

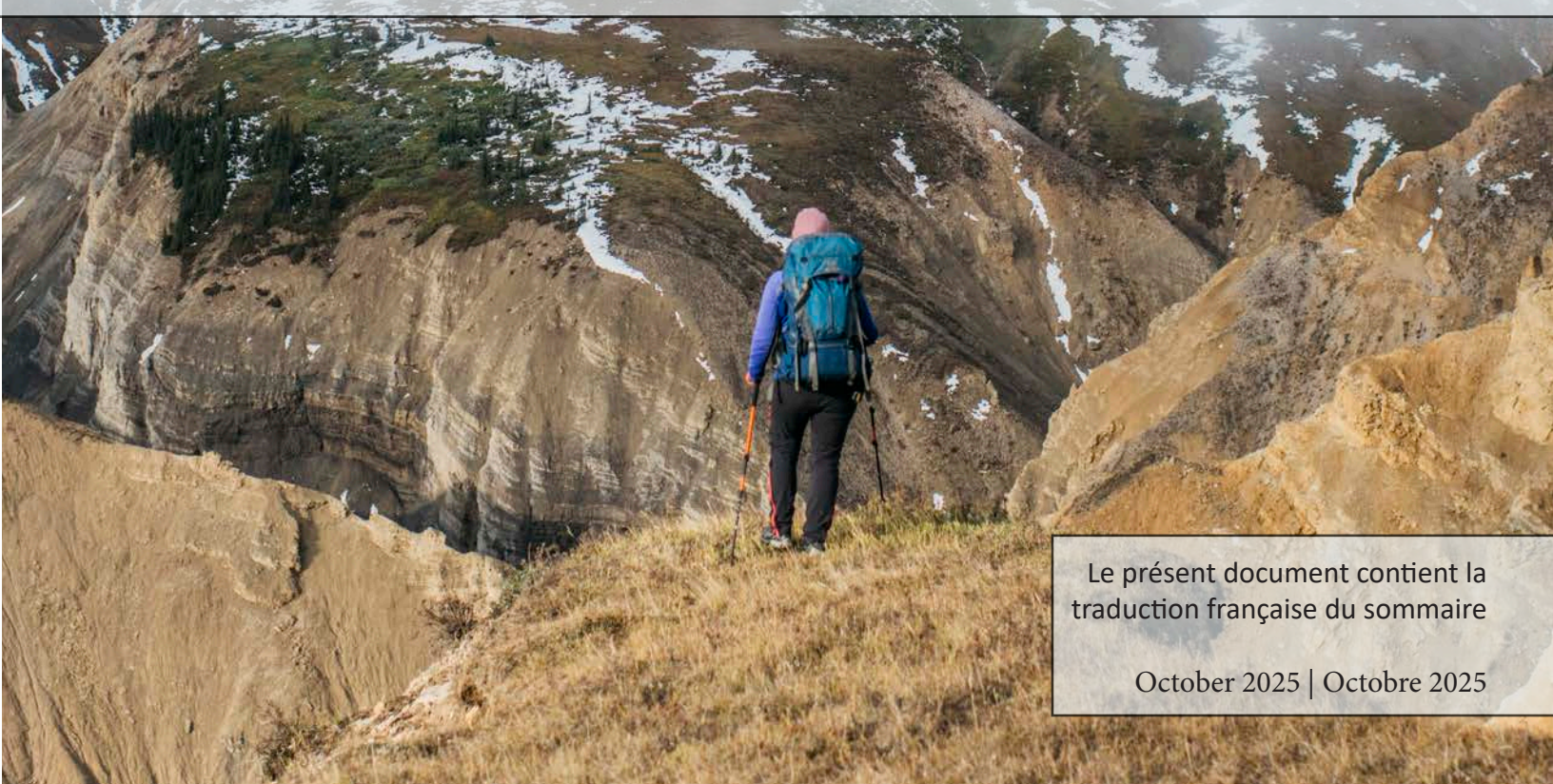


Northwest Territories Health and Social Services System People Strategy 2025-2028

Systeme de santé et de services sociaux des Territoires du Nord-Ouest Stratégie du personnel 2025 à 2028

This document was prepared by the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority (NTHSSA), in partnership with the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS), the Hay River Health and Social Services Authority (HRHSSA), and the Tłıchǫ Community Services Agency (TCSA).

