



Public Service Commission
of Canada

Commission de la fonction publique
du Canada

INSIGHTS ON THE PERCEPTIONS OF STAFFING ADVISORS AND SUB-DELEGATED PERSONS UNDER THE NEW DIRECTION IN STAFFING



RESULTS OF THE PILOT SYSTEM-WIDE
STAFFING AUDIT QUESTIONNAIRE

MARCH 2018

Canada

Report Overview

As part of the pilot System-Wide Staffing Audit (pilot audit), a questionnaire was administered to sub-delegated persons and staffing advisors associated with the sample of 386 appointments across the 25 organizations participating in the pilot audit. The purpose of the questionnaire was to provide the Public Service Commission (PSC) with a better understanding of the staffing environment and to contextualize findings of the pilot audit, by gauging these stakeholders' awareness and understanding of the New Direction in Staffing (NDS), and of their own roles and responsibilities.

These questionnaire results represent a “snapshot” in time: responses were gathered during the early summer of 2017, and were based on perceptions one year after the implementation of the NDS in April 2016. These results will be integrated with pilot audit findings stemming from the review of organizational staffing systems and compliance of appointments, which will be finalized later in 2018. The final pilot audit report will include recommendations and an action plan for the PSC to support system-wide improvements such as adjustments to policies, improvements to program delivery, and support to organizations.

Overall, staffing advisors and sub-delegated persons reported high levels of awareness of the changes stemming from the NDS. Although many observed staffing culture change in terms of sub-delegated persons having more room to apply their judgement in staffing decisions, a large number of stakeholders had not seen changes in terms of a more simplified staffing approach, or an increased focus on outcomes, particularly for those located in regions outside of the National Capital Region (NCR).

This report presents the highlights and key findings from the questionnaire that were of interest to the PSC. Readers are encouraged to review the full questionnaire and to contact the PSC for any additional information.

Introduction

As part of its renewed oversight model, the Public Service Commission (PSC) is adopting a system-wide approach to audits, focused on requirements such as merit and official languages. By focusing on these requirements, the PSC ensures its continued accountability to Parliament, while supporting deputy heads to adapt staffing to their organizational context.

The purpose of the pilot audit is to obtain information on the integrity of staffing at a system-wide level. The findings and recommendations will be shared broadly in a final report, to promote early identification of risks and timely solutions. Any recommendations that emerge from the pilot audit will be directed towards the PSC to support policy adjustments and program improvements, as required.

As part of the pilot audit, an online questionnaire was administered to the sub-delegated persons and staffing advisors from across Canada associated with the sample of 386 appointments from 25 organizations selected for the pilot audit (questionnaires can be found in the Annexes). The reference period for these appointment files was April 1 to November 30, 2016. The purpose of the questionnaire was to provide the PSC with a better understanding of the staffing environment and to contextualize pilot audit findings, by gauging these stakeholders' awareness and understanding of the NDS, and of their own roles and responsibilities. The questionnaire also assessed the extent to which stakeholders perceived staffing culture change at that stage of NDS implementation.

Given that the results of the questionnaire are to be considered in relation to other findings from the pilot audit (on overall compliance and organizational staffing systems), which will be finalized in 2018, there are no recommendations associated with this particular report.

“There is good awareness of the intent to shift staffing culture to be more nimble, more responsive to needs, less administrative, but there is only limited evidence of this shift in specific selection processes.”

RESPONDENT PROFILE

Sub-delegated persons

- 149 respondents (52% response rate)
- 55% (82) were located in the National Capital Region (NCR), 45% (67) were located across other regions
- 58% (87) reported managing or assisting in more than 5 staffing activities on average in a given year

Staffing advisors

- 130 respondents (66% response rate)
- 58% (76) were located in the NCR, 42% (54) were located across other regions
- 31% (40) had been a staffing advisor in the public service for between 5 and 10 years prior to joining their current organization

– Sub-delegated person

High levels of stakeholder awareness of NDS requirements, with some gaps in understanding

Key highlights:

- ▶ 88% of sub-delegated persons and 96% of staffing advisors were aware of the requirement for deputy head direction on the choice of appointment process
 - ▶ Of these, 58% of sub-delegated persons and 74% of staffing advisors reported a full understanding
- ▶ 73% of sub-delegated persons across other regions and 58% in the NCR reported a full understanding of the requirement to articulate the selection decision in writing

