

**Assessing Staffing Structure: Prioritizing Cost Efficiency and Quality Service to Youth at
Dalhousie Youth Support Services**

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ASSESSING STAFFING STRUCTURE:

Prioritizing Cost Efficiency and Quality Service to Youth at
Dalhousie Youth Support Services

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Host organization: Dalhousie Youth Support Services

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Abstract

Wages are an important aspect to daily life. As a necessity, money is needed in order to pay for food and shelter. Proper compensation can determine whether people are able to afford their lifestyles. Low wages are an influential factor which can impact the workplace. A non-profit organization such as Dalhousie Youth Support Services in Peterborough, Ontario, was examined to assess how wages impacted the budget currently and in the future. A staffing model was established for amending the staff wages by conducting an online market research analysis. Staff salaries were aligned with the average current wage in Canada and the Peterborough area to assess if the staff were being paid appropriately. Research conducted found that for staff to be appropriately paid in relation to the average wage currently in the workforce, an 8.3 % wage increase was required for the Administrative Assistant and Educational Youth Counsellor positions. The recommendation of increasing wages was made to the organization along with the impact it will have on the budget by reducing it from 53 % to 50.3 % should they simply amend the wages to the current average wage in Canada. The issue of increased funding may be necessary if additional staff are required in years to come. As such, research into new funding programs and alternative sources may be the next step for Dalhousie Youth Support Services.

Introduction

A vital non-profit organization to the city of Peterborough and the surrounding area is Dalhousie Youth Support Services. They have been working for over 20 years to improve the quality of life for youths 12 to 17 years of age that have been diverted by the courts under the *Youth Criminal Justice Act* (1). Youths receive educational support and are encouraged to build healthier relationships (1). The organizations' support services involve anger management, life skills, assistance with future employment opportunities and problem solving (1). The staff at Dalhousie Youth Support Services are the essential caregivers that provide their services to youths in the Peterborough area. Efficient quality service is important for them to be able to deliver their services. As such job satisfaction is important towards the staffs' ability to deliver quality service.

Numerous factors can influence employee satisfaction in the workplace as has been shown in previous literature (2-4). Precarious employment whereby employees frequently change employment can be influenced by insufficient wage and increased workloads therefore resulting in poor performance and an increased dissatisfaction in the workplace (2-4). Studies have described how precarious workers are more dissatisfied than others because of low wages and contract positions related to limited funding (5). Dissatisfaction in the work environment can lead to serious health consequences when left unresolved such as stress and job burnout (2,6-9). A cascade can follow from increased stress leading to incomplete and decreased quality of work (3,6-7). Monetary gain in the workplace is just as important as accomplishment and achievement as it can be a form of appreciation and recognition towards the employee (3,6). Increased wages can provide job security for individuals in the workforce (3,5). For those non-profit organizations where staff have left or considered leaving it is usually due to the lack of full-time work and low wages (4). Also, due to reduced funding among non-profit organizations and increased costs the employee wages have consequently been low and without increases for many years (4,7-8). Positive support from employers can increase job performance and offset some levels of dissatisfaction such as low wages (9). However, this is not always the case and with reduced funding there is an increase in restructuring (10). Various management models exist to help restructure non-profit organizations such as evidence-based, knowledge, new public management and strategic restructuring (10-13). The combination of resources and report information

provided by experts constitutes how knowledge management systems are organized to implement efficient services (10). A survey conducted in 2016 by non-profit organizations in Canada and Australia concluded that within knowledge management systems the needs of the community are the foremost essential part of non-profit organizations (10). Evidence-based management systems employ techniques that have been proven to work and identifies influential factors that can impact management (10). Alternatively, new public management systems are more restrictive and follow regimented business operations (11,12). Restrictive policies and budgets from this type of management creates instability thereby limiting services and putting the staff and the organizations at a disadvantage (11,12). Though sometimes radical change to conserve funding and resources involves collaborating many similar non-profit organizations into one which is known as strategic restructuring (13). Employees that are dissatisfied and either resign or are unable to perform their duties efficiently can lead to frequent restructuring in the workplace (2,7,13).

Wages are an important factor to living, without fair pay and a living wage that grows with the economy, people do not feel secure in their lives (4,5). Because of low wages people may succumb to the inability to afford living and they may be putting their life on hold such as not being able to afford having a family (4).

