the other dominant theme was team attachment, best illustrated by statements like "the whole team works really well together – the team has fun! You joke around." This theme covers responses expressing a sense of belonging and camaraderie participants feel within their worksite teams and/or the strong interpersonal bonds they feel with their colleagues. Latent, minor themes coming from this question included job stability, total compensation (i.e. provision of benefits, pension, etc.) and work hours/scheduling flexibility.

If you resigned, what would you miss the most about working for MHSU?

This question asks participants what they like about the organization, but in a different way as a method of teasing out any additional information and confirming responses to the previous question. Two major themes of what participants would miss the most about working for MHSU emerged from this question: team attachment and client service. Team attachment was mentioned in 70 percent of responses to this question. This theme refers to the sense of

belonging and camaraderie participants feel within their worksite teams and the strong interpersonal bonds they feel with their colleagues. The second theme was how much the participants would miss frontline client service, client interaction and helping, as stated by a participant, "an underserved population." This theme was identified in 50 percent of responses. A poignant answer by one interview participant clearly articulates the essence of the client service theme: "seeing the clients every day; having that interaction with people, hearing a plain thank you, knowing that clients are grateful - it just makes you feel wonderful." Another participant noted that if they were to leave they would miss "...seeing the progress of the clients. It is very rewarding and amazing to even see a piece of that. Seeing them walk out with their head held high feels incredible." A third minor, latent theme of job task attachment was identified in a handful of answers: some participants articulated a strong attachment to the structure, process and high degree of ownership they had over their work as something they would miss if they were to resign.

How could your current job be more exciting?

In response to this question, all participants felt challenged and engaged in their current roles by expressing a high level of satisfaction with daily tasks. Some participants indicated that they had capacity for an increased workload, but said they were not bored or dissatisfied with the work they do. Responses were also consistent with survey responses testing the same issue.

What do you like the least about working for MHSU?

Responses to this question were intended to identify areas the organization could improve to reduce turnover. Overall, participants provided more detailed responses to what they dislike about working at MHSU than they did when asked what they liked. The theme occurring most often was a perceived lack of respect for administrative skills coupled with perceived condescending treatment by administrative supervisors/management and clinical staff. This theme arose in 42 percent of responses. The types of comments contributing to this theme are well highlighted by this response: "there is a feeling that it doesn't take much skill to do administrative support work and the work isn't valued – the feeling seems to be that they could hire anybody and you are replaceable." It is challenging to provide a specific example of the kind of comments referencing condescending treatment as most examples are so specific they risk identifying the participant; however, several of the comments reflecting this theme noted what could be described as a 'lowest-common-denominator' or 'one-size-fits all' approach to performance management where the actions of a few result in a blanket response sent to all administrative professionals.

In the examples given, a few administrative support workers may have made an error in judgment reflecting a lack of training, technical skill or professionalism, but their mistake resulted in every administrative professional either in the region or even the Island receiving a generic email reminding all administrative professionals to follow a particular process or uphold

a certain standard of professionalism. In the multiple mentions of this practice, participants stated they felt highly insulted and belittled by the 'one-size-fits-all treatment' when they personally hold themselves to high professional standards for both work quality and conduct. A number of interviewees providing these types of examples noted that the combination of not receiving regular performance feedback or positive feedback, coupled with generic emails to be reminded of (in their mind) basic performance standards, left them feeling unappreciated and/or unnoticed for their hard work, service and good judgment.

Based on the survey results, it is surprising that dissatisfaction with pay, the second theme from this question, received only four mentions. Respondents raising this issue felt that the pay is inadequate for the work completed, typically citing other Collective Agreements wage rates within Island Health in which (perceived) lower-skill positions (e.x. janitor) receive a higher hourly rate of pay.

Smaller themes, with only two mentions, included:

- Frustration with the rigid environment created by the Collective Agreement which respondents felt limits their ability to grow and develop and constrains managers' ability to recognize individual capabilities and adapt roles to suit administrative professionals' strengths.
- Management bias/favoritism in the selection process and in approving leaves and vacation.
- Frustration with bureaucratic process wherein respondents feel there are many opportunities to streamline work and reduce errors, but are prevented from doing so due to bureaucratic impediments.

What aspects of the work environment do you enjoy?

This question assists in identifying what aspects of the work environment administrative support workers appreciate and uncovers potential areas to be enhanced through potential recommendations. Unsurprisingly, based on the dominant themes in previous questions, client service (50 percent) and team attachment (33 percent) were the dominant themes unveiled when participants were asked what they like most about the work environment, with the minor theme of job task attachment again emerging in two responses.

Are you satisfied by your current job functions and tasks? If no, what would make your work more enjoyable or satisfying?

All respondents indicated they were highly satisfied by their job functions and tasks. Numerous respondents expressed a desire to take on more small scale special projects in support of their site or administration Island-Wide. Unfortunately, most of the specific examples given to illustrate special projects cannot be shared as they would likely identify the participant. However, one participant identified a need to generate standardized training manuals as an on-the-job training

aid across multiple sites and indicated she would be interested in working on a project like that if work volume allowed.

Do you feel that your supervisor is supportive of you personally and professionally?

Responses to this question are consistent with the survey questions testing supervisory relationships. Interview responses were categorized as positive if they did not include any negative comments, as neutral if they expressed some positive and some negative comments and negative if they did not include any positive comments. Overall, 70 percent of respondents offered a positive response, while only a handful were either neutral or negative. Neutral or negative responses cited a perceived lack of interaction and/or a perceived lack of respect from their supervisor. The theme of being treated in a condescending manner by administrative management emerged in both neutral and negative responses to this question.

If MHSU could make a single change to better support administrative professionals, what do you think that change should be?

Most participants provided more than one suggestion in response to the question. Themes originating from this question are consistent with themes identified in other questions seeking information on areas for improvement. Better pay and improved staffing levels were both mentioned in 33 percent of responses, while improved recognition of administrative professionals also appeared several times.

What do you think about the training/professional development opportunities available through MHSU? What type of training/professional development would you like to see more of?

This question was asked to gather information on whether or not the provision of more training and development opportunities might enhance employee retention. Overall, respondents expressed strong dissatisfaction with the training and professional development opportunities available for administrative professionals at MHSU, with 70 percent of participants providing an assertively negative response to the question: "what do you think about the training/professional development opportunities available through MHSU?" Negative responses were more or less consistent with the following answer: "There is nothing!" The remaining responses were neutral and there was one positive response.

As a follow-up question to all participants, the researcher asked "what type of training would you like to see more of?" Fifty percent of respondents indicated that they would like to see more technical skills training that directly relates to administrative professionals and would help them be more efficient and effective in their daily work. Technical skills training suggestions included: training in Microsoft Office Word, Excel, Outlook and Access, database training in Cerner, medical terminology, and electronic and hardcopy records management. Forty percent of respondents requested more clinically-focused training that would enhance their ability to

support client care and improve their confidence when handling difficult client situations. Suggestions included:

- Cultural sensitivity coursework to assist with client service.
- Training to enhance administrative professional ability to read and/or gauge clients, better enabling them to notify clinicians of potential problems or issues at the earliest point possible and improving overall confidence in client interaction.
- Training to assist administrative professionals in communicating assertively with difficult clients when boundary-setting is needed.

Tell me a story about the most exciting, energizing and motivating situation you have ever experienced in your job at MHSU. What happened? Describe the situation step-by-step as it unfolded. What made this situation so motivating for you?

Responses to this question fit tightly into three themes: opportunities to share knowledge and expertise (42 percent), recognition for a job well done (42 percent) and client service wins (25 percent). Opportunities to share personal on-the-job knowledge and expertise either to colleagues, business and clinical managers or third-party subject matter experts was not an anticipated response theme but provides an interesting springboard for developing potential recommendations to mitigate turnover. Specific examples risk identifying participants, but, broadly speaking participants felt truly excited and engaged in their work, and as a consequence recognized by their colleagues and supervisors, when they were chosen to train others, assist a clinical or business manager with a special project or assigned a project that they "owned." In general terms, participants felt that in these instances they truly added value and were not treated, in one participant's words, "[as] a number in a secretarial pool." Recognition for a job well done refers to responses indicating that receiving recognition and gratitude both from their work teams, colleagues and/or clients made participants feel highly engaged and motivated at work. One participant went as far to say that "positive feedback gets [them] out of bed in the morning." Another participant noted how even indirect client feedback makes them feel excited, energized and engaged in the work: they stated that they feel wonderful about their job and the importance of their work when they can hear "relief" in a client's voice when they are able to call and offer an earlier appointment for the client than the client was previously offered.

Do you have any other feedback/comments to help me gain a better understanding of why you continue to work for MHSU?

The interview concluded with the open-ended question: "Do you have any other feedback/comments to help me gain a better understanding of why you continue to work for MHSU?" Responses to this question varied so widely, that no cogent themes were identifiable. Not a single participant raised a new issue not covered elsewhere in the interview and nothing contradictory to the survey results emerged in response to the open-ended question.

5.2 EXIT INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

The exit interview recruitment email was sent to 27 former MHSU employees who departed voluntarily in the last two years (whom Island Health IT was able to identify an email address for). Four individuals expressed interest in participating, with three eventually following through on the interview. As mentioned, this response rate was disappointing, especially following significant efforts to adjust the recruitment methodology following feedback from Human Research Ethics, but was ultimately anticipated given the lack of incentive for exit interview participants to give their time (i.e. not paid to participate, incur the cost of a potential long distance phone bill, etc.). South and Central Island had representation in the exit interviews, but there was no representation from North Island. Exit interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes and participants answered a total of 13 questions. While the exit interview questions are located in [Appendix F](#), they are also listed below for convenience:

1. When you were working for MHSU, what region did you work in?
2. What were your main reasons for leaving Mental Health and Substance Use?
3. What did you like most about working at MHSU?
4. What did you like the least about working at MHSU?
5. Briefly describe which program of MHSU you worked for.
6. Did you feel that your work contributed to the greater good or benefited the community? If yes, do you feel like this enhanced sense of meaning had a positive effect on your job satisfaction? If no, why not?
7. Did the work environment have any effect on your decision to leave? If yes, what aspects specifically (i.e. organizational practices, culture, relationships, etc.)?
8. Were you satisfied or did you enjoy by your primary job functions and tasks? If no, what would have made your work more them more enjoyable or satisfying?
9. Do you feel that your supervisor was supportive of you professionally and/or personally?
10. Did your relationship with your supervisor have any impact on your decision to leave?
11. Is there anything MHSU could have done differently to retain you as an employee?
12. Was there any training/professional development MHSU could have offered to retain you? What type of training/professional development would have interested you?
13. Do you have any other feedback/comments to help me gain a better understanding of why you left?

