

# AUDITOR GENERAL

Halifax Regional Municipality



## Follow-up Review – 2022 Audit: Management of Respectful Workplaces

March 2024

**March 14, 2024**

This ***Follow-up Review – 2022 Audit: Management of Respectful Workplaces***, completed under section 50(2) of the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, is hereby submitted to the Audit and Finance Standing Committee of Regional Council.

Respectfully,

*Original signed by*

Andrew Atherton, CPA, CA  
Auditor General  
Halifax Regional Municipality

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# Follow-up Review – 2022 Audit:

## Management of Respectful Workplaces



5 of 15  
Overall Recommendations  
Completed



### Management has:

Defined harassment  
complaint file documentation  
requirements

Assigned responsibility to  
oversee HRM business units'  
employee engagement  
initiatives

Developed a process to help  
ensure policy accessible  
offline

Developed a process to  
monitor workplace violence  
incident investigations

### Management needs to:

Develop objectives, with  
performance measures, for  
enhanced workplace culture

Implement quality control  
checks on harassment  
complaint files

Establish whistleblower policy  
and anonymous reporting  
tool

Implement a process to  
assess if HRM employees  
have taken key respectful  
workplace training

Establish timelines for  
complaint files

Auditor General Halifax Regional Municipality

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## Management of Respectful Workplaces Audit – June 2022

### Implementation Status by Recommendation

| Recommendation  | Business Unit               | Status |
|---|-----------------------------|--------|
| 1. HRM should establish documented objectives, with performance measures, detailing how to achieve the strategic initiative of an enhanced workplace culture.   | Human Resources             | ✗      |
| 2. Human Resources and Corporate Communications should develop detailed plans, with timelines, to implement the remaining recommendations from the 2016 and 2019 consultant reports. If management does not plan to implement certain recommendations, this should be documented and communicated to Regional Council as appropriate. | Human Resources             | ✗      |
| 3. Human Resources and Corporate Communications should update the Workplace Rights Harassment Prevention Policy and the Workplace Violence Prevention Corporate Procedure to address issues identified by external consultants, and by this audit. Additionally, implementation timelines should be established.                      | Human Resources             | ✗      |
| 4. Human Resources and Corporate Communications should work with business units to ensure the Workplace Rights Harassment Prevention Policy is accessible to those without computers, such as posting it in common areas.   | Human Resources             | ✓      |
| 5. HRM should assign responsibility to centrally track business unit employee engagement initiatives. This responsibility should include requiring business units to develop formal action plans, ensuring the plans address survey results, and monitoring progress.   | Human Resources             | ✓      |
| 6. HRM should implement a whistleblower policy that includes steps on how whistleblowers will be protected and an anonymous reporting tool. The policy and tool should be communicated to all HRM employees and accessible through HRM communication channels.  | Chief Administrative Office | ✗      |

|   |                             |   |
|---|-----------------------------|---|
|   |                             |   |
| 7. HRM should implement a process to ensure information received through the anonymous reporting tool is appropriately reviewed and investigated. This should include detailed roles and responsibilities, and appropriate record keeping.  | Chief Administrative Office | ✗ |
| 8. Human Resources and Corporate Communications should implement a process to assess identified workplace issues which fall outside of the scope of an investigation. This should include working with the business unit to ensure issues are addressed as appropriate.   | Human Resources             | ✗ |
| 9. Human Resources and Corporate Communications should implement a process to periodically assess whether HRM employees have taken key respectful workplace courses. This should include taking steps to ensure those who have not completed training take it and considering whether the number of course offerings is sufficient. | Human Resources             | ✗ |
| 10. Human Resources and Corporate Communications should establish timelines for harassment complaint intake and investigation, and monitor files that go beyond the standard timeline to determine if additional steps are needed.  | Human Resources             | ✗ |
| 11. Human Resources and Corporate Communications should implement file documentation requirements, to help ensure key steps are documented and any investigation and resolution are supported.  | Human Resources             | ✓ |
| 12. Human Resources and Corporate Communications should implement quality control checks on harassment complaint files. This should be done by a second person to ensure all necessary documents are filed. A file completion checklist may assist with this.   | Human Resources             | ✗ |
| 13. Human Resources and Corporate Communications should monitor violence incidents in the health and safety system to ensure an appropriate investigation is completed and documented.  | Human Resources             | ✓ |

|   |                 |   |
|---|-----------------|---|
| 14. Human Resources and Corporate Communications should implement a process to ensure access to confidential information (physical and electronic files) is updated when individuals change positions or leave HRM. | Human Resources | ✘ |
| 15. Human Resources and Corporate Communications should implement a process to ensure access to the health and safety information system is updated when employees change positions or leave HRM.                   | Human Resources | ✔ |

## Background

The Office of the Auditor General, Halifax Regional Municipality, follows up audits previously reported by the office after 18 months. These follow-up reviews report the progress management had made implementing changes recommended by the Auditor General.

## Objective and Scope

We completed a follow-up review of a report released in 2022.

- Management of Respectful Workplaces Audit

Our objective was to provide review level, or limited assurance, on HRM management's implementation of recommendations from this report. A limited assurance engagement provides a lower level of assurance than an audit. Conclusions are based on reasonability of what management tells us, and limited testing, rather than detailed testing, as would be found in an audit. This allows us to focus limited resources on new audits, while still providing assurance that management is addressing the issues we identified in past audits.

Our approach included discussing implementation with staff; reviewing policies, guidelines and processes; and other procedures we considered necessary.

This limited assurance engagement was conducted in accordance with the Canadian Standard on Assurance Engagements (CSAE) 3001 Direct Engagements published by the Chartered Professional Accountants of Canada.

We apply CPA Canada's Canadian Standard on Quality Management 1. Our staff comply with the independence and ethical requirements of the Chartered Professional Accountants of Nova Scotia Code of Conduct.

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