Ce document a été préparé par l'Administration des services de santé et des services sociaux des Territoires du Nord-Ouest, en partenariat avec le ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux, l'Administration des services de santé, et des services sociaux de Hay River et l'Agence de services communautaires tlıchǫ.



Le présent document contient la traduction française du sommaire

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English

Si vous voulez ces informations en français, contactez-nous.

French

Kĩspin ki nitawih̄tĩn ē nĩh̄yawih̄k ōma ācimōwin, tipwāsinān.

Cree

Tłjchq yatı k'èè. Dı wegodi newq dè, gots'o gonede.

Tłjchq

ʔerih̄t'ís Dēne Sų́íné yatı t'a huts'elkēr xa beyáyatı theʔą ʔat'e, nuwe ts'ēn yóti.

Chipewyan

Edı gondı dehgáh got'ıe zhatıé k'èè edat'éh enahddhę nıde naxets'é edahí.

South Slavey

K'áhshó got'ıne xadā k'é hederı ʔedıht'é yerınwę nıde dúle.

North Slavey

Jii gwandak izhii ginjik vat'atr'ıjáhch'uu zhit yınohthan jı', diits'át ginohkhii.

Gwich'in

Uvanittuaq ilitchurisukupku Inuvialuktun, ququaqłuta.

Inuvialuktun

Ċ^bdĊ ĩĩ^{sb}bΔ^c ΛϚLJΔĩ^c Δ.ɔ^bĩĳĳ^cϚ^{sb}ıLıĳĩ^b, Δ^cĳ^cĩ^cɔ^c Δ^cı^bcϚ^cɔ^{sb}ĳ^c.

Inuktitut

Hapkua titiqqat pijumagupkit Inuinnaqtun, uvaptinnut hivajarłutit.

Inuinnaqtun

1-855-846-9601



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Message from the Minister



It is my pleasure to introduce the **2025 – 2028 NWT Health and Social Services System People Strategy** (People Strategy). This strategy sets a clear vision for supporting a strong, dedicated, and representative workforce—one that is empowered by effective leadership and grounded in cultural safety. Together, we will continue to work towards this vision and create conditions for every member of our health and social services teams to thrive while delivering the right services at the right time to meet the needs of our residents.

The strength of the system lies in its people. Across disciplines, departments, and communities, collaboration and commitment remain essential to meeting the evolving needs of both the workforce and the individuals and families that receive care throughout the Northwest Territories (NWT).

Each day, NWT Health and Social Services System (NWT HSS System) staff play a vital role in shaping the wellbeing of our communities. Whether providing direct care to patients, supporting clients, managing operations, or working behind the scenes, their unwavering commitment continues to make a meaningful difference in the lives of NWT residents.

This dedication has been most evident during the many recent, significant challenges the NWT has faced, from a global pandemic to devastating floods and wildfires that have and continue to threaten communities and displace residents across the territory. Time and time again, I have witnessed health and social services staff stepping up to meet these challenges with resilience, compassion, and a spirit of collaboration.

This strategy represents more than a plan—it is a commitment to building a healthier, more connected, and more resilient system for all NWT residents. As this work moves forward, it marks a time for renewed focus, shared responsibility, and collective action.

Over the next three years, the NWT Health and Social Services System will continue to evolve, led by a shared vision, lived values, and a commitment to providing best care. The dedication of health and social service staff and practitioners drives this transformation forward, guiding the NWT HSS System toward progress, collaboration, and integration across teams to strengthen care and support for all who call the NWT home. The launch of this People Strategy marks a key step forward, and I am confident we will see the NWT HSS System continue to evolve and progress—unlocking even greater possibilities ahead.

Sincerely,

Hon. Lesa Semmler
Minister of Health and Social Services

Executive Message

Staff are the heart of the health and social services (HSS) system and the most valued resource. This strategy reflects a joint commitment to listen, engage, and respond to the concerns that the workforce face. The challenges teams are met with are constant, complex and range from burdensome administrative tasks to full scale emergency responses. It is important to acknowledge and express gratitude to everyone who works hard each day and continues to persevere through challenges, while adapting to a constant evolution environment. The contributions made by staff across the health and social services system are deeply valued and make a difference.