Given that only three interviews were conducted, applied thematic analysis was not used as discussing the interview text does not require distilling down a larger data sample into simplified themes for ease of discussion and analysis. Overall, the researcher anticipated the content of the exit interview responses. Further, no responses conflicted with survey responses, nor did any of the data contradict or present new information not present in the stay interviews. Finally, most exit interview responses reflect larger themes identified in the stay interviews.

Each participant identified the need to move to more challenging and higher paying positions as their primary reasons for leaving MHSU. Client service and team attachment were the main aspects participants liked the most about working at MHSU, while aspects they did not like included union rigidities creating a barrier to individual development within MHSU and having a limited “scope of work.” One participant stated there was absolutely nothing they did not like about working at MHSU.

Each participant provided a detailed and nuanced description of the program and/or worksite they supported indicating a strong level of engagement and interest in the services provided and an understanding of how their role fit into the bigger picture. All participants expressed a strong positive response to the question “do you feel that your work contributed to the greater good or benefited the community?” and also noted that in their new/different roles they often miss the feeling of supporting individuals in need.

No participants indicated that the work environment was a factor in their decision to depart, although most identified some workplace issues they disliked, for example:

- A (perceived) tension between administrative management expectations that administrative support workers only perform a set list of functions and clinical/medical staff expectations that administrative support workers should help out as needed with a variety of tasks, often outside the scope of administrative management expectations.
- Medical professionals specifically (i.e. nurses and doctors) not treating administrative professionals with respect and dignity (an example was provided where “none of the [job title] at [work site] bothered to learn my name the entire time I worked there.”).

All participants noted that they enjoyed their primary job functions and tasks at MHSU when they were presented with variety, but strongly disliked being constrained to just “answering the phone and booking appointments.” One of three participants indicated that their supervisor was not supportive personally and professionally and that their relationship with their supervisor impacted their decision to leave, but the other two provided a strong positive response about their supervisor’s performance and that their supervisor was a positive factor that would have kept them at MHSU rather than drive them away.

All responses to the question “is there anything MHSU could have done differently to retain you as an employee?” reflected the lack of a development and career path for administrative professionals at MHSU. One participant also stated that longer-term administrative colleagues created quite a bit of anxiety for the participant by making frequent comments about job security. The participant stated that while she did not ever experience a reduction of hours or layoff in her time with MHSU, their comments caused her to frequently go through the “trauma and drama of worrying about finding another job.” She noted that perhaps administrative support workers with greater seniority should be deterred from making unnecessary comments to that effect, as they are unsettling for a newer employee.

Responses regarding training and development were negative for the most part indicating participants do not perceive the current offerings as adequate and/or were not aware of what the offerings were. All participants expressed a need for greater clinical and technical training, as was also expressed by current MHSU administrative professionals.

The final open-ended question culminated in responses noting dissatisfaction with pay and frustration with the lack of developmental opportunities within MHSU.

6.0 KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The project embarked to uncover what organizational factors are contributing to voluntary employee turnover and what the client can do to mitigate these factors, reduce employee turnover and address employee turnover intention. Recalling the theoretical framework on which the project rests, there are turnover antecedents (i.e. factors which lead to turnover) and factors which contribute to retention (i.e. organizational retention practices). The employee survey and interviews highlighted what turnover antecedents may be contributing to turnover at MHSU and the review of effective practices in employee retention outlined practices MHSU may wish to consider to address voluntary employee turnover antecedents at play. The employee survey and interviews also illuminated areas of organization strength which could further be leveraged through implementation of specific organizational retention practices. This section provides an overview of the key findings (the turnover antecedents and retention strengths), relates the findings back to the literature review and theoretical framework and pairs a recommendation which each finding to assist the client in mitigating voluntary employee turnover. A summary of the project recommendations is located in [Appendix G](#).

The recommendations are laid out in ascending order of priority. Recommendations one through 14 directly address the organizational factors contributing to turnover, while recommendations 15 to 17 assist in leveraging retention strengths.

It is critical to note that the academic, peer-reviewed literature on effective practices in employee retention contains very little information outlining the specific tactics to be deployed as part of the effective practices. For example, while it is established that employee recognition programs are an effective practice for improving employee retention, such academic work offers no specific information describing program components or tactics. Russell (2013) criticizes the literature on voluntary employee turnover for this very reason, noting “current theories and measures simply have very little to offer managers facing voluntary turnover problems – there is little or no knowledge transfer” (p.164). He also questions the “relev[ance]” of voluntary employee turnover literature for HR practitioners and line managers concluding that academic literature offers very little in the way of “valuable tools to help managers deal with real world turnover problems” (p.164). Thus, while the recommendations which follow are tailored to reflect the client’s scope of control and decision-making authority, the environment of fiscal restraint within the Island Health context and alignment with the established effective practices in employee retention, the specific tactics or ‘nuts and bolts’ of recommendations are drawn from human resources management textbooks more than peer-reviewed works assessing the efficacy of a practice in relation to employee retention.

6.1 ORGANIZATIONAL TURNOVER ANTECEDENTS

The survey and interview questions were built to test the turnover and retention factors illuminated in the literature review and summarized in the theoretical framework. A number of factors were identified by research participants as organizational factors contributing to turnover:

1. Pay is not perceived as equitable.
2. Career development opportunities and training and development offerings within MHSU are inadequate.
3. Administrative skills and contributions are undervalued (and an absence of formal and informal recognition may exacerbate this perception).
4. Person-job and person-organization fit can be improved as reflected by several measures of individual role perception.
5. Supervisors are providing an unsatisfactory volume of performance feedback (positive or constructive).
6. Opportunities to provide input on decisions and processes which directly impact administrative work are limited.

Each is discussed in greater detail below and is paired with a recommendation to address the specific challenge. A summary of recommendations is included in [Appendix G](#).

6.1.1. PAY NOT EQUITABLE

The perception that remuneration is insufficient for the work performed came across in both the survey and the interviews, despite being suppressed and excluded as a tested factor. This result was anticipated by the project client and the Administrative Coordinators in preliminary interviews. The feedback on this issue came forth with robust presence in the qualitative survey question and in the interviews. Pay was the strongest theme emerging from the open-ended survey question “what do you think MHSU leadership could do to enhance retention of administrative professionals?” with approximately 40 percent of responses expressing some form of dissatisfaction with remuneration. While the interview findings were not as strong as the survey, pay was the second most commonly cited theme in response to the interview question asking participants what they like the least about working at MHSU. Further, when interview participants were asked what single change MHSU could make to better support administrative professional retention, the pay theme arose in 33 percent of responses.

This finding is challenging because the theoretical framework identifies external pay equity as a retention factor (Posthuma et al., 2013; Hughes & Rog, 2008, Scott, McMullen & Royal, 2012), but, as previously discussed, MHSU administrative support professionals are paid well above market median for office assistant, program assistant, administrative assistant and other similarly titled roles. The pay range for the AS3 Classification (covering the vast majority of administrative support professionals in MHSU) is \$17.77 to \$18.95, while market median for

similarly titled roles in Canada is \$13.00 for Office Assistants and \$15.00 for Medical Office Assistants (PayScale.com, 2014). Further, the effective practice review findings clearly indicate that increasing pay is not an empirically supported method of promoting retention (Gaertner, 2000; Llornes & Stazyk, 2011). Even if increasing pay were within the client's scope of control, there is a lack of evidence to suggest this would translate into improved retention rates.

Given this disconnect between how administrative support professionals feel, the lack of data to support how they feel and the lack of evidence to support an increase to pay, an educational communications tactic may assist in improving perceptions of pay and transparency in discussions about pay.

Recommendation 1: Provide MHSU administrative professionals with a total compensation letter upon hire, and when wage increases occur, to address negative perceptions of compensation and underscore some of the less visible factors which contribute to total compensation.

The British Columbia Human Resources Management Association (2014) defines total compensation as “all forms of pay and rewards received by employees for performance in their jobs including: money, benefits, services, perquisites and in-kind payments” (p.144). In addition to receiving competitive pay, administrative professionals expressed a high level of satisfaction with non-monetary factors which qualify as intangible work benefits, including: satisfaction with Monday to Friday daytime work, the availability of scheduling flexibility, supportive supervisors and job security. Working from a total compensation letter template, Administrative Coordinators could be required to coordinate this total compensation education program by providing letters at hire and when pay increases are processed within their employee groups to ensure new and current employees stay up to date on what their total compensation package includes and the total value of that compensation (Noe et al., 2006, p.299; Schwind et al., 2011, p.396). The total compensation letter template could include statements regarding:

- Current annual compensation rate,
- Total annual value of benefits package,
- Total annual value of employer pension contributions,
- Summary of vacation benefits,
- Access to Island Health gym(s) and any other employment perquisites (i.e. employee discounts, free parking as it applies, etc.),
- Data positioning MHSU administrative professional pay in relation to Canadian market median for similarly titled roles,
- Training and development opportunities scheduled or available on an annual basis,

- Availability of Monday to Friday, daytime work and flexible scheduling (may wish to highlight this as a competitive advantage for MHSU within the Island Health context where similar classifications work all days of the week and all hours of the day),
- Supportive supervisors,
- Job security,
- Highly meaningful and rewarding work, and
- Information on employer awards received (i.e. named one of British Columbia's top employers for five years running).

6.1.2 CAREER ADVANCEMENT AND TRAINING

Participants expressed frustration with the minimal opportunity for career advancement within the administrative stream at MHSU, and more than 60 percent of interview participants felt that training and development opportunities are virtually non-existent and insufficient where they do exist. While the frustration with career advancement was anticipated by the researcher based on preliminary interviews with Administrative Coordinators, the strongly expressed dissatisfaction with training was not anticipated. Given the existence of an online Learning Management System and the volume of mandatory training courses required for new hires at MHSU, the researcher assumed there was an organizational emphasis on learning and that the researcher had assumed would continue throughout the course of employment. Expressions of frustration with this organizational issue came across with unwavering strength in the survey and the interviews; when survey respondents were asked to rank the top three reasons they would resign from MHSU from a predefined set of options (which excluded pay), a lack of development opportunities or on-going professional development was the most frequently chosen factor. In the interviews, participants were asked what they thought of the training/development opportunities for MHSU administrative support and 70 percent of respondents provided a strong, negative response stating that current offerings were insufficient. When asked follow-up questions by the researcher to better understand the perceived gap, 50 percent of respondents requested further technical training to help them perform more efficiently and effectively in their role, and 40 percent of respondents asked for clinical skill training to better assist with clients.

This finding does present an opportunity for action by the client given the clearly expressed dissatisfaction with both career and development opportunities and training opportunities and the importance of offering both types of opportunities for employee retention. As outlined in the literature review and theoretical framework, providing career advancement and development opportunities is an empirically supported effective practice to promote employee retention (James & Mathew, 2012; Oladapo, 2014; Hughes & Rog, 2008; Luna-Arocas & Camps, 2008; Kim & Lee, 2007; Whittington & Galpin, 2010; Hausknecht et al., 2009; Hannay & Northam, 2000; van Dyk & Coetzee, 2012; Glen, 2006; Blankertz & Robinson, 1997; Thite & Russell, 2010). Similarly, providing training opportunities is also an established effective practice in

retaining employees (Thite & Russell, 2010; Posthuma et al., 2013; James & Mathew, 2012; Hughes & Rog, 2008; Whittington & Galpin, 2010; Hinkin & Tracey, 2010).