The purpose of this research project was to examine the current wages of the staff positions at Dalhousie Youth Support Services in Peterborough, Ontario. The staff wages were compared to the average current wage rate that employees within similar occupations in the Peterborough area and Canada earn. This research questioned the impact the current and prospective wages would have on the organizations budget and it aimed to amend the staffing structure accordingly. This would allow for recommendations of an efficient staffing model to be established for the organization to acknowledge if it were affordable and plausible. Wages can influence job performance, satisfaction, and stability. Employee satisfaction can determine the efficiency and quality of service that an organization delivers. Wage increases would be beneficial to employees who have not had a wage increase in years.

Methodology

Influential factors, such as wages, can impact those employed in non-profit and social service positions. Employee wages are one of the main factors that have influence over a worker to both perform quality work and to retain long term employment. Dalhousie Youth Support Services are concerned that their employees may not be receiving adequate salaries in comparison to other workers in similar job positions at other non-profit organizations. Their concerns arise from precarious employees leaving for better paid positions at other facilities and that the employees have not received a wage increase in approximately eight years or more.

For this reason, a market research analysis was conducted to discover the average wage earnings of employees for the following positions of Executive Director, Executive Assistant, Administrative Assistant and Educational Youth Counsellors. The position of Executive Director, and the three Educational Youth Counsellors are full-time positions based on 40 hours per week. The position of Administrative Assistant is a part-time position based on 25 hours per week. For the position of Executive Assistant, full time and part time wage data was consulted. Various online job websites were used to gather monetary wage data of the given positions during the months of January and February of 2020. Wage data was limited by current job availability and as such only the job position of Educational Youth Counsellor could be found through online job postings. Online job positions for Educational Youth Counsellors were found online through Canada Job Bank, Indeed.com and LinkedIn. The job title of Educational Youth Counsellor was searched under these online job sites by comparing the job description online to the job description provided by Dalhousie Youth Support Services. This ensured that the wages would be as similar as possible when conducting the comparison.

Future positions of Executive Assistant and another Educational Youth Counsellor were also examined. Currently Dalhousie Youth Support Services does not have an Executive Assistant. However, with growing prospective needs in the future for an Executive Assistant that can serve to assist the Executive Director with daily operations and management of staff, this position was examined. Additionally, an Educational Youth Counsellor for a part-time position of 25 hours per week was included along with the current three positions to accommodate for future needs. Once the position was identified the data collected included the province, hourly wage and/or yearly salary. The yearly salary can be found from the hourly wage for the full time and part time positions. This is done by multiplying the hourly wage by 40 hours a week and then multiplied

by 52 weeks per year. Likewise, part time hourly position wages are multiplied by 25 hours per week and then multiplied by 52 weeks per year. The hourly wage data was gathered and inputted into an Excel software spreadsheet. The average hourly wage for Educational Youth Counsellors can be determined across Canada based on the collective average wage and independent wage based in different provinces.

In order to find the wage earnings for the other job positions a market research agency in Peterborough, Ontario was consulted. Ryan Sisson from Trent University's Trent Community Research Centre referred Sean Dooley from Workforce Development Board/ Local Employment Planning Council (WDB) to aid with the market research data.

The Workforce development board required the job title for each position. The research agency uses NOC, National Occupation Classification, codes in accordance with the Government of Canada to identify the job positions that are near identical to the job titles being searched.

General job descriptions of the employee positions at Dalhousie Youth Support Services were examined and compared to the NOC code job descriptions. The following job descriptions according to the National Occupation Classification are detailed below but are not limited to these tasks.

For an Administrative Assistant, NOC code 1241, their daily duties include preparing invoices, reports, correspondence, organizing and distributing mail, scheduling meetings, conducting inventory and ordering supplies (14). They also answer phone calls, file documents, greet and direct visitors entering the facility and collect data for research purposes (14).

An Executive Assistants', NOC code 1222, job duties include reporting and preparing submissions for executives and the board of directors, arranging and preparing meetings, collecting data, research and presentation of data, assisting the Executive Director and performing duties on their behalf (15).

Educational Youth Counsellors, NOC code 4033, are the frontline workers that supervise and educate youths (16). They arrange schedules and learning programs and counsel students on future job preparations (16). They administer educational tasks and provide life and adaptive skills (16).