The development of the People Strategy is the result of a collaborative effort between the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) and the three health and social services authorities: the Hay River Health and Social Services Authority (HRHSSA), the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority (NTHSSA), and the Tlicho Community Services Agency (TCSA). It is based on the Northwest Territories (NWT) HSS System People Strategy vision of representative workforce that is compassionate, skilled, and dynamic, delivering person-centered, culturally safe, and equitable health and social services across the NWT, enabling a system where the voices of patients, clients and staff together shape and guide care.

The purpose of the People Strategy is to ensure that the employees of the NWT HSS System are well-supported, engaged, and equipped to succeed in delivering outstanding care to the individuals, families, and communities of the NWT. The People Strategy supports building an environment and culture where employees are valued, empowered, and have the tools and resources they need to perform their jobs effectively and to feel fulfilled. It is not a quick fix for immediate workforce challenges; however, it does provide a strong, practical foundation to guide human resource efforts across the NWT HSS System.

Each employee across in the NWT HSS system have an important role to play in moving the People Strategy forward. Every person and each role has the ability to create meaningful change, and leadership across the system are committed to empowering staff to do just that. People are the greatest asset to the system, and this strategy reflects dedication to supporting positive transformation, both individually and collectively.





Executive Summary

The 2025–2028 People Strategy is grounded in a shared vision of a compassionate, skilled, and representative workforce. The strategy reflects the values of person-centered, culturally safe, and equitable health and social services across the NWT. It builds on the 2021–2024 HR Plan and guides the evolution of HR practices across the system.

This three-year roadmap addresses medium and long-term workforce needs, reinforcing commitments to clients, families, staff, and leaders. It emphasizes improving attraction, recruitment, and retention, while encouraging innovation and creativity. DHSS will leverage established inter-departmental forums to tackle systemic challenges—such as policy, housing, and technology—through coordinated solutions.

The strategy is anchored by five strategic pillars:

1. Building upon our vibrant workforce
2. Fostering meaningful connections
3. Effective communication and decision-making
4. Continuous learning and leadership development
5. Commitment to cultural safety and anti-racism

These pillars support daily work and create opportunities for growth, leadership, and innovation. They guide new approaches, respond to local needs, and drive system-wide improvements.

Clear communication is essential to the strategy’s success. Transparency and engagement will be supported through regular updates—via meetings, town halls, emails, and leadership forums. Feedback loops will invite input from staff, partners, and clients ensuring the strategy remains responsive and adaptive.

Ultimately, the 2025–2028 People Strategy positions the NWT HSS System to become a more cohesive, resilient organization. With a focus on leadership, engagement, well-being, cultural safety, and inclusivity, it supports the system’s commitment to Best Care, Best Health for a Better Future. By working together with shared purpose, we can build a workplace that fosters growth, resilience, and excellence—now and into the future.



Sommaire

La Stratégie de gestion des personnes 2025-2028 repose sur une vision commune visant à former une main-d'œuvre compatissante, qualifiée et représentative de la population. Cette stratégie tient compte des valeurs entourant une prestation des services de santé et des services sociaux équitable, axée sur la personne et respectueuse des cultures partout aux Territoires du Nord-Ouest (TNO). S'inspirant du Plan des ressources humaines 2021-2024, elle oriente l'évolution des pratiques en matière de ressources humaines à l'échelle du système.

Cette feuille de route triennale répond aux besoins à moyen et à long terme en matière de main-d'œuvre, renforçant ainsi les engagements pris à l'égard des clients, des familles, du personnel et des dirigeants. Elle permet de renforcer l'attraction, le recrutement et le maintien en poste du personnel tout en favorisant l'innovation et la créativité. Le ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux mobilisera les forums interministériels pour s'attaquer aux défis systémiques, comme les politiques, le logement et la technologie, en proposant des solutions coordonnées.