While the addition of net new developmental positions is outside the client's scope of authority and unlikely in the current Island Health fiscal context, the client can take several actions to create opportunities for career development (internal to MHSU) and enhance awareness of available Island Health and MHSU training.

Career Advancement and Development Recommendations

Recommendation 2: Create an Island-wide MHSU Administrative Professional Advisory Committee to steward and implement the project recommendations (as appropriate), solicit administrative professional input and/or feedback on organizational changes (as appropriate) and lead other self-identified, practicable initiatives to promote the career development and retention of MHSU administrative professionals.

This recommendation serves multiple purposes. First and foremost, the Advisory Committee provides a career development opportunity and a higher-level of organizational exposure for those administrative professionals seeking to build their communication, leadership, project management and coordination skills in an environment where the organizational structure and nature of their everyday role limits their ability to do so (Belcourt et al., 2011, p.199). Secondly, establishing an Advisory Committee creates a forum for soliciting employee feedback and input on proposed management programs and actions (Schwind et al., 2010, p. 399).⁸ Finally, an Advisory Committee provides a resource for implementing some of the project recommendations and establishes a sense of shared ownership and accountability between management and administrative professionals for improving retention of administrative professionals.

While the Advisory Committee's membership composition and terms of reference is best determined by the client, the following considerations are suggested for inclusion in considerations of membership and committee structure:

- Use expressions of interest as a means of determining committee membership.
- Require expressions of interest to reference committee participation criteria requirements (i.e. alignment with expressed career goals, individual readiness for program and project administration, positive attitude toward change, strong verbal and

⁸ Minimal opportunities for employee input on organizational decisions another project finding which will be reviewed shortly.

written communication skills, the ability to work independently and as part of a team, etc.).

- Ensure committee membership reflects all Island regions.
- Establish a rotating chair.
- The Advisory Committee could meet bi-monthly via videoconference with an annual face-to-face conference.
- Have the Manager, Business Systems and Administration as the Advisory Committee leadership sponsor.
- Pay committee members for their participation on the committee and allow for committee work and meetings to occur during regular work hours.

Recommendation 3: Identify the knowledge, competencies, skills and abilities individuals need to develop to advance to the AS4 Classification or Administrative Coordinator positions and create an internal program for measuring and assessing individual “readiness” to proceed as part of the annual performance planning review.

While internal promotion opportunities for administrative professionals are limited within the MHSU context, they are not impossible. Creation of readiness checklists outlining the key knowledge, competencies, skills and abilities required for consideration in one of the above mentioned roles would assist Administrative Coordinators in leading performance planning and career development conversations with administrative professionals looking to grow their career within MHSU. By providing an objective framework for assessment, Administrative Coordinators are better positioned to determine appropriate development or training opportunities to assist the employee in achieving their career goals (i.e. need to obtain leadership experience through external volunteer work or participation on the Advisory Committee, etc.) (Belcourt et al., 2011, p.199).

Training and Development Recommendations

Recommendation 4: Promote available courses on the Island Health Learning Management System and within the Island Health context, related to desired technical and clinical training, through a monthly communication to MHSU administrative professionals.

During employee interviews, 70 percent of employees expressed that formal training opportunities were insufficient or not available. Only one employee interviewed mentioned the online Learning Management System (LMS) available for employee training at Island Health. Schwind et al. (2010), state that one of the

key downfalls of intranet self-service, identified by human resources executives, is “getting employees to use self-service” (p.395). The project findings indicate a low level of administrative professional engagement with the online LMS (available through the intranet) and support this recommendation to increase awareness of the LMS with MHSU administrative professionals and highlight available and relevant technical and coursework available on the LMS through a monthly communication. When drafting the monthly communication, the designated writer may wish to contact Island Health Human Resources or review the appropriate intranet page to confirm upcoming online and face-to-face training for inclusion in the communication. The communication could be sent via email from the client or shared via an internal newsletter.

Recommendation 5: Distribute semi-annual updates on training and development offered in the last six months.

As a follow-up to the last recommendation, conducting a semi-annual survey of Administrative Coordinators to establish what training occurred in the last six months would assist in improving the perception that training is not taking place. While not everyone will take training in a six month period, reporting out on the training that did occur will assist in demonstrating that training occurs and that MHSU supports investments in administrative professional training.

Recommendation 6: Leverage performance planning conversations to highlight and discuss specific training and development opportunities within the Island Health context related to individual career development plans (i.e. participation on the Advisory Committee, approval to participate in LMS courses or face-to-face training, etc.).

Ensuring Administrative Coordinators are considering training requests through the annual performance planning cycle, in addition to ensuring employees are knowledgeable regarding the available training offerings to request (outlined in recommendation four), will ensure training requests are being formally considered and a discussion regarding training offerings is occurring at least once per year with each administrative professional (Belcourt et al., 2011, p.189).

Recommendation 7: Partner with clinical leaders to arrange informal clinical “Knowledge Sharing Sessions” (i.e. in-house clinicians share information and best practices in client interaction in a semi-formal format offered in person and via webinar).

As identified by administrative professionals, there is a stronger desire for more clinical training to support administrative client care but a lack of general clinical training available with relevant content for an administrative professional.

Informal, in-house knowledge sharing is an established training method (Schwind et al., 2010, p287; Noe et al., 2010, p.381). This recommendation was suggested by an administrative professional during one of the interviews who felt clinical training was a gap, but noted in-house resources exist at almost each site to increase administrative professional knowledge of handling clients experiencing mental health or addictions challenges.

While such informal training and knowledge-sharing would be portfolio-specific, it presents a low-cost tactic for addressing the perception that insufficient clinical training exists for administrative professionals. Efforts to encourage this training initiative would be site specific, but the client could encourage clinical leaders to offer sessions like these on a quarterly basis and include them in the monthly training update and semi-annual report out (see recommendations four and five).

6.1.3 RECOGNITION (AND RESPECT)

One of the clearest organizational issues presented in the survey and interview findings is that over 60 percent of administrative professionals do not feel respected at work, nor do they feel valued by colleagues at all levels. This challenge is best expressed in two ways: there is a feeling that improved respect and recognition of administrative skill sets and individual strengths is needed, and that there should be better formal and informal recognition for high-caliber work and contributions going above and beyond basic job requirements. This was an unanticipated result based on preliminary interviews with Administrative Coordinators and the project client.

In a survey ranking exercise, not feeling valued and respected was the second most frequently cited reason why MHSU professionals would leave the business unit. In the interviews with current employees, the theme of a perceived lack of respect for administrative skills coupled with condescending treatment by administrative supervisors/management and clinical staff arose in 42 percent of responses. Many MHSU administrative professionals feel as though their work and specific skill sets are neither understood nor valued by clinical/medical professionals and administrative management alike; to succinctly express the respect issue as explained to the researcher, four excerpts from the various stay and exit interview questions eloquently illustrate the issue:

- “You are left with the feeling you are a number in a secretarial pool.”
- “There is a feeling that it doesn’t take much skill to do administrative support work and the work isn’t valued – the feeling seems to be that they could hire anybody and you are replaceable.”
- “None of the [job titles] at [work site] bothered to learn my name the entire time I worked there.”

- “They do not understand the technical skill required to do the job accurately and quickly to ensure the best possible patient care. [I] feel [I] taken for granted, plain and simple.”

While a lack of formal and informal recognition does not necessarily reflect with the same level of intensity as other identified issues (i.e. pay, career growth, training and respect) in quantitative terms, there are three reasons the lack of informal and formal recognition warrant serious consideration as an organizational challenge contributing to turnover. Firstly, feeling undervalued or disrespected could actually be a symptom of a lack of formal and informal recognition. Secondly, the desire to be recognized and feel valued, while not as forcefully present in the data as a primary organizational challenge, was still present nonetheless. In the survey, “a lack of recognition for good work” was selected 10 times by approximately 60 respondents as one of the top three reasons they would consider resigning from MHSU (six percent of all responses), and “I receive recognition for a job well done” was one of the least frequently selected reasons in response to the question asking participants to select their top three reasons for remaining with MHSU. The survey question “I receive regular feedback from my supervisor” had the second lowest level of agreement in the supervisor relationship section of the survey.

The need for improved informal and formal recognition comes through with strength in a basic textual analysis of the interview transcripts, but not necessarily in thematic analysis of a single contained question. The desire to be recognized (in addition to being treated with respect) does not emerge as a strong theme in any specific question, but when the interview comments are taken as a whole, this organizational opportunity for improvement is apparent. Consider the following excerpts which formed part of a participant response to a range of questions (none specifically probing about recognition practices):

- "Seeing the clients every day; having that interaction with people, hearing a plain thank you, knowing that clients are grateful - it just makes you feel wonderful."
- “They need to recognize our behind the scenes stuff... very little recognition is received from supervisors. They don’t take notice of going above and beyond...[recognition practice] should be expanded to improve recognition from leadership and managers (in collaboration with clinicians) for administrative professionals.”
- “...there is a true lack of appreciation. I have gone three years without a performance review.”

During the interview, participants were asked to describe a time they felt excited, motivated and engaged at work. The purpose of this question was to isolate what aspects of the role are likely to support retention. The data indicates that recognition for good work and administrative skill sets

is the most likely workplace experience to leave administrative professionals feeling excited, motivated and engaged. Eighty four percent of answers to this question cited occasions when administrative support professionals either had an opportunity to share their knowledge and expertise in a particular area (a form of respect and recognition for skills) or received recognition from colleagues or clients (i.e. received simple thank you or were thanked in a group format).

Some short descriptions and interview paraphrases/excerpts further illustrate the desire (and positive impact) for recognition and respect. One administrative professional gave an example describing their work on an annual project which is well received by clients (project description withheld to protect anonymity); to paraphrase, the feeling the participant gets when the participant is “cheered on” by the team and thanked by clients is when the participant feels truly engaged and attached to their role. One participant simply stated: “[it] feels really nice when the team says thank you or acknowledges my work,” while another noted “whenever I get a big thank you from the clinical staff, it makes me feel so good. It makes me feel appreciated.” Perhaps one of the strongest direct quotes was: “positive feedback gets me out of bed in the morning.”

The very strong feedback from interview participants on what makes them feel engaged at work coupled with the survey and interview data indicating recognition is not happening with routine frequency and that administrative professionals feel undervalued and disrespected, illuminates a serious organizational gap with potential to negatively impact turnover intention and turnover.