Stakeholders were asked to report their levels of awareness and understanding of the following new Appointment Delegation and Accountability Instrument requirements:

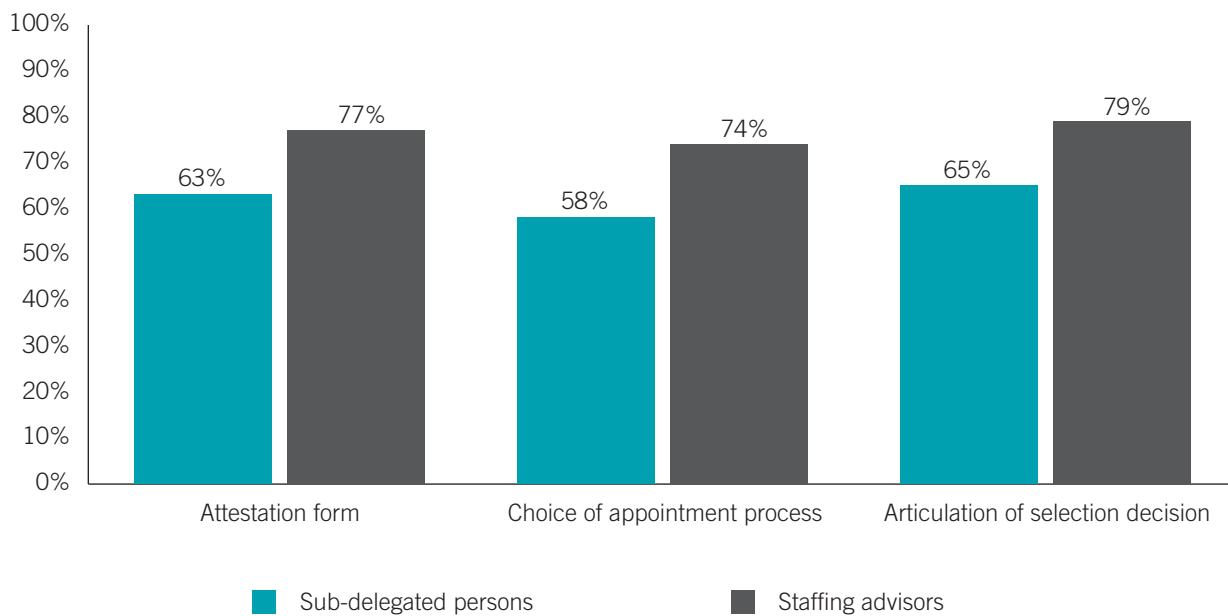
- ▶ sub-delegated persons to sign an attestation form regarding their staffing accountabilities
- ▶ deputy head to provide direction on choice of appointment process (i.e., advertised versus non-advertised)
- ▶ deputy head's requirement for sub-delegated persons to articulate the selection decision in writing

“The New Direction in Staffing has allowed for a lot more flexibility.”

– Staffing advisor

The majority of stakeholders were aware of new requirements, with staffing advisors reporting a higher rate of full understanding overall (Figure 1). Fifty-eight percent of sub-delegated persons reported having full understanding of the requirement for deputy heads to establish direction on the choice of process; this is the lowest rate of full understanding reported by either stakeholder group across the 3 requirements.

Figure 1: Stakeholders who reported having a full understanding of new requirements



Staffing advisors' rate of full understanding was around 75% for all 3 requirements, whether located in the NCR or in other regions. Sub-delegated persons' rate of full understanding was just over 60% for all 3 requirements, whether located in the NCR or in other regions. However, 73% of sub-delegated persons who worked in other regions reported a full understanding of the requirement for a written articulation of the selection decision, compared with 58% of sub-delegated persons who worked in the NCR.

Differing views of the role of the staffing advisor

Key highlights:

- ▶ 81% of sub-delegated persons and 84% of staffing advisors correctly identified sub-delegated persons as accountable for staffing decisions within their organization
- ▶ 65% of staffing advisors described their role as a strategic partner, compared with 35% of sub-delegated persons
- ▶ 49% of sub-delegated persons described the role of staffing advisors as focusing on rules and process, compared with 34% of staffing advisors

“I would welcome being more of a strategic partner with my clients and participating more in the planning process, but I don’t think the client fully embraces this role for the HR advisors.”