An Executive director or Senior Manager, NOC code 0014, represents and approves the organizations policies, distributing the finances and resources throughout the business and formulate changes (17). They also hire and organize the staff (17).

Wage data for the Peterborough area was collected by WDB using three sources. First, local online job postings for full-time and part-time positions in the Peterborough region for 2019 represent the vicinity jobs researched. Second, EMSI Analyst software tool is a subscription-based program for the Peterborough area for 2018 that can project and calculate the current and future wage data based on labour market data. Lastly, wage data based on the NOC codes were collected from Canada Job Bank based on surveys provided from the labour force. This information represents the Peterborough area but also the Muskoka, Northumberland, Haliburton and City of Kawartha Lakes regions for January 2020.

The salary data obtained was then compared to the current position earnings. From here the percent increase in wage to comply with the average competitive wage is calculated. This is calculated by dividing the difference between the new and old wage by the old salary and multiplying by 100. The resulting wage market research was culminated into a salary based on the given job positions and then compared to the Dalhousie Youth Support Services annual budget. To protect the confidentiality of the host organizations budget and position salaries, the data is represented as a percentage for this report.

Results

The wage data in Table 1 was collected from the independent online research for the Educational Youth Counsellor position from Canada Job Bank, Indeed.com and LinkedIn. This data indicates the full-time wage percentage in reference to the budget that the Educational Youth Counsellor staff at Dalhousie Youth Support Services are being underpaid across Canada.

Table 1: Percent Wage Underpaid of DYSS Educational Youth Counsellors Across Canada

Province	Percent underpaid
British Columbia	10.5
Ontario	7.01
Manitoba	5.18
Saskatchewan	6.49
Alberta	6.4
Quebec	28.6 *
New Brunswick	23.6 *
Canada	8.32

The data provides, except for the asterisk indicated percentages, the amount of wage that the DYSS Educational Youth Counsellors are being underpaid individually according to current wage data of Educational Youth Counsellors obtained from each province. The percentages noted with an asterisk represent that the Educational Youth Counsellors at DYSS currently earn a higher wage than the wage in those provinces by the amount indicated. However, it is also necessary to mention that the asterisk percentages in Quebec and New Brunswick are based on the data of a single job posting which was offering a very low wage in comparison to the rest of Canada which abnormally skews the results.

The results obtained for the full-time Educational Youth Counsellors from the research conducted online as shown in Table 1, show that in comparison to the given budget, Educational Youth Counsellors at DYSS are being paid an average of 8.32 % below the average wage rate as other Educational Youth Counsellors in Canada. By comparison in Table 2, the Educational Youth Counsellors according to Workforce Development Board show a much higher percentage of being underpaid in wages at an average of 56.64 % within the vicinity of the Peterborough area.

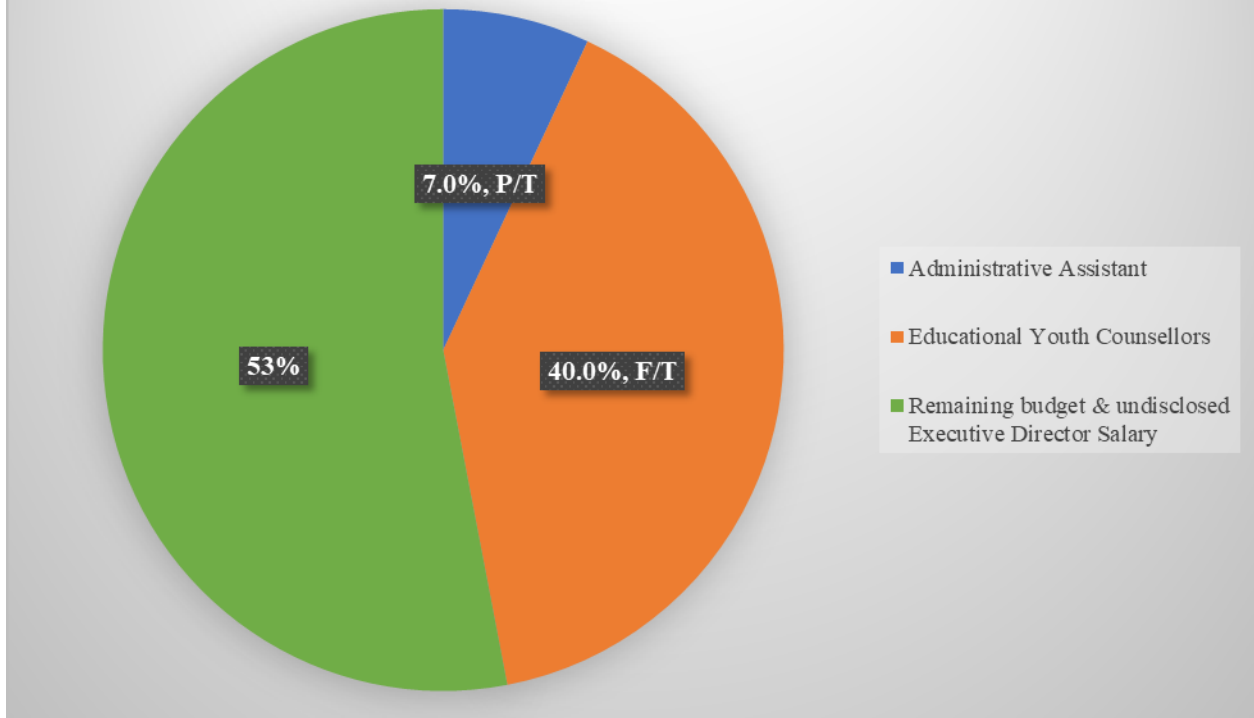
Table 2: Workforce Development Board (WDB) Research of Average Wage of each Full-time Position as Percentage Underpaid Relative to Current Salaries