La stratégie repose sur les cinq piliers stratégiques suivants :

1. L'optimisation de notre main-d'œuvre dynamique
2. L'établissement de liens significatifs
3. Une communication et une prise de décisions efficaces
4. Un perfectionnement professionnel et en leadership continu
5. Un engagement en faveur du respect de la culture et de la lutte contre le racisme

Ces piliers soutiennent le travail au quotidien et créent des possibilités de croissance, de leadership et d'innovation. Ils orientent les nouvelles approches, répondent aux besoins à l'échelle locale et favorisent des améliorations dans l'ensemble du système.

Une communication claire est essentielle à la réussite de cette stratégie. Pour favoriser la transparence et les échanges, des mises à jour seront effectuées régulièrement par l'entremise de réunions, d'assemblées publiques, de courriels et de forums sur le leadership. Des commentaires seront sollicités auprès du personnel, des partenaires et de la clientèle grâce à pour s'assurer que la stratégie demeure adaptée aux besoins.

En définitive, la Stratégie de gestion des personnes 2025-2028 vise à faire du système de santé et des services sociaux des TNO une organisation plus cohérente et plus résiliente. En mettant l'accent sur le leadership, les échanges, le bien-être, le respect des cultures et l'inclusion, la stratégie permettra au système de santé et des services sociaux de remplir ses engagements et de concrétiser sa vision, « Une santé optimale et des soins optimaux pour un avenir prometteur ». C'est en travaillant ensemble dans un but commun que nous pouvons créer un lieu de travail qui favorise la croissance, la résilience et l'excellence, aujourd'hui et demain.

NWT HSS System Vision

Best Health. Best Care. For a Better Future. To promote, protect and provide for the health and wellbeing of the people of the Northwest Territories.

Through partnerships, our mission is to provide equitable access to quality care and services and encourage our people to make healthy choices to keep individuals, families, and communities healthy and strong.

People Strategy Vision

Attracting, recruiting and retaining a representative workforce that is compassionate, skilled, and dynamic to deliver person-centered, culturally safe, and equitable health and social services across the Northwest Territories — enabling a system where the voices of patients, clients and staff together shape and guide care.



Informing the Strategy

The People Strategy was developed through employee engagement and the integration of strategic planning documents to align with the overall NWT HSS System vision. These elements were crucial in shaping the strategy's pillars, which are the building blocks to advancing positive change for the NWT HSS System, its staff, and practitioners. The People Strategy aligns with one of the 20th Legislative Assembly's key mandate priorities, "access to health care", and will support a skilled, stable, resilient, and representative workforce across the NWT, effectively providing residents with better access to better care.

From HR Plan to People Strategy

The 2025–2028 People Strategy builds on the foundation laid by the 2021–2024 NWT Health and Social Services System HR Plan. Over the past several years, the groundwork has been established to retain and attract health and social services professionals to the NWT, and to advance workforce development and employee engagement. These efforts have helped shape our understanding of the pathway to a more connected, informed, and flexible workforce across the territory. The new strategy leverages this progress—but focuses on long-term and sustainable change that is responsive to the voice of the current and future workforce. The People Strategy is the guide for the culture of the HSS System and is inclusive of all those who support it. The main purpose is to create a culture where everyone is enabled to reach their highest capability. It is a shared commitment to strengthening the NWT HSS System towards a more engaged, satisfied, and connected workforce.

The People Strategy is based on the principles of continuous improvement and adaptability. It aims to address the NWT HSS System's current needs while remaining flexible to adapt to new challenges. While the overall strategy provides a consistent direction for 2025–2028, the broad actions within each pillar and the activities outlined in program plans will evolve over time—guided by ongoing employee feedback, data insights, and emerging system needs.



What We Have Heard

A comprehensive range of employee and public engagement activities were completed to identify strengths and opportunities for improvement within the NWT HSS System's approach to human resource support. It is important to acknowledge that this feedback may not resonate with everyone, given the large diverse staffing complement of the HSS system, making it important to ensure spaces are available where all voices can share their experiences and recommendations for improvement.