– Staffing advisor

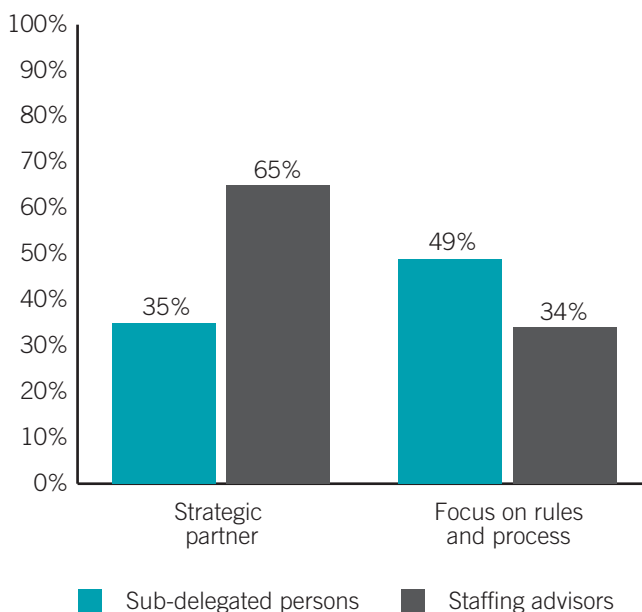
Stakeholders were asked who, other than the deputy head, was accountable for staffing decisions within their organization. A majority of stakeholders (81% of sub-delegated persons and 84% of staffing advisors) correctly identified the sub-delegated persons as accountable for staffing.

Stakeholders were asked to describe the role of staffing advisors as either:

- ▶ a strategic partner
- ▶ offering support and advice
- ▶ offering administrative support
- ▶ focussing on rules and process
- ▶ other

Both stakeholder groups most often described the role of the staffing advisor as providing support and advice. Results suggested that while those who worked in human resources (HR) often viewed the role of the staffing advisor as a strategic partner (Figure 2), sub-delegated persons continued to see the role of staffing advisors as providing support and advice, or focusing on rules and process. Nearly half of sub-delegated persons, regardless of the region where they worked, described the role of staffing advisors as focusing on rules and process, compared with around 35% of staffing advisors.

Figure 2: HR views role of staffing advisor as a strategic partner, compared with sub-delegated persons



“While the tools are in place, risk management has not changed, and staffing processes are still heavy and slow.”

– Sub-delegated person

“There is still some confusion between the sub-delegated manager and the HR advisor on roles, responsibilities, and who is ultimately accountable for the appointment decision.”

– Sub-delegated person

Staffing advisors more likely than sub-delegated persons to perceive changes to staffing culture

Key highlights:

- ▶ Perceptions of culture change differed by region: sub-delegated persons in the NCR perceived more culture change than those in other regions, and a higher proportion of staffing advisors in other regions perceived no staffing culture change compared to those in the NCR

Stakeholders were asked about their perceptions of staffing culture change since April 2016 in a number of areas:

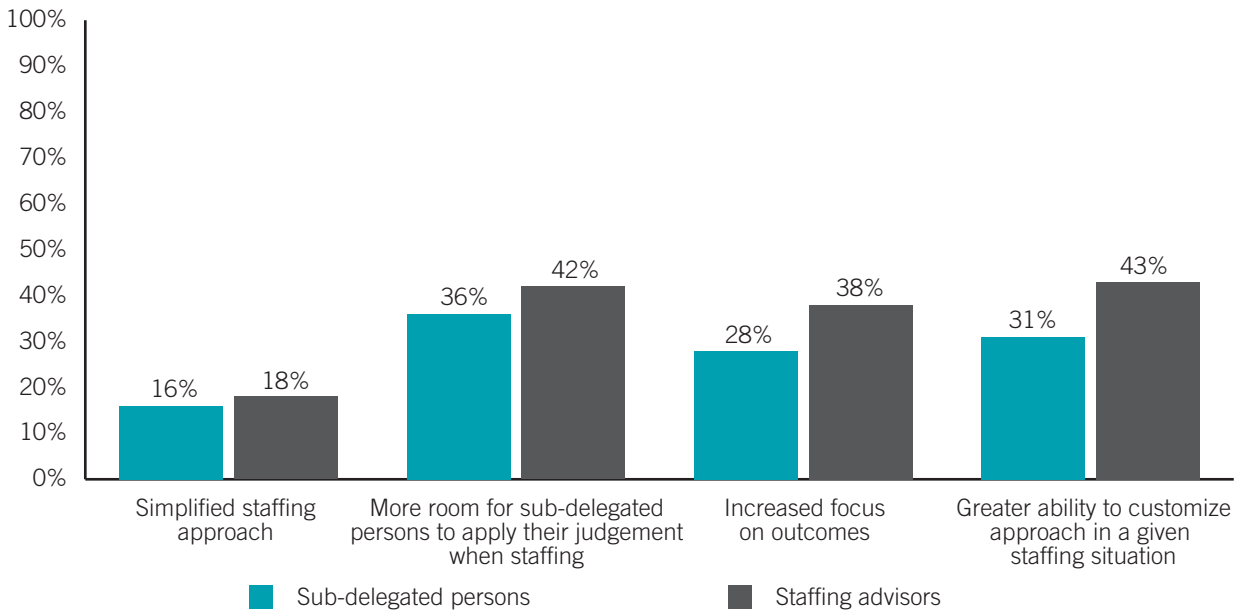
- ▶ movement towards a simplified staffing approach (for example, reduction of administrative burden)
- ▶ more room for sub-delegated persons to apply their judgement when staffing
- ▶ increased focus on outcomes (finding the right person) and less on process
- ▶ a greater ability to customize approach in a given staffing situation

Staffing advisors were generally more likely than sub-delegated persons to perceive staffing culture change (Figure 3). All stakeholders perceived more room for sub-delegated persons to apply their judgement when staffing. Fewer stakeholders perceived a change towards simplified staffing.

“While the staffing flexibilities have increased for managers, the role of the HR advisor as a traffic cop has increased as well.”

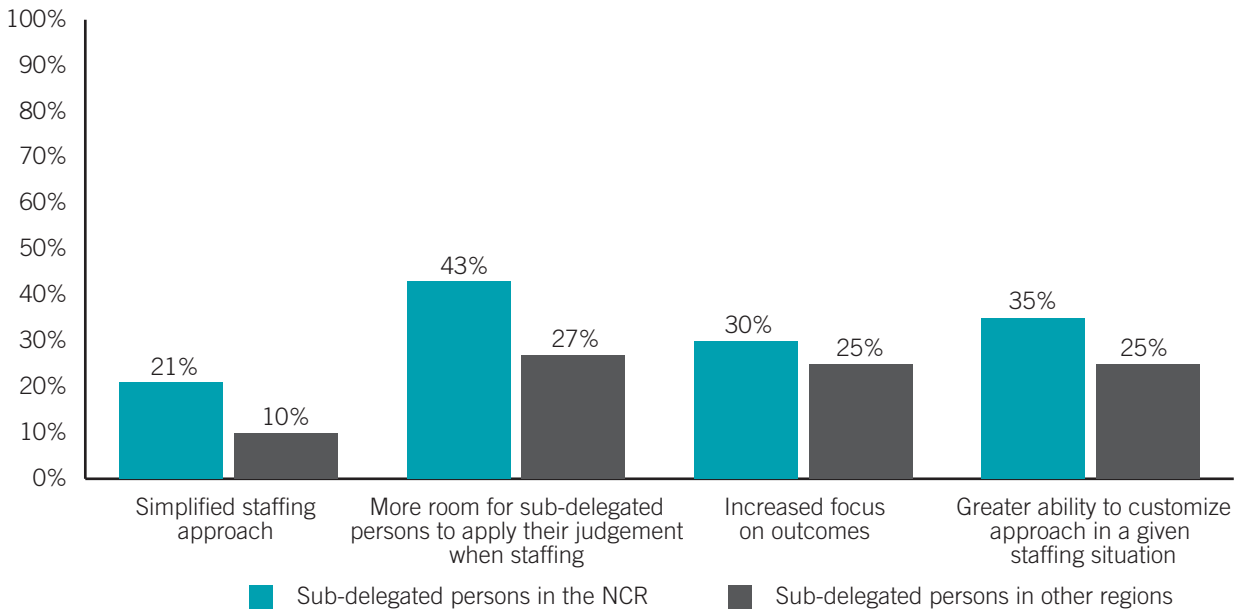
– Staffing advisor

Figure 3: Stakeholder perceptions of staffing culture change (“to a great extent”)