Returning to the established turnover antecedents and retention practices outlined in the literature review and summarized in the theoretical framework, it is well established that a negative workplace culture, in this case manifesting as a lack of recognition and respect toward administrative professionals, is correlated with voluntary employee turnover (Llorens & Stazyk, 2010, p.116; Dass & Topaloglu, 2014; Kumar, James & Matthew, 2012). In addition, the absence of recognition and rewards are also correlated with voluntary turnover wherein a lack of recognition causes individuals to feel unappreciated and exit the organization (Hickey & Bennett, 2012; Cho & Lewis; Deery, 2008; Hausknecht, 2009; Hinkin & Tracey, 2010; Huselid, 1995; James & Matthew, 2012; Kim & Lee, 2007; Whittington & Galpin; 2010). Based on the report findings, the client can take several actions to improve this facet of the work environment and enhance formal recognition for administrative professionals.

Recommendation 8: Implement an MHSU administrative professional recognition program incorporating informal and formal recognition elements.

Creating and implementing a robust formal and informal recognition program for administrative professionals addresses the two key challenges in relation to administrative professionals feeling respected and valued at MHSU (British Columbia Human Resources Management Association, 2014, p.145). Informal program elements could include items such as:

- Online thank you cards accessible through the MHSU intranet (for peer to peer or supervisor to peer use).
- An online gratitude board embedded or bannered in the MHSU intranet for colleagues to express gratitude in a public forum.
- A birthday card from the Administrative Coordinator to recognize birthdays.
- A congratulations letter individually signed by the senior MHSU leadership to new hires outlining the critical role MHSU administrative support professionals play in delivering MHSU's mandate.

Formal program elements could include:

- Island-wide awards (symbolic) for client and team service excellence to be given out by the project client in a public forum.
- Hand-written notes of gratitude from MHSU senior leadership to acknowledge six month and annual milestones.

Recommendation 9: Establish a campaign to promote awareness of administrative professional individual expertise and backgrounds and share with the entire MHSU team on a monthly basis.

Distributing a monthly communication to the entire MHSU team (i.e. leadership, clinical and administrative) profiling a single MHSU administrative professional to highlight his or her unique skills, knowledge areas and attributes would serve as a formal recognition opportunity, as well as a tactic to address the perception that administrative professionals do not possess unique and valuable skills and experience. The information could be presented in a "Q&A" interview format, with intent to share individualized accomplishments and areas of expertise. Having the communication sent by one of the senior medical leaders would enhance the probability that the communication is read and demonstrate a leadership commitment to value administrative skill sets among clinicians and medical professionals in the MHSU context. It is recommended that the proposed Advisory Committee be responsible for creating the "Q&A" template and administering this program.

Recommendation 10: Seek senior MHSU operational and medical leadership support in addressing the perception that administrative support skills are not respected or valued.

The key finding that administrative professionals feel disrespected and undervalued cannot be effectively addressed without engaging senior operational

and medical leadership in identifying solutions. It is recommended that the client solicit their input on shifting medical and clinical attitudes perceived as disrespectful and request support from Island Health Human Resources to determine the appropriate tools, resources or training needed to improve respectful treatment of administrative professionals. This recommendation dovetails with recommendation nine (above) that a senior medical leader publicly value the skills sets of MHSU administrative professionals.

6.1.4 PERSON-JOB AND PERSON-ORGANIZATION FIT

Survey questions testing person-job and person-organization fit indicate a higher than anticipated level of discord between how participants view their role and the needs of MHSU to retain employees, highlighting a potential need to adjust recruitment strategy to promote a closer person-job and person-organization fit. When asked to select the best description of how individuals perceived their current role, 26 percent of participants identified their role as their field of choice with 36 percent noting it as a stepping stone in their career, 24 percent indicating it was a job to pay the bills and 14 percent indicating they were not sure how the role fit into their career and life plans. Survey respondents who perceived their current role as their field of choice were the most likely to identify the intent to stay three or more years in their current role.

Individuals' indicating their current role is a stepping stone in their career were the second most likely group of respondents to indicate they planned to stay less than one year and less than six months. Participants who were not sure how the role fit into their career and life plans were the least likely to indicate intent to stay three or more years, while individuals indicating their role was a job to pay the bills indicated they were likely to depart in one year or less.

Further person-job and person-organization dissonance was present in a demographic question requesting participants share their perception of their own capability in the administrative role; surprisingly few survey participants identified themselves as technical experts and approximately 25 percent of participants felt they were either intermediate or novice when asked to perceive their own skill level in their role. As discussed in the literature review, individuals who see themselves as highly experienced subject matter experts are far less likely to turnover than individuals perceiving themselves as developing in their roles.

Based on survey results alone, it appears that tailoring recruitment practice to target talent pools specifically interested in providing medical administrative support and/or administrative support services to underserved populations (and refining job posting and selection criteria to reflect the same) would promote a closer person-job and person-organization fit. Promoting greater alignment between personal goals, the career opportunities available at MHSU and the organizational needs of MHSU may assist in decreasing employee turnover. Screening criteria to

assess individual perception of their own capabilities may also support identifying candidates who take a higher measure of pride and confidence in their skills and abilities; thus, promoting enhanced alignment between individual perception of the job and the organizational need to retain skilled administrative professionals.

Recommendation 11: Target candidate pools whose own objectives more closely align with the role and the organization's services to reduce the number of individuals who perceive the role as a job to pay the bills or are not sure how the role fits into their career plans.

This recommendation could include partnering with applied and technical post-secondary program employment facilitators to place graduates appropriate for administrative support work. Technical school and college diploma program graduates from medical office assistant and office assistant programs are more likely to experience person-job and person-organization fit because they have chosen administrative support work as a career path and are more likely to experience person-job fit than an individual who fits the role qualifications but is simply seeking a job to pay the bills.

An additional tactic may be to partner with university employment facilitators to push available opportunity postings to recent undergraduate program graduates in departments such as political science, sociology or social work to enhance the probability that successful applicants will experience job satisfaction (person-job fit) and see the work as meaningful (person-organization fit). The specific programs mentioned often have a strong focus on social justice and are likely to produce graduates interested in a career supporting mental health and addictions recovery services. Further, social science undergraduates lacking applied work experience and/or additional and applied technical training may value working in a more entry-level role as part of a large public sector organization with ample opportunity for future growth and career development.

While recent undergraduates may see an administrative support role as a stepping stone in their career, the MHSU employee survey indicates individuals viewing their role as a stepping stone were more likely to express intent to stay for three or more or two to three years than individuals who perceived their role as a job to pay the bills or were unsure of how the position fit their career plans.

Recommendation 12: Investigate and apply screening tools to promote closer person-job and person-organization fit (i.e. personality tests and/or screening assignments) and screen out ill-fitting candidates with a higher probability of turnover.

As discussed in the literature review and theoretical framework, establishing person-job and person-organization fit are important for managing turnover (Whittington & Galpin, 2010; Hannay & Northam, 2000; Hendrick & Raspillar, 2011; Carr, Pearson, Vest & Boyar, 2011; Borzaga & Tortia, 2011; Bhatnagar, 2007). The recruitment process offers a valuable opportunity to establish fit. Screening tests (i.e. Work Keys Skills Assessment Battery and written assignments) can enhance the probability of hiring individuals with person-job and person-organization fit (Hendrick & Raspillar, 2011). While purchasing a testing battery may not be feasible given budgeting limitations, development of a written assignment to assess fit may assist hiring managers in decision-making: individuals could be asked to outline why they want to work in an administrative support role, why they want to support MHSU services and what they enjoy about working in an administrative support role. Assessing the completed written assignment against fixed criteria would provide hiring managers with a recruitment tool for further assessing fit in addition to an interview.

6.1.5 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Based on the survey results and interview findings, supervisors are not perceived as widely supportive of direct reports' professional growth and are not perceived as providing regular performance feedback. "My supervisor cares about my professional growth" and "I receive regular feedback from my supervisor" were the lowest scoring questions in the supervisory relationship section of the survey with 54 percent and 59 percent agreement respectively. In response to the question "what do you think MHSU leadership could do to enhance retention of administrative professionals," the theme "intensify performance management of poor performers" was present in nine percent of all responses and was the third most cogent theme emerging from the question. Further, interview comments indicate numerous administrative professionals have either never received a performance review or have not received a performance reviews in multiple years. Together, these responses indicate there is an organizational issue impacting turnover to be addressed in relation to supervisors and their execution of performance management.

Recommendation 13: Set formal performance management cycle for MHSU administrative professionals, monitoring and tracking Administrative Coordinator completion of probationary and annual performance planning meetings for each MHSU administrative professional to ensure minimum number of feedback and coaching opportunities are occurring.

Based on the feedback from administrative professionals gathered through the project, annual performance reviews are not occurring. As identified in the literature review and theoretical framework, ineffective leadership (a component of which is a lack of performance feedback) is an established turnover antecedent

(Cahalane & Sites, 2008; Grissom, 2011; Hickey & Bennett 2012; Lee & Jimenez, 2011; Llorens & Stazyk, 2010; Lloyd, Murphy & Price, 2006). While MHSU Administrative Coordinators are viewed as supportive and empathetic, the interviews indicate they do not provide routine performance feedback (informal or formal). Further, the employee survey indicates that supervisors are perceived as not caring about individual employee's professional growth. Performance planning and feedback conversations are a critical opportunity to provide formal feedback (positive and constructive) and to discuss career development objectives. By holding Administrative Coordinators accountable to the process on an annual basis, the client can address an area where line supervisors are viewed as ineffective.

Recommendation 14: Invest in performance coaches for Administrative Coordinators to enhance performance management, mentoring and coaching conversation skills.

While this may not be possible within the Island Health fiscal context, the literature review and theoretical framework clearly establish that investments in managerial training have a positive impact on employee retention and almost all research underscored the relationship between management awareness (in the areas of performance management, coaching and mentoring) and retention (Deery, 2008, Whittington & Galpin, 2010; Huselid, 1995; Van Dyk & Coetzee, 2012; Grissom, 2011; Palmer & Gignac, 2012, Blankertz & Robinson, 1997). Based on employee feedback, Administrative Coordinators are not perceived as effective in providing performance feedback and some of the more negative interview comments gave specific examples (excluded to protect participant identity) of poorly executed constructive feedback. By investing in this area, the client may improve Administrative Coordinator confidence in relation to performance feedback and address a key turnover antecedent which may be contributing to turnover within the employee group.