Staff Position	EMSI Analyst (%)	Vicinity Jobs (%)	Canada Job Bank (%)
Administrative Assistant	17.02	8.31*	17.67
Executive Assistant	N/A	N/A	N/A
Educational Youth Counsellor	55.78	56.64	54.31
Executive Director/Senior Manager	N/A	N/A	N/A

*The asterisk represents that this Administrative Assistant position was based on being a full-time wage position. However, as a part-time position the wage is adjusted and indicates that employees at DYSS are overpaid by 13.15 % in comparison to the vicinity data found by WDB. A representation of the current salaries impact on the budget as a percentage is shown in Figure 1 in a pie graph. This graph illustrates the amount of the budget that is used by the salaries of the staff of the Administrative Assistant and the three Educational Youth Counsellors. It is important to note that the Executive Directors' salary is not included and that the Administrative Assistant position is part-time at 25 hours per week and the Educational Youth Counsellors are full-time at 40 hours per week. The Administrative Assistant uses 7.0 % of the budget while the Educational Youth Counsellors use 40 % of the budget. This leaves 53 % of the budget for expenditures and the Executive Directors' salary. The current division of the DYSS budget in this research was not compared against other institutions and does not stipulate whether this is a representation of other practices.

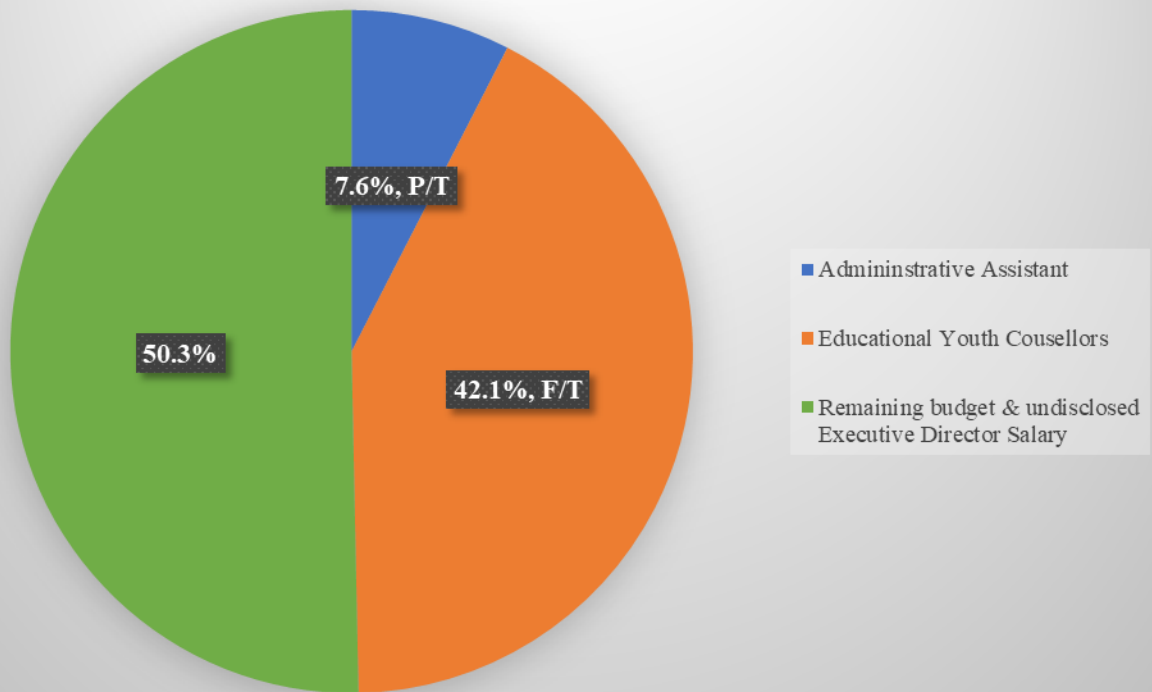
Note: For Figures 1 through 4 the staff positions at DYSS full time and part time positions are indicated on the pie graphs by F/T and P/T, respectively.