Sub-delegated persons in the NCR were more likely than those located in other regions to perceive staffing culture change (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Perceptions of staffing culture change (“to a great extent”) among sub-delegated persons, NCR versus other regions

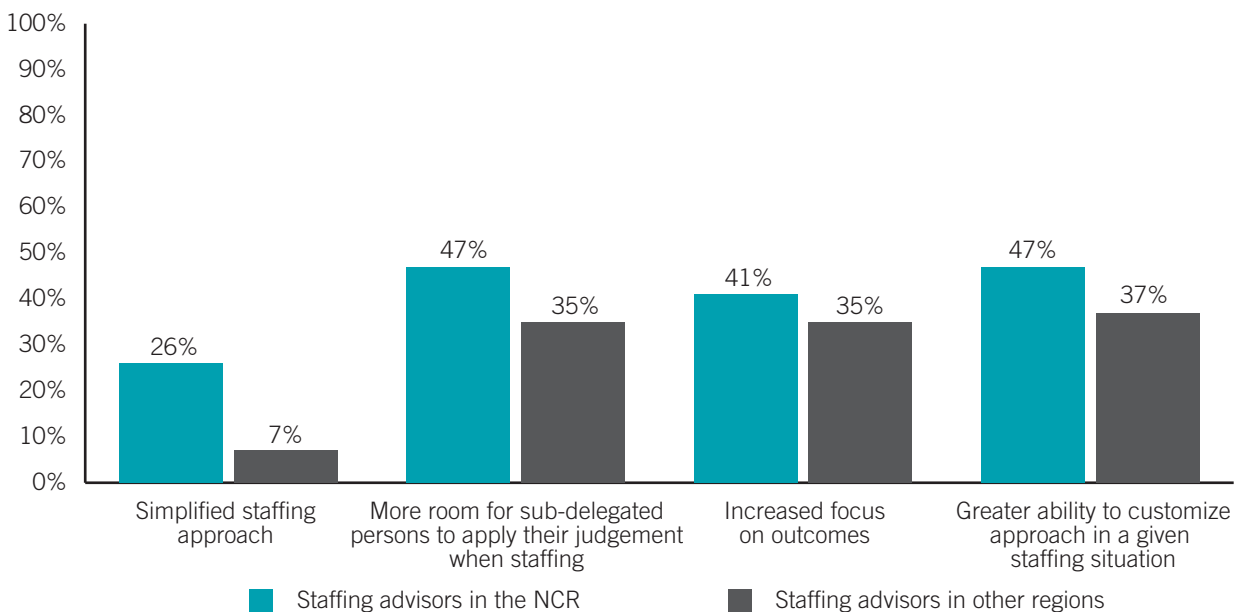


“Little change in staffing culture in my organization. Many staffing actions are focused on old habits and policing delegated managers instead of enabling the flexibility and efficiencies intended by the NDS.”

– Sub-delegated person

Staffing advisors in the NCR were more likely to perceive staffing culture change compared with those in other regions, with the largest gap in perceptions relating to a more simplified staffing approach (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Perceptions of staffing culture change (“to a great extent”) among staffing advisors, NCR versus other regions



Conclusion

These are the key findings of the pilot audit questionnaire. The insights provided by the sub-delegated persons and staffing advisors will help the PSC to contextualize the findings from other components of the pilot audit (on overall compliance and organizational staffing systems), which will be published later in 2018.

Annex A: Questionnaire for Staffing Advisors

Preamble

This audit questionnaire is being administered by the Public Service Commission (PSC) as part of the System-Wide Staffing Audit. The PSC will use your responses to contextualize audit findings and gather information on the implementation of the New Direction in Staffing (NDS). Additionally, this exercise will help to establish baseline information, against which the PSC will be able to gauge future progress and focus its efforts on possible areas of improvement to the public service staffing system.