6.1.6 EMPLOYEE INPUT IN DECISION-MAKING

The final organizational issue, which presented in the survey with enough presence to warrant inclusion in the discussion of organizational issues impacting turnover, is the perception that administrative professionals are given limited opportunity to provide input on decisions and processes which directly impact administrative work. Within the survey, a work environment question asking participants whether they are asked to provide input on decision or projects that affect them received 45 percent agreement, with 22 percent of respondents indicating disagreement with the statement. Improving and encouraging employee communication emerged

as the sixth most cogent theme in the open-ended qualitative question asking what MHSU leadership could do to enhance retention of administrative professionals. The theme was present in five of the 81 categorically distinct comments made by 47 respondents; in total, 11 percent of all question respondents noted the issue in their answer. While the theme is not as impressively represented as pay or career advancement, it is noteworthy that it was articulated as a retention challenge by participants even though the theme has far less of a tangible and immediate impact on participants than issues like pay, career advancement, training and formal recognition. Recommendation two, the establishment of an administrative professional advisory committee, would create a potential forum for engaging administrative professionals in change management and seeking input on changes impacting the administrative function. For example, senior MHSU leaders could be placed on the committee meeting agenda on a quarterly-basis to provide initial context and information regarding upcoming changes impacting administrative professionals, outlining why the change is required and requesting input from the committee on what actions could be taken to support the change. The advisory committee could be accountable for reporting out on this new information (i.e. reasons for change) to MHSU administrative professionals and/or engage with their administrative professionals peer group to solicit ideas for assisting the team through periods of change and transition.

6.2 ORGANIZATIONAL RETENTION STRENGTHS

While the previous section highlighted some organizational factors which may be contributing to turnover, the survey and interviews unpacked some organizational advantages and strengths worth noting. MHSU has a wealth of organization-specific retention strengths to leverage in efforts to promote retention:

1. Administrative professionals believe they perform meaningful work.
2. Administrative professionals experience a high level of job satisfaction through ownership of their routine work tasks, client interaction and connectivity to MHSU's client service mandate.
3. Supervisors are perceived as supportive by administrative professionals.
4. Administrative professionals believe current scheduling practice allows for work/life balance.
5. Administrative professionals experience high levels of work team attachment (indicating a positive work environment).
6. Positive feedback from clients, colleagues and supervisors motivates, engages and excites administrative professionals.

The strengths are discussed in greater detail below. For each strength, a new recommendation is either provided or an explanation of how an existing recommendation leverages the strength is given. A summary of project recommendations is included in [Appendix G](#).

6.2.1 MEANINGFUL WORK

The survey and interview results demonstrate that the vast majority of administrative professionals see their work as meaningful, feel good about what they do for a living, are passionate about helping clients, care about building a rapport with clients and feel they are serving the public good. Based on the feedback given in the preliminary interviews with the Administrative Coordinators and project client, this was not an anticipated research finding; the researcher had anticipated, given the stated emphasis on pay as a turnover driver, that most administrative professionals would perceive their role as a means to end (i.e. a job to pay the bills) and not necessarily feel a sense of connectedness to public service or clients. In the interviews, 43 percent of all interviewees indicated that dedication to client service was what “kept them working at MHSU” and when asked what they would miss this most if they resigned 50 percent of responses stated they would miss frontline interaction with clients.

Referencing the literature review and theoretical framework, marketing employer brand internally is an effective retention practice (Hughes & Rog, 2008; Kim & Lee, 2007; Whittington & Galpin, 2010; Hausknecht et al., 2009; Cahalane & Sites, 2008; Cartwright & Holmes, 2006; Coombs, 2009; Frey & Bayón, 2013; Bart & Baetz, 1998; Blankertz & Robinson, 1997; Bhatnagar, 2007; Hinkin & Tracey, 2010). In addition, establishing a formal internal communications program can also promote retention (Posthuma et al., 2013; Ban, Drahnak-Faller & Towers, 2003). While the findings do not indicate problems in these areas, the client may wish to leverage existing organizational strengths by employing an internal marketing and communications program.

Recommendation 15: Create and implement an annual retention communications plan to reinforce positive perceptions of the administrative support professional role and highlight individual contributions to the organization’s mandate in a methodical and timely manner.

This recommendation provides an opportunity to leverage a retention strength the organization already possesses: the availability of meaningful work (Cho & Lewis, 2011; Cahalane & Sites, 2008; Iverson, 2000; Naff & Crum, 1999; Shim & Rohrbaugh, 2011). In addition to creating opportunities to highlight individual contributions and positive organizational outcomes, underscoring the meaning of the work, the communications plan can incorporate other communication-based project recommendations and plan for their delivery (i.e. promoting training opportunities, highlighting individual skill sets, reporting out on training, promoting the recognition program, etc.).

Recommendation 15(a): Leverage the nascent MHSU Administrative Professionals Newsletter (identified by the client in November 2014) as an internal communications tool, to allow for planned distribution of items likely to

leverage key organizational strengths, and promote and profile news and information that supports positive perceptions of the workplace and individual contributions.

The MHSU Administrative Professionals Newsletter could be an important delivery medium for key messages to support retention as identified in the communications plan. Items for potential inclusion in the newsletter could include:

- Internal marketing of job benefits and perks on a routinized basis.
- Sharing “good news” stories to assist administrative professionals in seeing their work as meaningful.
- Formal and informal recognition: name award winners and share peer-to-peer or supervisor-to-peer kudos.
- Profiling Island Health Learning Management System learning which will help build and develop MHSU technical and/or clinical skills.

The provision of an in-house publication, such as an employee newsletter, can be a critical component in an organizational communication system where email alone is the primary method of communication (Schwind, 2010, p.393).

Recommendation 15(b): Generate an MHSU-specific employee value proposition to assist in the recruitment and retention of MHSU administrative professionals.

As outlined in the literature review and theoretical framework, the employee value proposition “makes clear to the employee ‘what’s in it for them’ or what extrinsic and intrinsic benefits they will receive in exchange for their labour, both now and in the future” (Hughes & Rog, 2008, p.753). Further, it is one of the most frequently cited effective practices in employee retention (coupled with internal and external marketing of employer brand). The MHSU administrative professional employee value proposition should leverage and highlight the organizational retention strengths identified in the study. It is recommended that the MHSU Advisory Committee play a lead role in the development of the value proposition. The value proposition can be deployed as a recruiting tool, featured at the top of job postings and advertisements, and be used for internal marketing as a key message embedded in the annual retention communications plan.

6.2.2 JOB SATISFACTION

The survey highlighted that administrative professionals enjoy executing their routine tasks and duties, with 76 percent agreement and only eight percent of respondents disagreeing. Further, 81

percent of respondents indicated they felt good about what they do when they go home at the end of the day (with only two percent of respondents disagreeing). Finally, a latent theme in the stay and exit interviews emerging from the question determining what participants would miss the most if they were to resign from MHSU, and while not the primary reason cited, respondents expressed concern they would miss the gratification they get from their current role. This theme included statements regarding attachment to the structure and processes of the work (i.e. positive job feedback) and the high degree of individual ownership they are able to exert over their work (i.e. role clarity). Interaction with clients is one of the most preeminent aspects of the vast majority of MHSU administrative professional roles, and, as previously stated, the personal fulfillment gleaned from providing frontline client service was cited as a primary driver of retention and what would be missed the most if an employee were to depart. Knowing that employees find the work enjoyable, have role clarity and feel a reasonable level of satisfaction with the work itself is an organizational strong point with potential for further exploration as part of mitigating future employee turnover.

Closely related to meaningful work, job satisfaction will be leveraged through a number of the recommendations already reviewed most directly through the implementation of a professional recognition program (recommendation 8), the establishment of a program to promote awareness of unique administrative professional skill sets (recommendation 9), requiring annual performance reviews (recommendation 13) and the creation and implementation of an annual communications plan to enhance positive perceptions of the administrative professional role, including an employee newsletter (recommendations 15 and 15(a)).

6.2.3 SUPPORTIVE SUPERVISOR RELATIONSHIPS

Overall, administrative professionals believe their supervisors care about them personally, that supervisors are approachable, supportive and fair. While some areas with opportunity for improvement were noted in the prior section, it should not be understated that there are many things Administrative Coordinators are perceived to be doing very well and this came across with strength in the survey, stay interviews and exit interviews. Based on interview comments and survey results, the strength of many positive supervisor-employee relationships may actually be a retention asset. For example, “I like working for my supervisor” was the fifth most frequently selected reason current employees chosen as a reason they continue to work at MHSU.

As established in the literature review and theoretical framework, ineffective leadership is a turnover antecedent and programs promoting effective leadership are in effective practice in employee retention (Cahalane & Sites, 2008; Grissom, 2011; Hickey & Bennett 2012; Lee & Jimenez, 2011; Llorens & Stazyk, 2010; Lloyd, Murphy & Price, 2006). The recommendations to enhance supervisor performance management and performance management and coaching skills will assist in leveraging this important organization strength (recommendations 13 and 14).

6.2.4 WORK/LIFE BALANCE

The availability of convenient scheduling is an effective practice and retention strength; in a ranking question, the statement “my work schedule works well with my personal life” was the third most frequently cited reason why administrative professionals would continue working at MHSU. With further inquiry as to the exact aspects of work scheduling that work so well for administrative support professionals, this organizational strength could be further leveraged as part of a recruitment and retention strategy.

Ensuring work/life balance and the availability of flexible scheduling are established effective practices in employee retention (James & Matthew, 2012; Hughes & Rog; 2008, Deery, 2008; Hinkin & Tracey, 2010). Providing MHSU professionals with a total compensation letter at hire and when wage increases are received (recommendation 1), to remind them of the availability of flexible scheduling and work hours making it easier to balance work and life will assist in leveraging this organizational strength.

6.2.5 WORK TEAM ATTACHMENT (POSITIVE WORK ENVIRONMENT)

Overall, administrative professionals feel a sense of attachment and belonging with their immediate work teams and positively perceive their relationship(s) with other administrative professionals. This is a significant component of a positive work environment (an established factor in turnover and retention). This was well reflected in the survey results and came across with great strength in the interview setting where research participants were able to elaborate on their work environment in their own words. Thirty percent of all answers expressed team attachment as their primary reason for continuing to work at MHSU; when asked what they would miss the most if they were to leave MHSU, 70 percent of responses expressed that they would miss their work team most.

Feelings of work team attachment are an important component of a positive work environment, an important aspect of employee retention as outlined in the literature review and theoretical framework (Cartwright & Holmes, 2006; Brown & Yoshioka, 2003; Hinkin & Tracey, 2010; Sheridan, 1992; Coombs, 2009; Ban, Drahnak-Faller & Towers, 2003; Bhatnagar, 2007). This particular organizational strength is well-served by numerous recommendations already noted, including: creation of an Island-wide MHSU Administrative Professional Advisory Committee (recommendation 2), the establishment of informal knowledge-sharing sessions between clinical team members and administrative professionals (recommendation 7), implementation of a formal and informal recognition program (recommendation 8), establishment of a program to promote awareness of administrative professional skill sets (recommendation 9) and creation of an annual communications plan and newsletter to reinforce positive perceptions of the administrative support professional role and highlight individual contributions, allowing an opportunity to share team “good news stories” (recommendations 15 and 15(a)).