Figure 1: Current Division of Budget as Percentage



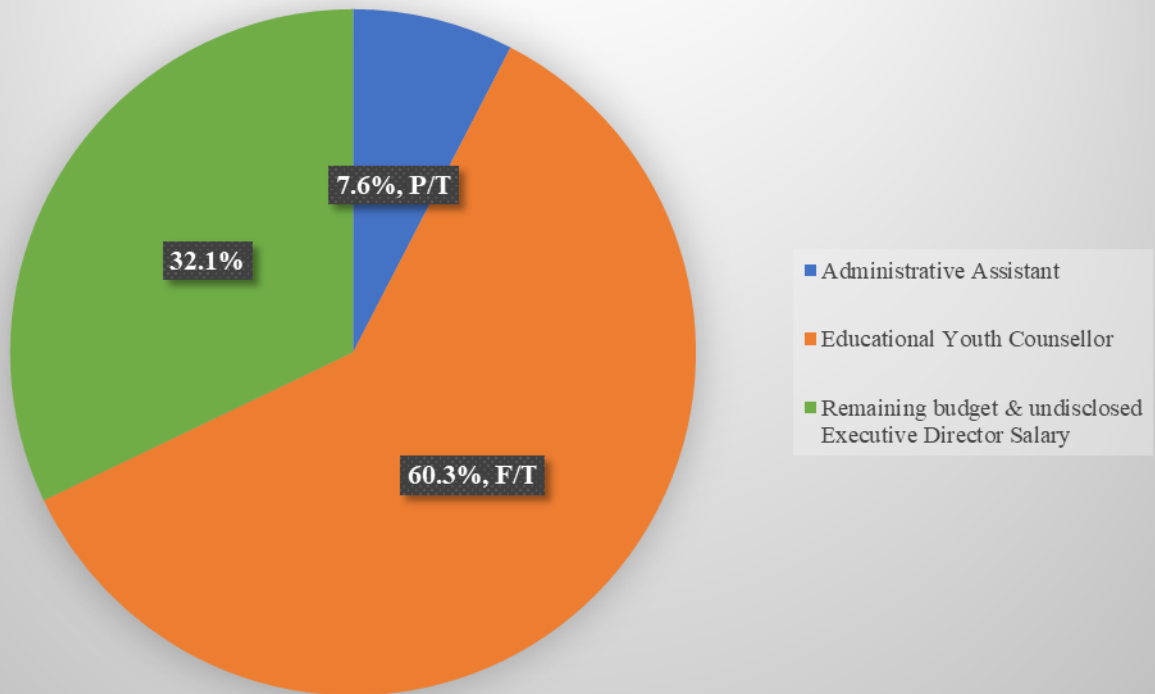
In Figure 2, shown below, the graph represents the staff salaries impact on the budget after the wages have been amended to relate to an 8.3 % increase in wage to the Administrative Assistant and the three Educational Youth Counsellors' positions. The Administrative Assistant remains as a part-time position of 25 hours per week and the Educational Youth Counsellors remain at 40 hours per week. The Administrative Assistant uses 7.6 % of the budget and the Educational Youth Counsellors now use 42.1 % of the budget. The remaining budget is 50.3 % for expenditures and the salary of the Executive Director. The decision to amend the wages of the Educational Youth Counsellor and the Administrative Assistant positions by an 8.3 % was due to the results found in the market research analysis. This provided that Educational Youth Counsellors, according to Table 1, were being underpaid an average of 8.32 % in Canada and that Administrative Assistants, according to Table 2, were underpaid by 8.31% in the vicinity of Peterborough from their 2019 research. The 8.3 % wage increase was a percentage determined from the similarity between the two results found.