Please note that the System-Wide Staffing Audit will obtain information on the integrity of staffing at a system-wide level. This will allow the PSC to provide feedback to all organizations and Parliament on the performance of the staffing system as a whole. Should areas of improvement be identified, recommendations will be addressed to the PSC and not to individual organizations.

The questions are organized into four main sections:

1. NDS implementation
2. Staffing culture
3. Accountabilities/roles and responsibilities
4. General information

All responses are confidential and results will only be presented in an aggregate format.

To the extent possible, please base your answers on your own experience and involvement in these areas. It will take about 5 to 10 minutes to have your say.

Thank you for your cooperation. If you have questions, please contact us at cfp.vdes-swsa.psc@cfp-psc.gc.ca.

Section 1: New Direction in Staffing implementation

The following questions ask about your awareness of the NDS that came into effect on April 1, 2016. The NDS consists of renewed staffing and oversight frameworks for the federal public service with the goal of:

- simplifying staffing, while ensuring that appointments remain merit-based and non-partisan and
- providing organizations with greater opportunity or flexibility to customize approaches to staffing for their particular needs, all within the spirit of the Public Service Employment Act.

<p>Attestation</p>	<p>1. Are you aware of the requirement for sub-delegated persons to sign an attestation form (i.e., the one-time signed document confirming their adherence to the deputy head's staffing-related requirements) regarding their staffing accountabilities?</p> <p>1 = yes 2 = no</p> <p>1.1) If yes, on a scale of 1 to 3, indicate your level of understanding of the intent of the attestation form:</p> <p>1 = no understanding 2 = some understanding 3 = full understanding</p>
<p>Direction on choice of appointment process</p>	<p>2. Are you aware of your deputy head's direction on choice of appointment process (i.e., advertised vs. non-advertised)?</p> <p>1 = yes 2 = no</p> <p>2.1) If yes, on a scale of 1 to 3, indicate your level of understanding of your deputy head's direction on choice of appointment process:</p> <p>1 = no understanding 2 = some understanding 3 = full understanding</p>
<p>Articulation of selection decision</p>	<p>3. Are you aware of your deputy head's requirement for sub-delegated persons to articulate, in writing, the selection decision?</p> <p>1 = yes 2 = no</p> <p>3.1) If yes, on a scale of 1 to 3, indicate your level of understanding of your deputy head's requirement for sub-delegated persons to articulate, in writing, the selection decision:</p> <p>1 = no understanding 2 = some understanding 3 = full understanding</p>

PSC enabling support

4. How would you rate the overall support received from the PSC in implementing the NDS?

- 1 = unsatisfactory
- 2 = somewhat satisfactory
- 3 = fully satisfactory
- 4 = not applicable (have not used PSC services)

4.1) Please elaborate:

5. 5) Are there any areas where additional PSC staffing-related support, training or services may be needed?

- 1 = yes
- 2 = no

5.1) If yes, please elaborate:

Section 2: Staffing culture

The following question seeks to gauge the degree of culture change following the implementation of the NDS.

Change in staffing culture	<p>6. For each of the following items, to what extent has the staffing culture in your organization has shifted since April 2016?</p> <p>a) Simplified staffing approach (e.g., reduction of administrative burden)</p> <p>1 = not at all 2 = to some extent 3 = to a great extent 4 = don't know</p> <p>b) More room for sub-delegated persons to apply their judgement when staffing</p> <p>1 = not at all 2 = to some extent 3 = to a great extent 4 = don't know</p> <p>c) Increased focus on outcomes (finding the right person) and less on process</p> <p>1 = not at all 2 = to some extent 3 = to a great extent 4 = don't know</p> <p>d) Greater ability to customize approach in a given staffing situation</p> <p>1 = not at all 2 = to some extent 3 = to a great extent 4 = don't know</p> <p>e) My organization's monitoring of staffing is more relevant and useful</p> <p>1 = not at all 2 = to some extent 3 = to a great extent 4 = don't know</p>
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Section 3: Accountabilities/ roles and responsibilities

The following questions ask about your awareness of roles and responsibilities in appointment processes.