6.2.6 MOTIVATED BY POSITIVE FEEDBACK

The final organizational strength imparted with enough force to warrant inclusion in this discussion is the high level of appreciation administrative professionals articulated for positive feedback. Interview participants felt most engaged and excited about their work when they were given opportunities to share their knowledge and expertise, received recognition for a job well done and witnessed client success stories. Feeling recognized by colleagues and clients was identified by almost every interview participant as a highly motivating and engaging experience.

As recognized in the literature review and theoretical framework, providing adequate recognition is important for supporting retention (Deery, 2008; Hausknecht, 2009; Hinkin & Tracey, 2010; Huselid, 1995; James & Matthew, 2012; Kim & Lee, 2007; Whittington & Galpin, 2010). As such, the implementation of the formal and informal recognition program (recommendation 8) may be fertile ground for enhancing employee retention given the strongly expressed preference for receiving positive feedback.

6.3 INCONCLUSIVE FINDINGS

As illustrated by the previous discussion, the survey and interviews were successful in identifying some key organizational factors driving turnover and some pre-existing areas of strength. However, the survey questions probing work environment, were inconclusive. While some aspects of a positive work environment (i.e. work team attachment) were clearly present, other aspects were inconclusive. On the one hand, employee perceptions of their work environment indicated that most employees see it as friendly or civil and efficient, indicating that the common turnover culprits of an unfriendly work environment or highly inefficient work processes/culture are unlikely to be contributing to turnover. Further, a positive work environment and optimistic energy was the second most frequently selected reason in a ranking question asking administrative professionals why they would continue to work at MHSU. On the other hand, a pessimistic and negative work environment, a known driver of turnover, does appear to be an organizational challenge - it was identified as one of the top three reasons an administrative professional would consider leaving MHSU in a ranking question.

What could be inferred from these mixed findings is that there is opportunity for improvement in fostering and cultivating a positive work environment at some work sites, while other work sites are not experiencing challenges in this area. Additional inquiry by the client may be beneficial to try and isolate which work sites are perceived by employees as being positive and optimistic and have those teams share what makes the work environment so enjoyable in the hope those aspects may be fostered elsewhere. Alternatively, or in addition, the client may find it beneficial to isolate those sites with a negative and pessimistic environment to try and eradicate the factors contributing to the overall negativity and pessimism.

6.4 OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

While the key project findings and recommendations are directly related to the organizational retention opportunities and strengths, the literature review and theoretical framework recommends several additional practices to support mitigating voluntary employee turnover.

Recommendation 16: Continuously monitor turnover statistics and adjust retention programs as needed.

Conducting on-going analysis of factors driving turnover and tailoring talent management programs to fit organizational needs is an important organizational step in managing retention (James & Matthew, 2012; Kumar, Dass & Topaloglu, 2011). On an annual basis, the client should review year over year turnover statistics by region to determine if the higher turnover experienced in 2013, in South Island specifically, was an anomaly or if it continues as a concerning trend over time. The effectiveness of any implemented recommendations should also be assessed against turnover data on an annual basis.

Recommendation 17: Communicate which project recommendations are to be implemented to MHSU Administrative Professionals.

A critical component of two-way organizational communication is closing the communication loop (Posthuma et al., 2013; Ban, Drahnak-Faller & Towers, 2003). During the employee interview phase of data collection, participants expressed a desire to know what, if any, outcomes would arise from providing their input. Should the client feel it is appropriate, it is recommended that at least some project recommendations are shared with MHSU administrative professionals.

7.0 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this project was to assist the client in identifying what organizational factors were contributing to voluntary employee turnover at MHSU and to support the client in determining what could be done to mitigate turnover. A review of the literature on voluntary employee turnover and retention identified common organizational turnover antecedents and effective practices the organization can deploy to assist in retaining talent. The employee survey, stay interviews and exit interviews identified numerous organizational factors which may be contributing to turnover and, pinpointed organizational areas in which the client may wish to deploy the project recommendations to address turnover within MHSU.

One area which may warrant additional investigation by the client is the perception that MHSU administrative professionals are insufficiently remunerated for their work. As discussed, there is a disconnect between how employees feel about their remuneration, the actual pay range for the position and how that pay range compares to the market median for similarly titled roles across Canada. While the literature suggests external pay equity is an effective retention practice, it appears administrative professionals at MHSU are paid above market. In addition, the effective practice literature does not indicate that raising pay is an effective means of mitigating turnover. While beyond the scope of the project, additional inquiry into the relationship between pay and turnover within MHSU may benefit the client in addressing turnover.

While not an appropriate step for the researcher, the client may also wish to engage the Administrative Coordinators in reaching out to former MHSU administrative professionals with whom they have maintained contact for input and feedback on the project findings. Given the paucity of exit interviews conducted, this may be one additional means of ensuring no other organizational factors, beyond what was identified in the project, are contributing to turnover.

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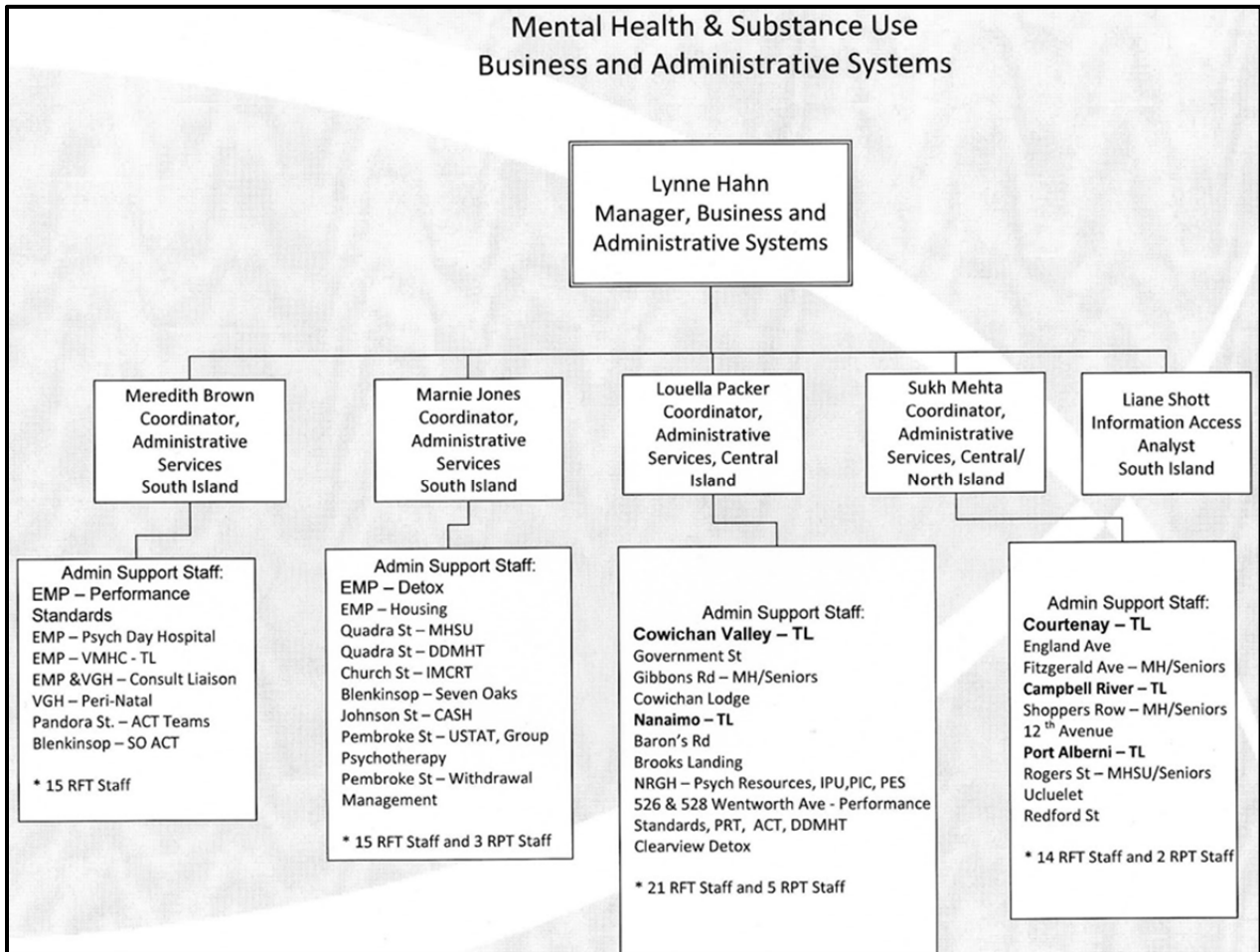
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APPENDIX A

MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE USE ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



APPENDIX B

RETENTION PRACTICES LITERATURE REVIEW KEY SEARCH WORDS

Search Word 1	Search Word 2	Search Word 3	Search Word 4
Best practices	Human resources	Public sector	Turnover
Smart practices	People resources	Government	Retention
Good practices	Human capital	Health services	Employee retention
High performance work practices	Human resources management	Healthcare	Engagement
HPWP	Talent management	Not for profit	Employee engagement
Best-in-class	Workforce management	Non-profit	Employee commitment
High performance work organizations			Discretionary effort
HPWO			