Figure 2: Amended Budget Relative to Local Wages



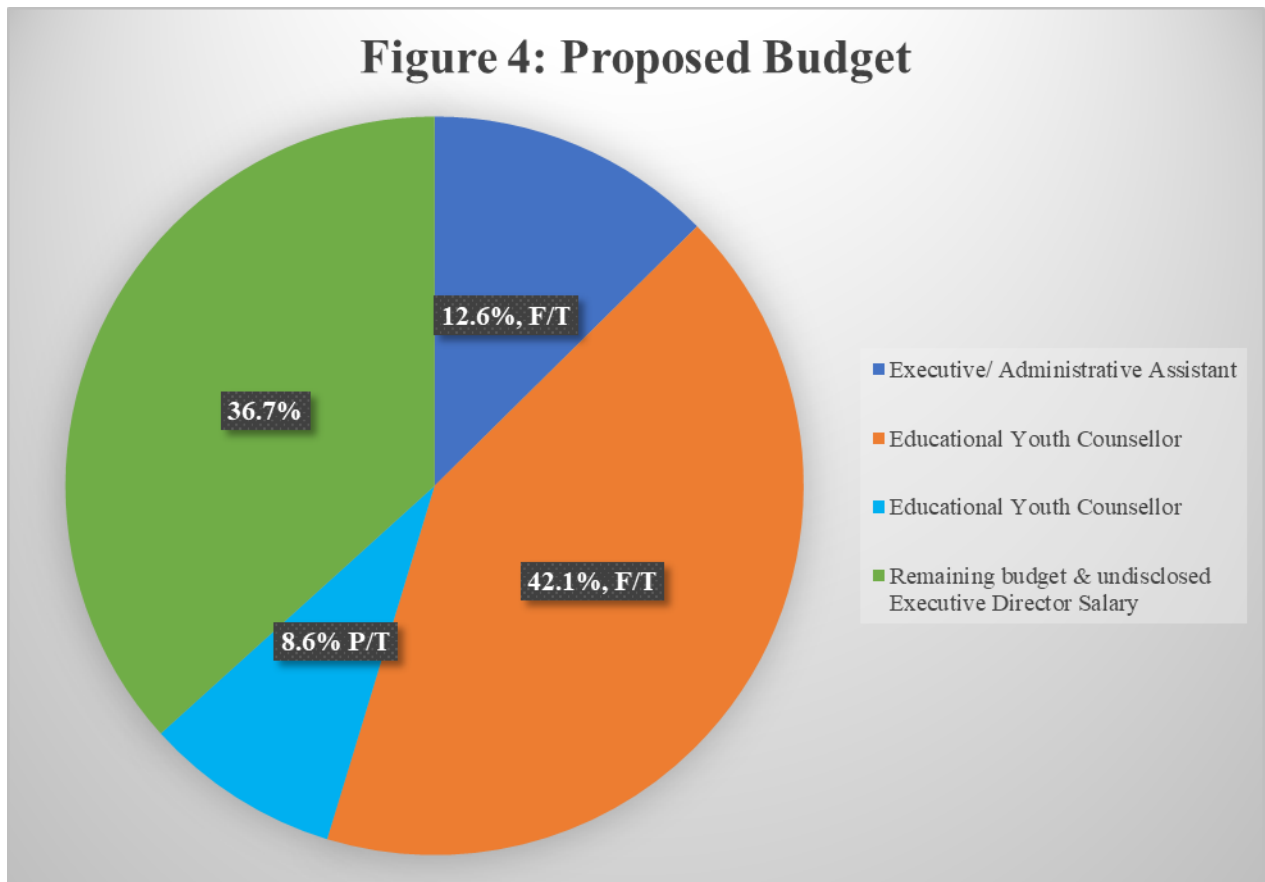
In order to show how the budget would be impacted by the increased vicinity average wage by the Workforce Development Board research agency, the pie graph is shown below in Figure 3. The part-time Administrative Assistant position remains at 7.6 % consumption of the budget. However, the Educational Youth Counsellors at an increased wage relative to WDBs' findings resulted in 60.3 % of the budget being used and only 32.1 % would remain for the expenditures and the Executive Directors' salary.