Awareness of staffing accountability	<p>7. Other than the deputy head, who is accountable for staffing decisions within your organization?</p> <p>1 = staffing advisor 2 = sub-delegated person 3 = shared accountability between the sub-delegated person and staffing advisor 4 = selection board 5 = unknown 6 = other, please specify:</p>
	<p>8. How would you describe the role of staffing advisors in your organization? Indicate all that apply.</p> <p>1 = strategic partner 2 = support and advice 3 = administrative support 4 = focus on rules and process 5 = other, please specify:</p>

Section 4: General information

	<p>9. Do you have any other comments or additional feedback related to any of the preceding questions?</p> <p>1 = yes 2 = no</p> <p>9.1) If yes, please elaborate:</p>
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10. Where do you currently work?

- 1 = Administrative Tribunals Support Service of Canada
- 2 = Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
- 3 = Canadian Transportation Agency
- 4 = Correctional Service Canada
- 5 = Courts Administration Service
- 6 = Department of Justice Canada
- 7 = National Defence
- 8 = Employment and Social Development Canada
- 9 = Fisheries and Oceans Canada
- 10 = Global Affairs Canada
- 11 = Health Canada
- 12 = Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada
- 13 = Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada
- 14 = Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada
- 15 = Natural Resources Canada
- 16 = Public Health Agency of Canada
- 17 = Public Prosecution Service of Canada
- 18 = Public Safety Canada
- 19 = Public Service Commission of Canada
- 20 = Public Services and Procurement Canada
- 21 = Royal Canadian Mounted Police
- 22 = Shared Services Canada
- 23 = Statistics Canada
- 24 = Transport Canada
- 25 = Veterans Affairs Canada

11. In which region do you currently work?

- 1 = British Columbia
- 2 = Alberta
- 3 = Saskatchewan
- 4 = Manitoba
- 5 = Ontario (except NCR)
- 6 = National Capital Region (NCR)
- 7 = Quebec (except NCR)
- 8 = New Brunswick
- 9 = Nova Scotia
- 10 = Prince Edward Island
- 11 = Newfoundland and Labrador
- 12 = Yukon
- 13 = Northwest Territories
- 14 = Nunavut
- 15 = Outside Canada

12. How long have you been a staffing advisor in your current organization?

- 1 = less than a year
- 2 = 1 to less than 5 years
- 3 = 5 to less than 10 years
- 4 = 10 years or more

13. How long have you been a staffing advisor in the public service prior to joining your current organization?

- 1 = less than a year
 - 2 = 1 to less than 5 years
 - 3 = 5 to less than 10 years
 - 4 = 10 years or more
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Thank you for your valuable input!

Annex B: Questionnaire for Sub-Delegated Persons

Preamble

This audit questionnaire is being administered by the Public Service Commission (PSC) as part of the System-Wide Staffing Audit. The PSC will use your responses to contextualize audit findings and gather information on the implementation of the New Direction in Staffing (NDS). Additionally, this exercise will help to establish baseline information, against which the PSC will be able to gauge future progress and focus its efforts on possible areas for improvement to the public service staffing system.

Please note that the System-Wide Staffing Audit will obtain information on the integrity of staffing at a system-wide level. This will allow the PSC to provide feedback to all organizations and Parliament on the performance of the staffing system as a whole. Should areas for improvement be identified, recommendations will be addressed to the PSC and not to individual organizations

The questions are organized into four main sections:

1. NDS implementation
2. Staffing culture
3. Accountabilities/roles and responsibilities
4. General information

All responses are confidential and results will only be presented in an aggregate format.

To the extent possible, please base your answers on your own experience and involvement in these areas. It will take about 5 to 10 minutes to have your say.

Thank you for your cooperation. If you have questions, please contact us at cfp.vdes-swsa.psc@cfp-psc.gc.ca

Section 1: NDS implementation

The following questions ask about your awareness of the NDS that came into effect on April 1, 2016. The NDS consists of renewed staffing and oversight frameworks for the federal public service with the goal of:

- simplifying staffing, while ensuring that appointments remain merit-based and non-partisan
- providing organizations with greater opportunity or flexibility to customize approaches to staffing for their particular needs, all within the spirit of the Public Service Employment Act.

