Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

NEW Directions

July 28, 2009

New guide helps determine where work belongs in the ministry

Making sure that ministry work is being done in the right place, in the right way and by the right people is key to a successful stewardship environment.

As divisions enter their implementation phase, there may be portions of their work and some processes that no longer fit with their new divisional and branch mandates. But, a number of challenges make it difficult for them to transition out of doing old work and following old processes. These challenges include:

- Divisions are at different stages of transition. Some branches will have to continue work that should have been transferred out because the receiving area is not ready to accept it.
- Confusion or lack of clarity over new mandates.
- Reluctance to stop work.
- Not enough resources to accept work under a new mandate.

The ministry has developed a Transitioning Work guide to help divisions work through these challenges and successfully transfer, modify or stop doing work that no longer aligns with their mandate.

"The guide helps staff decide which of their work needs to wind down or move to another unit, branch, division or even out of the ministry," said Stephen Pinkus, transition program manager, Transition Division, to participants at a recent Stewardship in Action FYI series presentation on Transitioning Work. "It also provides the processes to ensure the work is seamlessly passed on to the appropriate area."

Pinkus explained that to transition work effectively, staff need to apply important stewardship principles, including:

- Engaging in powerful conversations
- Effective negotiation and co-operation within and across divisions
- Collaborating cross-functionally
- Building trusting relationships.

The Transitioning Work approach has been built around four sets of conversations.

Pinkus said that through these conversations cross-functional work teams collaborate and make decisions about where work belongs, who should be doing it and how a smooth hand-off can best be made. See box on this page for an overview of the conversations.

The Transition Division has already helped organize and support a number of transitioning work pilots — including one involving the Long-Term Care and Community Care Unit in Health System Strategy. See story on this pilot project on page 2. Another pilot was led in the Provincial Programs Branch, Health System Accountability and Performance.

Learn more about the Transitioning Work process!

Click here to listen to the FYI Series session, **Transitioning Work**, on INFOweb.

Hear how the new Transitioning Work guide helped the Long-Term and Community Care Unit transition work out of their area that no longer fit under their mandate.

"These pilots were a big learning experience for us. They helped us review and shape the transitioning work process that is now available for use throughout the ministry," Pinkus said.

Conversations, connecting and really listening proved to be powerful tools to get people talking about their mandates and how and what work fits into their area. Negotiations and trust were also key to the success of the pilots. "It may be that work fits into someone's area but there is no available staff to take it on at the moment. So, then, the discussion may be about work staying in an existing place for now with a plan for it to move out later," Pinkus said.

"Many of us are process thinkers. But these conversations were very important in bringing about change and effective results," Pinkus told the audience. ■

TRANSITIONING WORK CONVERSATIONS

In the Transitioning Work approach, cross-functional teams work through four conversations. These help them decide which work should be transferred, modified or wound down because it no longer fits under a division's mandates. The Transitioning Work guide includes tools and templates to help move the conversations forward.

1 — Conversation 1: Review and describe business processes

Prioritize business process work, choose an area of focus to review, then document the process "as is" for the group to review.

2 — Conversation 2: Transition preplanning and role assignment

Review where process pieces belong, according to the unit/branch's new mandate. Identify appropriate roles for the transitioning work process. Determine where in the ministry this work fits — what should remain and what needs to be transitioned to another area.

3 — Conversation 3: Gain consensus

Collaborate and gain consensus for the transitioning work plan by negotiating with other units, branches and divisions as necessary.

4 — Conversation 4: Implementation

Implement the transitioning work plan through agreed upon timelines. Develop an evaluation process to assess progress on the plan.

Ontario

Cross-divisional pilot project uses conversations to get >results

It used to be that if you had a question on long-term care or community care there was one program area that had all the answers, Mary Iannuzziello, senior policy advisor of the Long-Term Care and Community Care Unit, Health Program Policy and Standards Branch, Health System Strategy, told a recent FYI series session.

Under its new stewardship structure, Iannuzziello's unit focuses solely on developing and interpreting policy and standards in the long-term care and community care areas. "We are no longer a one-stop shop area," Iannuzziello said.

But Iannuzziello's unit continued to receive many letters from the public dealing with different long-term care and community care issues. She said the unit recognized that the work of processing correspondence needed to be transitioned elsewhere. The issue was sorting out exactly how this could be done effectively and appropriately. "Correspondence was no longer a right fit within one area or one unit in the ministry," said Iannuzziello.

Guide steers conversations

The Transition Division, in partnership with the branch, stepped in to set up a pilot to work through this transitioning work process. A Transitioning Work guide was used to steer Iannuzziello's unit through the process of having conversations to clearly detail the range of work in question, identify partners in the ministry where the work might be a more appropriate fit and then negotiate a plan for how the work would be carried out in future.

Iannuzziello began conversing with Bessie Callitsis, manager of Correspondence Services, Communications and Information Branch. At the time, there were 80 pieces of backlogged correspondence in Iannuzziello's area. "We met and had conversations about the outstanding letters, categorized them by subject and discussed where we thought every letter should go," Iannuzziello said. Given the new functional structure of the ministry, in some cases one letter might need input from five divisions to respond to all the issues covered.

Collaborating across divisions

"We decided that Correspondence Services would take the lead," said Callitsis. Her team began developing ways to streamline the handling of the correspondence, including developing subject templates. "Accountability and responsibility for long-term care and community care policy rests with Mary's unit. But issues in a letter may rest with various divisions."

Callitsis had to seek buy-in from other divisions that they would play a role in responding to issues raised in the correspondence as required. "Things don't neatly fit into one area, so now we are working across divisions on this and we continue to have dialogue," Callitsis said.

With the co-operation between the two units, the backlogged correspondence has been whittled down. "We're very happy with the results from the correspondence work. Before Bessie's unit got involved we were struggling with this," Iannuzziello said. "I see a real value to applying the principles in the guide on the transitioning work process. It allows us to look at the work we're doing and collaborate with other areas of the ministry. In our stewardship role we all have joint ownership of the work," she said. ■

Negotiation leads to success for Transitioning Work pilot

A cross-functional team from the Long-Term Care and Community Care Unit of the Health Program Policy and Standards Branch, and Correspondence Services of the Communications and Information Branch collaborated on a successful Transitioning Work pilot project.

Team members worked through the four stages of conversation in the Transitioning Work process to achieve these results:

- ✔ The teams worked effectively negotiating and cooperating across divisions to align work with division and branch mandates.
- ✔ Decisions were made to stop work that no longer fit within the Long-Term Care and Community Care Unit's mandate.
- ✔ A well thought-out implementation plan was developed and executed to transition the work to Correspondence Services.

Staff photo

At a recent FYI Series session, Mary Iannuzziello, left, senior policy advisor of the Long-Term Care and Community Care Unit, Health Program Policy and Standards Branch, and Bessie Callitsis, manager of Correspondence Services in the Communications and Information Branch, discuss how their two areas participated in a Transitioning Work pilot project. The Transitioning Work guide helps managers and staff successfully transfer, modify or stop doing work that no longer fits under their mandate.

NEW Directions

NEW Directions, published for employees of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care by the Communications and Information Branch, can be read on-line at INFOweb.

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Do you have questions about the organizational change?
- Ask your manager
- E-mail your questions or comments to the feedback account at anewdirection.moh@ontario.ca