Figure 3: WDB Amended Budget Relative to Vicinity Wages



The proposed budget has been illustrated in Figure 4. The proposed budget was developed for DYSS's possible future needs. This includes, the amalgamation of the part time Administrative Assistant position into a full time Executive Assistant position because the position does not currently exist and it could be beneficial to the organization, and the addition of a part time Educational Youth Counsellor to help with additional students. The proposed budget indicates that 12.6% of the budget will be allocated to a full time Executive Assistant position. The three full-time Educational Youth Counsellors will use 42.1 % of the budget. While, one part-time Educational Youth Counsellor position of 25 hours per week will consume 8.6 % of the budget and 36.7 % of the budget remains for expenditures and the Executive Directors' salary. It is important to note that this is a future budget proposal and it use the 8.3 % increase. However, if this were to be implemented many years from now the amount of pay would likely change in comparison to this data. This could be due to increases in wages over the next several years that are not predictable at this time.

Figure 4: Proposed Budget



From the research conducted by examining the online job postings there were some variations among provinces. Rarely, there were wages that were much lower and higher than the average wage that seemed to skew the results in some provinces. Regardless of this difference the average wage across all provinces appeared to be very close to one another regarding the hourly wage. The host supervisor had also been interested among these job postings found through the independent online research of what the educational job requirements being advertised for Educational Youth Counsellors were. It was also interesting to note that upon collecting the data all the job listings required that the applicant possess an educational degree relative to the job position of Educational Youth Counsellor. Likewise, the employers requested the applicants have experience of at least two years. The only exception to this was found in New Brunswick where an educational degree and experience was not necessary but that the company was willing to train the right person for the job. There have been instances in the past long ago where a university degree was not as popular of a commodity to have as they are now and many people

through similar organizations had received onsite training. Though today's workforce requires Educational Youth Counsellors to have the expertise, training and educational degree. Within some organizations there have also been other methods of paying employees besides monetary. These payment methods could include other types of compensation or benefits. Additionally, many of the job postings found through the independent online research have posted enticements to encourage applicants to apply including benefits such as medical, dental and gym memberships. It should be noted that all the positions that were researched and found for the independent research online were advertised as full-time positions.

Discussion

The vicinity job listing from Workforce Development Board was chosen as the average to use for comparison for most of the job positions where applicable. The vicinity job listing conducted by Workforce Development Board showed a very large amount of the salary as being underpaid for the DYSS Educational Youth Counsellors' position at 56.64 %. The research that was conducted through the online job postings showed a 7.01 % salary amount that the Educational Youth Counsellors at DYSS are being underpaid in Ontario. Though the average across Canada was found to be 8.32 %. The similarity between the average in Canada of Educational Youth Counsellors and the vicinity wages of Administrative Assistants being underpaid by approximately 8.3 % was the reason this percentage was chosen as the amount to amend the wages.

There was a large discrepancy between the two types of research platforms regarding the average wage for the Educational Youth Counsellors. The independent online research collected from Canada Job bank, Indeed.com and LinkedIn provided promising results that were similar across most of Canada. However, the independent research may have been limited due to the time of year for hiring and the online job postings that were available. Furthermore, there were many job postings that did not include wages or salaries. The job postings that did include wages were collected for the research and appeared to be similar to the Educational Youth Counsellor position but that is difficult to fully ascertain given the method of the research. Therefore, there is the possibility that without direct job comparison it is difficult to know if the Educational Youth Counsellors from one facility are relatable to those at Dalhousie Youth Support Services and this could provide inaccurate data. The research conducted by Workforce Development Board had three different sources of how it collected data. The vicinity job information collected data from online job postings for 2019 in Peterborough. Which may or may not have been impacted by the available job postings at that time. The Canada Job Bank wage data from WDB was for a larger range from Peterborough, the Muskoka/ Kawartha region and Haliburton which was collected from surveys based on the National Occupation Classification Codes. This may have differences since the job descriptions are not entirely representative of what an employee performs in their duties as compared to the NOC codes. Lastly, the EMSI analyst software is a computer program that is projecting what the wage might be for that occupation and could be providing misinformation.