APPENDIX C

EFFECTIVE PRACTICE CITATIONS

Author(s)	Sector	Country	Type	Effective Practice
Hendrick & Raspiller (2011)	Public	International	Peer-Reviewed	Employ a highly selective recruitment process.
Hinkin & Tracey (2010)	Private	International	Peer-Reviewed	Employ a highly selective recruitment process.
Huselid (1995)	Private	United States	Peer-Reviewed	Employ a highly selective recruitment process.
Posthuma et al. (2013)	Private	United States	Peer-Reviewed	Employ a highly selective recruitment process.
The Alberta Council of Disability Services (2006)	Public	Canada	Public Body	Employ a highly selective recruitment process.
Whittington & Galpin (2010)	Private	International	Peer-Reviewed	Employ a highly selective recruitment process.
Cahalane & Sites (2008)	Public	United States	Peer-Reviewed	Empower employees and gather employee input in decision-making.
Grissom (2011)	Public	United States	Peer-Reviewed	Empower employees and gather employee input in decision-making.
Hannay & Northam (2000)	Private	United Kingdom	Peer-Reviewed	Empower employees and gather employee input in decision-making.
Hughes & Rog (2008)	Private	International	Peer-Reviewed	Empower employees and gather employee input in decision-making.
Huselid (1995)	Private	United States	Peer-Reviewed	Empower employees and gather employee input in decision-making.
Monsen & Boss (2009)	Private	United States	Peer-Reviewed	Empower employees and gather employee input in decision-making.
Posthuma et al. (2013)	Private	United States	Peer-Reviewed	Empower employees and gather employee input in decision-making.
Whittington & Galpin (2010)	Private	International	Peer-Reviewed	Empower employees and gather employee input in decision-making.
Hughes & Rog (2008)	Private	International	Peer-Reviewed	Ensure external pay equity.
Posthuma et al. (2013)	Private	United States	Peer-Reviewed	Ensure external pay equity.
The Alberta Council of Disability Services (2006)	Public	Canada	Public Body	Ensure external pay equity.
Deery (2008)	Private	International	Peer-Reviewed	Ensure work/life balance is supported.
Hinkin & Tracey (2010)	Private	International	Peer-Reviewed	Ensure work/life balance is supported.
Hughes & Rog (2008)	Private	International	Peer-Reviewed	Ensure work/life balance is supported.
James & Mathew (2012)	Private	India	Peer-Reviewed	Ensure work/life balance is supported.
Public Policy Forum (2010)	Public	Canada	Public Body	Ensure work/life balance is supported.
Ban et al. (2003)	Nonprofit	United States	Peer-Reviewed	Establish a formal internal communications program.
Posthuma et al. (2013)	Private	United States	Peer-Reviewed	Establish a formal internal communications program.
Bhatnagar (2007)	Private	India	Peer-Reviewed	Establish person-job and person-organization fit.
Borzaga & Tortia (2006)	Nonprofit	Italy	Peer-Reviewed	Establish person-job and person-organization fit.
Carr et al. (2011)	Private	United States	Peer-Reviewed	Establish person-job and person-organization fit.
Hannay & Northam (2000)	Private	United Kingdom	Peer-Reviewed	Establish person-job and person-organization fit.
Hendrick & Raspiller (2011)	Public	International	Peer-Reviewed	Establish person-job and person-organization fit.
Thite & Russell (2010)	Private	India	Peer-	Establish person-job and person-organization fit.

			Reviewed	
Whittington & Galpin (2010)	Private	International	Peer-Reviewed	Establish person-job and person-organization fit.
Fuqua (2011)	Public	United States	Peer-Reviewed	Explore under-utilized talent pools with higher retention rates.
Hannay & Northam (2000)	Private	United Kingdom	Peer-Reviewed	Explore under-utilized talent pools with higher retention rates.
Hinkin & Tracey (2010)	Private	International	Peer-Reviewed	Explore under-utilized talent pools with higher retention rates.
The Alberta Council of Disability Services (2006)	Public	Canada	Public Body	Explore under-utilized talent pools with higher retention rates.
Ban et al. (2003)	Nonprofit	United States	Peer-Reviewed	Facilitate a positive work environment and culture.
Bhatnagar (2007)	Private	India	Peer-Reviewed	Facilitate a positive work environment and culture.
Brown & Yoshioka (2003)	Nonprofit	United States	Peer-Reviewed	Facilitate a positive work environment and culture.
Cartwright & Holmes (2006)	Private	United States	Peer-Reviewed	Facilitate a positive work environment and culture.
Coombs (2009)	Public Sector	United Kingdom	Peer-Reviewed	Facilitate a positive work environment and culture.
Hinkin & Tracey (2010)	Private	International	Peer-Reviewed	Facilitate a positive work environment and culture.
Public Policy Forum (2010)	Public	Canada	Public Body	Facilitate a positive work environment and culture.
Sheridan (1992)	Private	United States	Peer-Reviewed	Facilitate a positive work environment and culture.
Alonso & Lewis (2001)	Public	United States	Peer-Reviewed	Highlight how the work is meaningful.
Ban et al. (2003)	Nonprofit	United States	Peer-Reviewed	Highlight how the work is meaningful.
Bart & Baetz (1998)	Private	Canada	Peer-Reviewed	Highlight how the work is meaningful.
Blankertz & Robinson (1997)	Public	United States	Peer-Reviewed	Highlight how the work is meaningful.
Brown & Yoshioka (2003)	Nonprofit	United States	Peer-Reviewed	Highlight how the work is meaningful.
Cahalane & Sites (2008)	Public	United States	Peer-Reviewed	Highlight how the work is meaningful.
Cartwright & Holmes (2006)	Private	United States	Peer-Reviewed	Highlight how the work is meaningful.
Coombs (2009)	Public Sector	United Kingdom	Peer-Reviewed	Highlight how the work is meaningful.
Frey & Bayón (2014)	Private	United States	Peer-Reviewed	Highlight how the work is meaningful.
Hausknecht (2009)	Private	International	Peer-Reviewed	Highlight how the work is meaningful.
Kim & Lee (2007)	Nonprofit	United States	Peer-Reviewed	Highlight how the work is meaningful.
Monsen & Boss (2009)	Private	United States	Peer-Reviewed	Highlight how the work is meaningful.
Naff & Crum (1999)	Public	United States	Peer-Reviewed	Highlight how the work is meaningful.
Public Policy Forum (2010)	Public	Canada	Public Body	Highlight how the work is meaningful.
Thite & Russell (2010)	Private	India	Peer-Reviewed	Highlight how the work is meaningful.
Whittington & Galpin (2010)	Private	International	Peer-Reviewed	Highlight how the work is meaningful.
Bart & Baetz (1998)	Private	Canada	Peer-Reviewed	Market employer brand and employee value proposition internally and externally.
Bhatnagar (2007)	Private	India	Peer-Reviewed	Market employer brand and employee value proposition internally and externally.
Blankertz & Robinson (1997)	Public	United States	Peer-Reviewed	Market employer brand and employee value proposition internally and externally.

Cahalane & Sites (2008)	Public	United States	Peer-Reviewed	Market employer brand and employee value proposition internally and externally.
Cartwright & Holmes (2006)	Private	United States	Peer-Reviewed	Market employer brand and employee value proposition internally and externally.
Coombs (2009)	Public Sector	United Kingdom	Peer-Reviewed	Market employer brand and employee value proposition internally and externally.
Frey & Bayón (2013)	Private	United States	Peer-Reviewed	Market employer brand and employee value proposition internally and externally.
Hausknecht (2009)	Private	International	Peer-Reviewed	Market employer brand and employee value proposition internally and externally.
Hinkin & Tracey (2010)	Private	International	Peer-Reviewed	Market employer brand and employee value proposition internally and externally.
Hughes & Rog (2008)	Private	International	Peer-Reviewed	Market employer brand and employee value proposition internally and externally.
Kim & Lee (2007)	Nonprofit	United States	Peer-Reviewed	Market employer brand and employee value proposition internally and externally.
The Alberta Council of Disability Services (2006)	Public	Canada	Business Literature	Market employer brand and employee value proposition internally and externally.
Whittington & Galpin (2010)	Private	International	Peer-Reviewed	Market employer brand and employee value proposition internally and externally.
Hinkin & Tracey (2010)	Private	International	Peer-Reviewed	Offer a recognition program.
Huselid (1995)	Private	United States	Peer-Reviewed	Offer a recognition program.
James & Mathew (2012)	Private	India	Peer-Reviewed	Offer a recognition program.
Kim & Lee (2007)	Nonprofit	United States	Peer-Reviewed	Offer a recognition program.
Posthuma et al. (2013)	Private	United States	Peer-Reviewed	Offer a recognition program.
The Alberta Council of Disability Services (2006)	Public	Canada	Public Body	Offer a recognition program.
Whittington & Galpin (2010)	Private	International	Peer-Reviewed	Offer a recognition program.
Deery (2008)	Private	International	Peer-Reviewed	Offer a reward and recognition program.
Hausknecht (2009)	Private	International	Peer-Reviewed	Offer a reward and recognition program.
James & Mathew (2012)	Private	India	Peer-Reviewed	On-going analysis of factors driving turnover/tailoring programs to fit need
Kumar et al. (2014)	Private	United States	Peer-Reviewed	On-going analysis of factors driving turnover/tailoring programs to fit need
Posthuma et al. (2013)	Private	United States	Peer-Reviewed	On-going analysis of factors driving turnover/tailoring programs to fit need
Blankertz & Robinson (1997)	Public	United States	Peer-Reviewed	Provide opportunities for career advancement and development.
Glen (2006)	Private	United Kingdom	Peer-Reviewed	Provide opportunities for career advancement and development.
Hannay & Northam (2000)	Private	United Kingdom	Peer-Reviewed	Provide opportunities for career advancement and development.
Hausknecht (2009)	Private	International	Peer-Reviewed	Provide opportunities for career advancement and development.
Hughes & Rog (2008)	Private	International	Peer-Reviewed	Provide opportunities for career advancement and development.
James & Mathew (2012)	Private	India	Peer-Reviewed	Provide opportunities for career advancement and development.
Kim & Lee (2007)	Nonprofit	United States	Peer-Reviewed	Provide opportunities for career advancement and development.
Luna-Arocas & Camps (2008)	Private	Spain	Peer-Reviewed	Provide opportunities for career advancement and development.
McGahern (2008)	Private	United Kingdom	Peer-Reviewed	Provide opportunities for career advancement and development.
Oladapo (2014)	Private	United States	Peer-Reviewed	Provide opportunities for career advancement and development.
van Dyk & Coetzee (2012)	Private	South Africa	Peer-Reviewed	Provide opportunities for career advancement and development.

Whittington & Galpin (2010)	Private	International	Peer-Reviewed	Provide opportunities for career advancement and development.
Hinkin & Tracey (2010)	Private	International	Peer-Reviewed	Provide training and development opportunities.
Hughes & Rog (2008)	Private	International	Peer-Reviewed	Provide training and development opportunities.
James & Mathew (2012)	Private	India	Peer-Reviewed	Provide training and development opportunities.
McGahern (2008)	Private	United States	Peer-Reviewed	Provide training and development opportunities.
Posthuma et al. (2013)	Private	United States	Peer-Reviewed	Provide training and development opportunities.
Public Policy Forum (2010)	Public	Canada	Public Body	Provide training and development opportunities.
Thite & Russell (2010)	Private	India	Peer-Reviewed	Provide training and development opportunities.
Whittington & Galpin (2010)	Private	International	Peer-Reviewed	Provide training and development opportunities.
Blankertz & Robinson (1997)	Public	United States	Peer-Reviewed	Train managers to enhance their performance management, coaching and mentoring skills.
Deery (2008)	Private	International	Peer-Reviewed	Train managers to enhance their performance management, coaching and mentoring skills.
Grissom (2011)	Public	United States	Peer-Reviewed	Train managers to enhance their performance management, coaching and mentoring skills.
Huselid (1995)	Private	United States	Peer-Reviewed	Train managers to enhance their performance management, coaching and mentoring skills.
McGahern (2008)	Private	United Kingdom	Peer-Reviewed	Train managers to enhance their performance management, coaching and mentoring skills.
Palmer & Gignac (2012)	Private	Australia	Peer-Reviewed	Train managers to enhance their performance management, coaching and mentoring skills.
van Dyk & Coetzee (2012)	Private	South Africa	Peer-Reviewed	Train managers to enhance their performance management, coaching and mentoring skills.
Whittington & Galpin (2010)	Private	International	Peer-Reviewed	Train managers to enhance their performance management, coaching and mentoring skills.

