

CCHL Professional Leadership Development

Think Tank: Leadership Development Priorities for 2022

Executive Summary

March 3, 2022

Introduction

Many healthcare organizations have successfully weathered the Omicron onslaught and finally there is breathing room for staff to rest and for development considerations, individually and organizationally, to resume. This potential space exists in the context of the health HR crisis, its surfacing latent impact on people, opportunities to apply lessons learned and to build back better with equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) prioritized, and attempts to “bake” lessons into the culture of organizations.

Following an initial Think Tank with human resources (HR) and organizational development (OD) specialists in December (2021), the Canadian College of Health Leaders (CCHL) hosted an opportunity for CCHL College members to connect with HR/OD professionals to discuss priorities to support and develop healthcare leaders in 2022.

Purpose

The purpose of these events is to:

- Cultivate a collegial community of healthcare leaders and HR/OD/LD professional colleagues across the country
- provide a forum for participants to share experiences and best practices, and
- consolidate perspectives on the most pressing leadership development needs of health leaders in the current context, which will inform our research and program offerings and priorities.

Approach

To enhance the robustness of our findings, we take a **three-pronged** approach:

- A brief **survey** of primer questions completed by participants beforehand
- Notes from the **Think Tank** breakout groups and full group discussions
- Additional points from the CCHL’s ongoing contact with partner organizations and international research.

Participation

Participation in this Think Tank involved:

- 22 survey responses
- 22 Think Tank participants
- 6 small group leaders and CCHL staff.

Results

Who

Which **leaders** would you prioritize for development in the next 6 months?

The top answers were:

1. Mid-level managers
2. Frontline leaders
3. (tie) Executives, senior leaders, and directors

Other mentions: Medical (physician) leaders, dyad leaders, supervisors, and new leaders.

An interesting perspective came from a participant who first stated that managers should be the top priority, but then changed the answer to directors, since directors can influence manager leadership.

Compared to December: directors and executives were first and managers were third.

Focus of development and support

Which **capabilities** or **areas** should be prioritized for leaders in your organization in the next 6 months?

The top responses were:

1. Addressing people's mental health and burnout
2. Core leadership skills and management essentials, particularly for new leaders
3. (tie) Empathetic/compassionate leadership, hope, and recruitment and retention

Other mentions: trauma-informed leadership, leading in the pandemic (given the information and work overload, rapidly changing environment), peer-to-peer support/connections, and leading self/self-awareness.

One participant illustrated the current need: “There is a hunger for leadership development. Many leaders feel like they’re floundering and want better results but need support”. Similarly, it was noted that during the pandemic, many people were promoted rapidly without critical onboarding in terms of leadership fundamentals and requisite preparation to succeed in the organizational culture.

More than one participant noted an aversion to promoting “resilience”, not as a concept, but when it is used at the expense of providing the necessary support.

Compared to December: the first two are the same priorities as identified in the December Think Tank.

How

What **form(s)** of support or development would work best for your leaders? (i.e., activities (e.g., coaching, workshops, mentoring etc.), structure, length, virtual vs. in-person/hybrid)

The top responses were:

1. Peer connections
2. (tie) In-person is best and (separately) virtual/e-learning
3. (tie) Webinars, flexible (on-line OR in-person), coaching, on demand/self-paced, and microbursts.

Nuances: given the changing landscape of leadership development, one person responded, “I do not know [what form would work best]” and another stated that many leaders need a wellness break before resuming training.

Although micro-learning has a role in leadership development, one participant noted that it is not conducive to deep, complex learning. Another suggestion was to think more broadly about leadership development, beyond formal training programs, and considering what people actually need and what would be most effective.

Compared to December: virtual sessions and microbursts were the top two responses, which could reflect the context of the Omicron wave at the time of the Think Tank.

Implications HR/OD/LD professionals might consider the following questions:

1. Which leaders or people in your organization have the **capacity** for development, and who might need a break or **wellness** support?
2. Whether for leadership development purposes or not, what forms of **human connection** would be most beneficial to your people in the coming months? This includes consideration of in-person vs. virtual
3. In terms of development, **whom** would you prioritize? **What** training or support do they need? What **form** might work best with this group and how do you know?
4. Which **gaps** – in terms of **personnel** and **leadership capabilities** – should be prioritized to address in the coming months?
5. How are **equity, diversity, and inclusion** being prioritized in your response to the previous question?
6. How are you ensuring that **lessons learned** and suggestions for **system improvement/optimization** are being solicited, discussed, and actioned?
7. How are you striving to “**bake**” lessons into your organizational culture?
8. To address the points above, what are you able to offer **internally**? In which areas might you need **external support**?
9. Which HR/OD/LD professionals from **other organizations** can you look to for support and sharing best practice?

Next Steps

CCHL has scheduled **Think Tanks** with HR/OD professionals and health leaders from our membership community every three to four months for the remainder of the year. For more information, please consult our website or contact Dr. Jaason Geerts at jgeerts@cchl-ccls.ca.

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