Engagement activities included:

- Employee focus groups and feedback sessions
- Local, facility, and regional leadership meetings (with CEO, COO or other HSS leaders)
- A series of employee town hall meetings with the Minister of Health and Social Services
- Direct feedback from the public through the Regional Wellness Councils
- Presentations delivered to the Indigenous Advisory Body, and Legislative Assembly Standing Committees
- Meeting with and correspondence from professional associations

The feedback received can be summarized under the following priorities:

- Prioritize employee retention with a particular focus on enhanced skill development and learning.
- Streamline processes to reduce administrative burden, allowing employees time to focus on patient and client care.



- Strengthen organizational engagement and empower employees through creating opportunities to participate in decisions and contribute innovative ideas.
- Continuous improvement of marketing strategies to maximize the attraction, recruitment, and retention of health and social services professionals.
- Enhance compensation approaches to improve attraction, recruitment, and retention.
- Ensure sustainable staffing growth that is focused on building a resilient, skilled workforce that is able to provide a high standard of client/patient focused service for residents of the NWT.

These priority areas align with feedback voiced by professional associations across Canada, based on evidence and feedback from health leaders nationwide. This is evident in the [six strategies for strengthening the workforce](#) which was curated by Healthcare Excellence Canada; Health Canada’s [Nursing Retention Toolkit](#), and the Canadian Medical Association’s [Call for Strengthening our Health Workforce](#). Many of the trends highlighted also align with social services-specific feedback from within the NWT HSS System.

Building on these national themes, and reinforced by recent NWT HSS workforce input, there are several common NWT HSS System areas of strength and areas of improvement. These strengths and areas of improvement are highlighted below:

Areas of Strength ¹	Areas of Improvement ²
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative work environment. • Positive working relationships, teamwork, and respect amongst employees. • Employees understand their roles and how their jobs align with their skills and interests. • Work is rewarding, challenging, and enjoyable, creating a sense of accomplishment. • Patients, families, and caregivers are actively involved in care decisions. • Patients and colleagues are treated with respect and dignity. • Effective incident response and transparency. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance commitment to quality, patient safety, and continuous organizational improvement. • Workload and burnout impacting motivation, job satisfaction, and retention. • Improvement of psychological and workplace health. • Lack of meaningful recognition and rewards. • Improved confidence in senior leadership and transparency / communication. • Greater opportunities for career progression and innovation.

¹ Identified as areas where approximately 80% or more of survey respondents agreed with or responded positively to a statement or theme.

² Identified as areas where approximately 60% or less of survey respondents agreed with or responded positively to a statement or theme.



People Strategy Pillars

The People Strategy is comprised of five strategic pillars with broad actions within each that support the vision, “Attracting, recruiting and retaining a representative workforce that is compassionate, skilled, and dynamic to deliver person-centered, culturally safe, and equitable health and social services across the Northwest Territories — enabling a system where the voices of patients, clients and staff together shape and guide care.”

Outlined below are the five strategic pillars of the 2025 – 2028 People Strategy.

1. Building upon our vibrant workforce
2. Fostering meaningful connections
3. Effective communication and decision-making
4. Continuous learning and leadership development
5. Commitment to cultural safety and anti-racism



The Five Pillars

1) Building Upon Our Vibrant Workforce

Build and retain a resilient, locally rooted health and social services workforce, while continuing to attract new professionals committed to serving the Northwest Territories in a permanent or locum capacity.

Through this pillar, the NWT HSS System will:

1. Inspire and engage NWT residents to pursue health and social services careers through:
 - Indigenous focused engagement activities.
 - Student and youth focused engagement activities.
2. Provide clear pathways and opportunities for career progression.
3. Continue to attract new professionals to the NWT.
4. Reduce access to housing as a barrier for staff recruitment.
5. Develop a 'community of locums' for the NWT.
6. Maintain competitiveness in the health and social services labour market.

2) Foster Meaningful Connections

Promote and build a culture of trust and safety where staff feel valued, achievements are celebrated, psychological and physical safety is prioritized, and meaningful relationships flourish through genuine care and connection to one another.

Through this pillar, the NWT HSS System will:

1. Prioritize staff physical safety.
2. Champion mental health and wellness for staff.
3. Recognize and celebrate staff achievements
4. Create opportunities for connection and collaboration.
5. Streamline administrative processes to reduce burden.
6. Empower staff to share ideas and drive innovation.