It is speculation that by the example in Figure 3, the graph shows how the budget would be impacted by the significant increases in salaries for the Educational Youth Counsellors. If the budget were amended to the increases from WDB in Figure 3, then the resulting amount of budget remaining would be reduced greatly from 50.3 % to 32.1 %. This is a drastic change and not knowing how this may impact the remaining salary of the Executive Director and the required expenditures to operate the organization it is a suggestion that this amendment may not be feasible. The 8.3 % wage increase was chosen as the amount for the Educational Youth Counsellors as opposed to the vicinity wage increase of 56.64 % because of the impact it may impose on the budget as shown in Figure 3. Also, the Administrative Assistant position indicated by Workforce Development Board suggested an 8.31 % increase to the wage. The approximate 8.3 % similarity between the research found for the Educational Youth Counsellors and the Administrative Assistant was reasonable suggestive evidence to support an 8.3 % wage increase. Figure 2 indicates the amended budget for Dalhousie Youth Support Services if they were to keep the staffing positions as they currently are and increase the employees wages by 8.3 %. However, the proposed amount shown in Figure 4 outlines the possibility for the future which would support additional staff with the addition of a part-time Educational Youth Counsellor and a full-time Executive Assistant position.

The Executive Assistant position could also be separated into two part-time staff composed of one Executive Assistant and one Administrative Assistant. The reason for examining the wages of an Executive Assistant are due to the lack of this position within the organization. Executive assistants possess many of the same duties as Administrative Assistants (14,15). It stands to reason that this position could help alleviate congestion and backlog within an organization and assist the Executive Director with duties. It would also serve the purpose of training another individual the organizations management system if the Executive Director were absent considering the current small size of the staff at Dalhousie Youth Support Services.

There are options for increasing the staff size should Dalhousie Youth Support Services require it in the future. There may be some benefits to utilizing volunteers and university placement students to assist with daily operations and research opportunities. If the organization increases their staff in the future, they will have to consider additional funding to support this. This is where student volunteers could assist with funding strategies and ways to enhance the awareness of the organization. Students could conduct research for the organization and develop ways to

generate funding which would be beneficial. There would have to be a degree of confidentiality established to protect the sensitive nature of the establishment as well as police background checks on any prospective student. Other forms of increasing funding may involve strategic restructuring. A method which is employed at times when there are multiple different organizations delivering the same if not similar services to the community which amalgamate into one organization (13). Organizations that are competing with similar organizations in the same area for funding consider this option when there is reduced funding or are at risk of dissolution (13). The combination and collaboration of non-profit organization's can provide some benefits by working together for a common purpose they can show their commitment to the community. The sharing of staff, resources and funding while continuing to have their satellite service locations where they remain can have beneficial outcomes for the future of the community.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the research it is recommended that Dalhousie Youth Support Services increase their employee's salaries by 8.3 % to remain competitive with the industry and reduce the chances of precarious employment. Competitive wages are important to maintaining staff moral and increasing job satisfaction. Job satisfaction can be increased when the workload is reduced or allocated appropriately in order to reduce job burnout and increased stress in the workplace. The combined position of Administrative Assistant into an Executive Assistant position would be beneficial to the organization by assisting where it is needed. Although the organization could fill the assistant position for a single full-time individual or two part-time individuals. It is their decision of what works best for them. There may have to be decisions made in the future if additional staff are required, this may include hiring Educational Youth Counsellors. The addition of part-time staff and wage increases has been factored into the proposed budget. The hiring of unpaid volunteers and university students could assist Dalhousie Youth Support Services with research and alleviate some of the daily minor operations while gaining informative experience. These minor operations may include answering and conducting phone calls, filing, organizing, assisting Educational Youth Counsellors if needed and making meals for the students. Research into alternative sources of funding along with the comparison of how Dalhousie Youth Support Services budget compares to other institutions may be of future interest to the organization wages and operational expenditures. Wage increases would benefit the current DYSS employees thereby creating satisfaction, resulting in better job performance and increase the quality of service that Dalhousie Youth Support Services delivers to the youths in Peterborough, Ontario.

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