<p>Attestation</p>	<p>1. Are you aware of the requirement for sub-delegated persons to sign an attestation form (i.e., the one-time signed document confirming their adherence to the deputy head's staffing-related requirements) regarding their staffing accountabilities?</p> <p>1 = yes 2 = no</p> <p>1.1) If yes, on a scale of 1 to 3, indicate your level of understanding of the intent of the attestation form:</p> <p>1 = no understanding 2 = some understanding 3 = full understanding</p>
<p>Direction on choice of appointment process</p>	<p>2. Are you aware of your deputy head's direction on choice of appointment process (i.e., advertised vs. non-advertised)?</p> <p>1 = yes 2 = no</p> <p>2.1) If yes, on a scale of 1 to 3, indicate your level of understanding of your deputy head's direction on choice of appointment process:</p> <p>1 = no understanding 2 = some understanding 3 = full understanding</p>
<p>Articulation of selection decision</p>	<p>3. Are you aware of your deputy head's requirement for sub-delegated persons to articulate, in writing, the selection decision?</p> <p>1 = yes 2 = no</p> <p>3.1) If yes, on a scale of 1 to 3, indicate your level of understanding of your deputy head's requirement for sub-delegated persons to articulate, in writing, the selection decision:</p> <p>1 = no understanding 2 = some understanding 3 = full understanding</p>

Section 2: Staffing culture

The following question seeks to gauge the degree of culture change following the implementation of the NDS.

Change in staffing culture	<p>4. For each of the following items, to what extent has the staffing culture in your organization shifted since April 2016?</p> <p>a) Simplified staffing approach (e.g. reduction of administrative burden)</p> <p>1 = not at all 2 = to some extent 3 = to a great extent 4 = don't know</p> <p>b) More room for sub-delegated persons to apply their judgement when staffing</p> <p>1 = not at all 2 = to some extent 3 = to a great extent 4 = don't know</p> <p>c) Increased focus on outcomes (finding the right person) and less on process</p> <p>1 = not at all 2 = to some extent 3 = to a great extent 4 = don't know</p> <p>d) Greater ability to customize approach in a given staffing situation</p> <p>1 = not at all 2 = to some extent 3 = to a great extent 4 = don't know</p>
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Section 3: Accountabilities and responsibilities

The following questions ask about your awareness of roles and responsibilities in appointment processes.

Awareness of staffing accountability	5. Other than the deputy head, who is accountable for staffing decisions within your organization? 1 = staffing advisor 2 = sub-delegated person 3 = shared accountability between the sub-delegated person and staffing advisor 4 = selection board 5 = unknown 6 = other, please specify: [Open text field]
	6. How would you describe the role of staffing advisors in your organization? Indicate all that apply. 1 = strategic partner 2 = support and advice 3 = administrative support 4 = focus on rules and process 5 = other, please specify: [Open text field]

Section 4: General information

	7. Do you have any other comments or additional feedback related to any of the preceding questions? 1 = yes 2 = no 7.1) If yes, please elaborate:
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8. Where do you currently work?

- 1 = Administrative Tribunals Support Service of Canada
- 2 = Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
- 3 = Canadian Transportation Agency
- 4 = Correctional Service Canada
- 5 = Courts Administration Service
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 - 9 = Nova Scotia
 - 10 = Prince Edward Island
 - 11 = Newfoundland and Labrador
 - 12 = Yukon
 - 13 = Northwest Territories
 - 14 = Nunavut
 - 15 = Outside Canada
-

10. How long have you been a sub-delegated person in staffing in your current organization?

- 1 = less than a year
- 2 = 1 to less than 5 years
- 3 = 5 to less than 10 years
- 4 = 10 years or more

11. How long have you been a sub-delegated person in staffing in the public service prior to joining your current organization?

- 1 = less than a year
- 2 = 1 to less than 5 years
- 3 = 5 to less than 10 years
- 4 = 10 years or more

12. How often, on average, do you manage or assist in managing a staffing activity with the intention of filling a position?

- 1 = less than once a year
 - 2 = 1 to 2 times a year
 - 3 = 3 to 5 times a year
 - 4 = more than 5 times a year
-

Thank you for your valuable input!