3) Effective Communication and Decision-Making

Ensure staff have the information, tools, authority and confidence to make effective timely decisions, and be enabled to contribute and create system improvements.

Through this pillar, the NWT HSS System will:

1. Develop a communication plan for staff engagement that includes a meaningful process that is responsive to their insights and recommendations.
2. Leadership will model and promote integrity, transparency, and authenticity.
3. Share data and other evidence-based tools to inform and guide decisions.
4. Ensure there are a variety of methods to provide feedback within the HSS system.

4) Continuous Learning and Leadership Development

Invest in the ongoing learning and development of staff to support system growth and sustainability.

Through this pillar, the NWT HSS System will:

1. Provide equitable access to training and development opportunities.
2. Invest in innovative and accessible learning approaches.
3. Promote a culture of continuous learning.
4. Develop and implement a structured succession planning process.
5. Review existing learning and development programs to identify gaps, improvement opportunities, and alignment with strategic priorities.
6. Close critical gaps in learning and development programs that threaten the sustainability of the HSS System.

5) Commitment to Cultural Safety and Anti-Racism

Create a culturally safe workplace that actively addresses racism and inequities, addressing systemic racism and increasing representation of Indigenous staff in leadership.

- Promote equity, diversity, and inclusion.
- Continue implementation of the Indigenous Employment Plans.
- Facilitate mandatory cultural safety and anti-racism training for all staff.
- Create Indigenous engagement spaces for staff and leadership.



Looking Ahead

The People Strategy is a three-year roadmap intended to address the medium and long-term human resource needs of the NWT HSS System and represents a commitment to the clients, patients, families, staff and leaders. We will work to meet the priorities of our staff, engaging them throughout. We are focused on how to elevate our attraction, recruitment and retention efforts to meet our vision. This strategy creates a space for innovation and creativeness; recognizing that to make improvements there must be mechanisms to make changes in service design, delivery, and funding. This directly ties to the necessity of having an interdepartmental task team to mitigate barriers in moving specific actions forward.

The People Strategy requires the strategic alignment of departments across multiple areas of Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT); this collaboration is a key enabler to the strategy's success. With input from the three health and social service authorities, DHSS will leverage established inter-departmental forums to address systemic challenges including those related to policy, housing, and technology – and develop coordinated, actionable solutions that reflect a whole-of-government approach.

Measuring Success

The overall, long-term success of the People Strategy will be assessed by achievements in employee engagement, participation, and wellbeing. Performance measures from the People Strategy will be reported annually and shared with all NWT HSS System employees. Feedback will be reviewed and summarized in regular updates to ensure transparency and responsiveness. These updates will include a results dashboard and highlights of notable programs, initiatives, and events.

Scheduled reporting will support accountability in delivering the strategy and reinforce the third pillar of the People Strategy – Effective Communication and Decision-Making.



Key Performance Indicators to measure our progress include:

- % vacancy rate
- % Indigenous representation
- % Indigenous leadership
- % completed cultural safety and anti-racism training
- % turnover rates
- % of staff who completed the workforce survey
- % of staff reporting burnout on the workforce survey
- % of managers who completed succession planning
- % safe supervisor training
- % of executive leaders who complete one staff engagement activity per quarter

Communication

Effective communication is critical for the success of the People Strategy to build transparency, trust and for continued engagement. The strategy will be shared through various communication methods to promote awareness, provide regular updates on progress and to seek ongoing feedback. Actions include but are not limited to regular updates through staff meetings, town halls, emails, communication platforms, and leadership engagements.

There is also a commitment to ensure there are feedback loops, and we invite all NWT HSS System employees, partners, stakeholders, clients, patients, and families to share their insights, and ideas to help shape our actions within the People Strategy. Your perspectives are essential, and feedback will be summarized in regular updates to ensure our approach remains nimble, responsive, and proactive in addressing evolving needs. Together, we can create a workplace that supports your growth, resilience, and excellence—today and into the future. Your voice matters, and your input will help inform our actions and initiatives over time. By working together with a shared purpose and vision, we can build a more resilient, inclusive, and compassionate workforce.