APPENDIX D

MHSU ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS SURVEY

About This Survey

Thank you for taking a few minutes out of your day to complete this survey: your thoughts and comments are one of the most critical components of this study. Your survey responses are anonymous and confidential; however, to protect the anonymity of your survey response be mindful of your surroundings or, if necessary, log on to a workstation with greater privacy. If at any point during the survey, you wish to withdraw, you have the right to do so - simply exit the browser window, but please note there is no method for retracting responses you submitted prior to exiting the survey. Should you have any questions or concerns regarding this survey, please contact the researcher at 250-507-2622 or via email at mann.sarahmarie@gmail.com.

Section One: How You Feel About Your Job

Question 1

My work is meaningful.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Question 2

My work has a positive impact.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Question 3

At the end of the day I feel good about what I do.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Somewhat Agree

- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Question 4

Developing a rapport with clients is important to me.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Question 5

I understand how my role positively impacts others.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Question 6

I understand how my role supports the objectives of MHSU.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Question 7

Non-administrative support staff (i.e. Social Workers, Psychiatrists, etc.) understand how my role supports the objectives of MHSU.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree

- Somewhat Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Question 8

Clients understand how my role supports them.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Question 9

I have the resources/tools I need to do my job.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Question 10

I have received the right training to feel confident in my role.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Question 11

I enjoy executing my routine job functions/tasks.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree

- Somewhat Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Question 12

Which of the following answers best describes how you perceive your role:

- This is my vocation/professional field of choice.
- I see my current position as a stepping stone in my career.
- I see my current position as a job to pay the bills.
- I am not sure how this role fits into my life/career plans.

Question 13

Depending on how you answered the last question (Question 12), please estimate how much longer you see yourself working at MHSU.

	3 Years +	2 to 3 Years	1 to 2 Years	Less than 1 Year	Less than 6 Months
This is my vocation/professional field of choice.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I see my current position as a stepping stone in my career.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I see my current position as a job to pay the bills.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am not sure how this role fits into my life/career plans.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Section Two: Work Environment

Question 14

Which of the following combinations best describes the work environment at the site where you most often work?

- Friendly/Efficient
- Friendly/Inefficient
- Civil/Efficient
- Civil/Inefficient
- Unfriendly/Efficient

- Unfriendly/Inefficient

Question 15

I feel respected at work.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Question 16

My workplace opinions, ideas and/or input are valued by my peers.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Question 17

I feel valued by colleagues at all levels within my team (i.e. Program Assistants, Office Assistants, Coordinators, Social Workers, Therapists, Counsellors, Psychiatrists, Psychologists, etc.).

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Question 18

I am asked to provide input on decisions or projects that affect me.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Somewhat Agree

- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Question 19

I get along with other administrative support staff.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Question 20

I do not feel micro-managed/scrutinized by others on my team.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Question 21

Everyone around me has an optimistic outlook.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Section Three: Drivers of Retention and Turnover

Question 22

Of the following statements describing reasons you might consider resigning from MHSU, pick your top three using the selection boxes.

- A lack of developmental opportunities or on-going professional development.
- I don't see feel my work is meaningful.
- Poor orientation and training programs.
- I feel undervalued and/or disrespected.
- A lack of recognition for good work.
- My work schedule does not work well with my personal life.
- I dislike my supervisor.
- Negative work environment/pessimistic energy.
- I am not satisfied or challenged by my job functions/tasks.
- I do not feel a sense of belonging within my work team.
- Organizational decision-making processes are unfair.

Question 23

Of the following statements describing reasons you would continue to work at MHSU, pick your top three using the selection boxes.

- I am satisfied with the developmental/professional development opportunities available.
- My work is meaningful and helps others.
- I feel a sense of commitment to clients.
- I feel fully trained and confident in my ability to perform the full measure of my work.
- I receive regular, positive (or constructive) feedback on my performance.
- I receive recognition for a job well done.
- My work schedule works well with my personal life.
- I like working for my supervisor.
- Positive work environment/optimistic energy.
- I enjoy executing my job functions/tasks.
- I feel a sense of belonging in my work team.
- Organizational decision-making processes are fair and transparent.

Question 24

What do you think MHSU leadership could do to enhance retention of administrative support professionals?

Section Four: Your Supervisor

Question 25

My supervisor is supportive.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Question 26

I can approach my supervisor with problems.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Question 27

My supervisor cares about my professional growth.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Question 28

My supervisor cares about me personally.

- Strongly Agree

- Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Question 29

My supervisor is fair.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Question 30

My workplace opinions, ideas and/or input are valued by my supervisor.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Question 31

I receive regular feedback from my supervisor.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Section Five: Demographic Data

Question 32

Which region do you work in?

- South Island
- Central Island
- North Island

Question 33

Which age bracket do you fall into?

- Under 25
- 25 to 35
- 35 to 45
- Over 45

Question 34

Do you currently have family care obligations (i.e. caring for young children or an elderly parent)?

- Yes
- No

Question 35

What is your marital status?

- Single
- Common Law
- Married
- Separated/Divorced

Question 36

Are you a permanent or casual employee?

- Permanent
- Casual

Question 37

How would you describe your level of proficiency in your current role?

- Novice
- Intermediate
- Experienced

○ Technical Expert

APPENDIX E

STAY INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What site do you work at?
2. Briefly describe which program of MHSU you work for to help me understand the service provided there.
3. Do you feel that your work contributes to the greater good or benefits the community?
4. What keeps you working for MHSU?
5. If you resigned, what would you miss the most about working for MHSU?
6. How could your current job be more exciting?
7. What do you like the least about working for MHSU?
8. What aspects of the work environment do you enjoy?
9. Are you satisfied by your current job functions and tasks? If no, what would make your work more enjoyable or satisfying?
10. Do you feel that your supervisor is supportive of you personally and professionally?
11. If MHSU could make a single change to better support administrative professionals, what do you think that change should be?
12. What do you think about the training/professional development opportunities available through MHSU? What type of training/professional development would you like to see more of?
13. Tell me a story about the most exciting, energizing and motivating situation you have ever experienced in your job at MHSU.
 - What happened? Describe the situation step-by-step as it unfolded.
 - What made this situation so motivating for you
14. Do you have any other feedback/comments to help me gain a better understanding of why you continue to work for MHSU?

APPENDIX F

EXIT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. When you were working for MHSU, what region did you work in?
2. What were your main reasons for leaving Mental Health and Substance Use?
3. What did you like most about working at MHSU?
4. What did you like the least about working at MHSU?
5. Briefly describe which program of MHSU you worked for.
6. Did you feel that your work contributed to the greater good or benefited the community?
 - If yes, do you feel like this enhanced sense of meaning had a positive effect on your job satisfaction?
 - If no, why not?
7. Did the work environment have any effect on your decision to leave?
 - If yes, what aspects specifically (i.e. organizational practices, culture, relationships, etc.)?
8. Were you satisfied or did you enjoy by your primary job functions and tasks?
 - If no, what would have made your work more them more enjoyable or satisfying?
9. Do you feel that your supervisor was supportive of you professionally and/or personally?
10. Did your relationship with your supervisor have any impact on your decision to leave?
11. Is there anything MHSU could have done differently to retain you as an employee?
12. Was there any training/professional development MHSU could have offered to retain you? What type of training/professional development would have interested you?
13. Do you have any other feedback/comments to help me gain a better understanding of why you left?

APPENDIX G

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS TO MITIGATE VOLUNTARY EMPLOYEE TURNOVER AT MHSU

Recommendation 1: Provide MHSU administrative professionals with a total compensation letter upon hire and when wage increases occur to address negative perceptions of compensation and underscore some of the less visible factors which contribute to total compensation.

Recommendation 2: Create an Island-wide MHSU Administrative Professional Advisory Committee to steward and implement the project recommendations (as appropriate), solicit administrative professional input and/or feedback on organizational changes (as appropriate) and lead other self-identified, practicable initiatives to promote the career development and retention of MHSU administrative professionals.

Recommendation 3: Identify the knowledge, competencies, skills and abilities individuals need to develop to advance to the AS4 Classification or Administrative Coordinator positions and create an internal program for measuring and assessing individual “readiness” to proceed as part of the annual performance planning review.

Recommendation 4: Promote available courses on the Island Health Learning Management System and within the Island Health context, related to desired technical and clinical training, through a monthly communication to MHSU administrative professionals.

Recommendation 5: Distribute semi-annual updates on training and development offered in the last six months.

Recommendation 6: Leverage performance planning conversations to highlight and discuss specific training and development opportunities within the Island Health context related to individual career development plans (i.e. participation on the Advisory Committee, approval to participate in LMS courses or face-to-face training, etc.).

Recommendation 7: Partner with clinical leaders to arrange informal clinical “Knowledge Sharing Sessions” (i.e. in-house clinicians share information and best practices in client interaction in a semi-formal format offered in person and via webinar).

Recommendation 8: Implement an MHSU administrative professional recognition program incorporating informal and formal recognition elements.

Recommendation 9: Establish a campaign to promote awareness of administrative professional individual expertise and backgrounds and share with the entire MHSU team on a monthly basis.

Recommendation 10: Seek senior MHSU operational and medical leadership support in addressing the perception that administrative support skills are not respected or valued.

Recommendation 11: Target candidate pools whose own objectives more closely align with the role and the organization's services to reduce the number of individuals who perceive the role as a job to pay the bills or are not sure how the role fits into their career plans.

Recommendation 12: Investigate and apply screening tools to promote closer person-job and person-organization fit (i.e. personality tests and/or screening assignments) and screen out ill-fitting candidates with a higher probability of turnover.

Recommendation 13: Set formal performance management cycle for MHSU administrative professionals, monitoring and tracking Administrative Coordinator completion of probationary and annual performance planning meetings for each MHSU administrative professional to ensure minimum number of feedback and coaching opportunities are occurring.

Recommendation 14: Invest in performance coaches for Administrative Coordinators to enhance performance management, mentoring and coaching conversation skills.

Recommendation 15: Create and implement an annual retention communications plan to reinforce positive perceptions of the administrative support professional role and highlight individual contributions to the organization's mandate in a methodical and timely manner.

Recommendation 15(a): Leverage the nascent MHSU Administrative Professionals Newsletter (identified by the client in November 2014) as an internal communications tool, to allow for planned distribution of items likely to leverage key organizational strengths, and promote and profile news and information that supports positive perceptions of the workplace and individual contributions.

Recommendation 15(b): Generate an MHSU-specific employee value proposition to assist in the recruitment and retention of MHSU administrative professionals.

Recommendation 16: Continuously monitor turnover statistics and adjust retention programs as needed.

Recommendation 17: Communicate which project recommendations are to be implemented to MHSU Administrative Professionals.