Assignment 2.3: Email Memo for Progress Report

To: Dr. Erika Paterson, English 301 Course Instructor
From: Amina Moustaqim-Barrette, English 301 Student
Date: November 9th 2020
Subject: Progress on Formal Report Regarding Return-to-Work Policies

Dear Dr. Paterson,

I am writing to report on progress made on my formal report since the research proposal was submitted and approved. The following details the proposed audience for the report, its purpose and significance, as well as the research plan and a tentative writing schedule. The proposed questionnaire for data collection is attached at the end of this document.

Audience

The intended audience for this report is Noorjean Hassam, Chief Operating Officer, BC Centre for Disease Control. Mrs. Hassam coordinates all internal policies at the BCCDC and has led the creation of return-to-work policies in response to evolving COVID-19 precautions

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to evaluate current return-to-work policy at the BCCDC and understand its effect on employees, as well as to consider alternative policy solutions

Significance of the report

Given uncertainties surrounding how long the COVID-19 pandemic will last, this report seeks to understand impacts of return-to-work policies that were implemented as short-term, emergency measures and help develop these into sustainable solutions aimed at optimizing employee well-being and workplace culture in the long-term

Research plan

- Existing literature and statistics related to workplace flexibility and employee well-being will be scoped
- Interview with management and employees at the BC Centre for Disease Control that employs both quantitative and qualitative components.
  - The quantitative component will involve asking employees to rate their understanding and experiences with return-to-work policies
  - The qualitative component will involve free-form questions about values and preferences related to return-to-work policies, and feasibility and capacity to implement different solution options.

Writing schedule

- November 13, 2020: Send invitations to potential interview participants
- November 18, 2020: Scope existing literature for relevant research and statistics
- November 20, 2020: Summarise existing literature and past findings
- November 23 – 24 2020: Conduct interviews with finalised questionnaire
- November 25, 2020: Enter data and conduct statistical analyses
- November 27 - 29 2020: Draft formal report
- December 1, 2020: Submit formal report draft
- December 5, 2020: Draft peer review of formal report draft
- December 10, 2020: Submit peer review of formal report draft
- December 13, 2020: Revise formal report using suggestions from peer review
- December 17, 2020: Submit final formal report

Thank you and I look forward to hearing your feedback and beginning the research process with your approval. As always, please feel free to contact me at aminamoustaqim377@gmail.com with any questions or comments.

Assignment 2.3: Formal Report Outline

I. Introduction
   i. Background
      - COVID-19 and associated work impacts
      - The role of the BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC)
   ii. Problem statement
   iii. Purpose of the report
   iv. Brief description of research plan and data sources
   v. Scope and limitations of the report
II. Body
   i. Research methods
   ii. Type of work and workplace needs
      - Types of work being conducted
         1. Needs related to work-from-home
         2. Needs related to in-office work time
   iii. Impacts of COVID-19 and current policies
      - Burn out and morale among health workers during COVID-19
      - Barriers associated with work-from-home
      - Barriers associated with return-to-work policy
   iv. Alternatives to current policies
      - Decentralised policy
      - Increased office capacity
      - Rotating days
      - Technical solutions
   v. Sustainability and future considerations
III. Conclusion
   i. Summary and overall interpretations
   ii. Recommendations
IV. Appendices
   i. Survey template

Introduction

On March 17, 2020, the province of British Columbia (BC) declared a public health emergency related to the ongoing pandemic of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) (World Health Organisation, 2020).

Measures to limit the spread of COVID-19 – especially physical distancing measures requiring individuals to keep two metres distance from one another at all times – have been implemented in workplaces across the province, including at the BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC), one of the primary government agencies responsible for coordinating provincial public health efforts. Indeed, to act as an example to workplaces across the province, the BCCDC was one of the first workplaces to send all non-frontline staff (those not working in a clinical setting) to work from home.

Statement of Problem

Work-from-home has a number of potential advantages, including offering families with flexibility and more time, as they no longer have to commute to work. During COVID-19, work-from-home policies have also been some of the most effective interventions to stop the spread of COVID-19 disease, as fewer people must take public transit and be in close contact with individuals outside of those they live with. Nevertheless, as employees working to track and stop the spread of COVID-19 disease, strict work-from-home policies may also impact inidivduals' abilities to do their work in a timely and efficient way. Current work-from-home policy at the BCCDC requires employees to request office time two weeks in advance of when they plan to come into their office space. Given that many of these employees are reacting to situations that require them to work on new and emerging issues in a timely manner, the current work-from-home policy may be hampering their ability to do their work.

Proposed Solution

There are several possible alternatives to the current work-from-home policy. Instead of centralizing the work-from-home requests centre-wide, the BCCDC could allow individual teams to decide an arrangement that best suits them. One of the largest issues which precludes the BCCDC from returning employees to the workplace is that the building is already over-capacity. Other solutions to explore would be to rotate workers into the workspace, or to find increased office capacity in a nearby building.

Scope

To assess the impact of the BCCDC's current return-to-work policy and the feasibility of alternate solutions, I plan to explore these five avenues of inquiry:

1. Whose work is being impacted by current return-to-work policies, and what specifics aspects of work must be done from the office?
2. Would increasing office capacity be a feasible and sustainable solution, or a temporary solution for the period of the COVID-19 pandemic?
3. Would employees be open to choosing rotating days to come into the office, and what barriers would this strategy present?
4. Do smaller teams and their managers have the capacity to decide an arrangement that suits them
5. Are there technical or other solutions that would facilitate work to be done from home more efficiently?

Methods

As my primary data source, I plan to use a survey of management and employees at the BC Centre for Disease Control that employs both quantitative and qualitative components. The quantitative component will involve asking employees for values and preferences related to return-to-work policies, while the qualitative component will involve free-form questions about different feasibility and capacity to implement different solution options. To protect the identity

of participants, no identifying information will be recorded. Secondary data will also be used, including published data and statistics related to mental health impacts and impacts of productivity associated to COVID-19 measures.

My Qualifications

As an affected employee by current return-to-work policies implemented at the BCCDC, I am well situated to explore the impacts and potential solutions to the issues that have arisen as a result. I have previously led a number of research projects, including program evaluations and policy analyses, and have experience conducting primary research using highly sensitive and confidential data.

Conclusion

A work environment which facilitates essential tasks is necessary; not only for the employees of the BCCDC, but for the employers and employees across the province that depend on the BCCDC's work in order to maintain a sense of normalcy and productivity in their own lives. Current BCCDC return-to-work policies may not be best suited to offer the flexibility needed to work in the highly stressful context of COVID-19, and other solutions could be explored. This project will allow me to explore the feasibility and desire for such alternative policies. With your approval, I look forward to beginning the research process.

World Health Organisation. (2020, March 12). *WHO announces COVID-19 outbreak a*

pandemic. World Health Organization. http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-

emergencies/coronavirus-covid-19/news/news/2020/3/who-announces-covid-19-

outbreak-a-pandemic