

CMHA Haliburton Kawartha Pine Ridge (HKPR): Maximizing Social Enterprise Opportunities



Problem:

Catering Plus is a social enterprise organization that creates employment opportunities for those with lived experience in the mental health system and/or barriers to employment. Some funding for Catering Plus is provided by the Central East Local Health Integration Network (LHIN), but these resources do not cover all costs (including client wages) associated with the service. The overall program should be self-funded or revenue neutral.

Catering Plus is a social enterprise which is operating in a deficit, therefore, putting employment of the clients (caterers) at risk.

QI Project Aim:

CMHA HKPR aims to provide as many meaningful employment opportunities as possible to caterers (i.e. clients) that are employed by Catering Plus. As such, a team of staff at this organization worked on a QI project that had the following aim: By March 31, 2018, Catering Plus will be operating as a sustainable business. Financial statements and charting will be used to measure a balanced or surplus budget by reducing catering costs from 116% to 90%. Employment opportunities will be maximized in a predictable way.

QI Project Overview:

E-QIP QI coach: Linda Saunders

E-QIP Data Coach: Nicole Adkin

As a social enterprise, Catering Plus is quite distinct among the QI projects that received support from the Excellence Through Quality Improvement Project (E-QIP). With the risk of sustainability to the

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program, E-QIP support was a welcome contribution to help address this issue.

As a preliminary step, the staff of the organization and coaches started by tracking down some key data points – food and labour cost percentage and net sales chart. When those data points were put on a run chart, the large inconsistencies, challenges and opportunities became evident.

A QI team comprised of caterers, the chef, the small business assistant, program manager, and E-QIP coaches met and put the Root Cause Tools to use. They started with a process map that identified 19 pain points that required further analysis. They prioritized these pain points using a “dotmocracy” approach whereby all QI team members voted on what they thought were the most important pain points to focus on that would address the root cause of the issue.

High labour costs were determined as a top pain point that was chosen to explore further based on the voting system. Another important root cause was that some of the caterers struggled to start their shifts independently, resulting in longer shifts and inefficiencies. The group completed a Fishbone diagram, the 5 Whys process and a driver diagram to understand this better.

After discovering a variety of possible reasons for this problem, the team used the driver diagram process to identify the following primary drivers of what the caterers needed to be able to start shifts independently. These included:

- Ensuring caterers have all information that they need regarding their shift
- Having the confidence to start on their own

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- Ensuring all groceries and supplies required for each shift are available to caterers when starting their shift
- The workspace is clean and prepped

Ultimately, the QI team identified many change activities that led to 13 PDSA (Plan-Do-Study-Act) cycles. The focus was on how to lower food and labour costs to operate sustainably, better support and prepare the caterers in their role, and create efficiencies in operation. Change ideas included:

- Price changes to menu
- First cook position put in place, to increase efficiency and provide mentorship
- Scheduling calculator for predictable staff and food costs
- Food labelling and fridge journaling
- Updating “how-to” instruction sheets
- Sourcing different grocery stores, bulk buying and time of grocery shopping

“Most importantly, we can never forget about the people side of change – this takes time and patience.”

For Sandy Woodhouse, the QI project lead, this process was incredibly insightful. As she says:

“I now recognize the importance of taking the time to use the data. What we discovered was that there’s no magic bullet to solve the challenges, but there are things we can do – and the visual diagrams are helpful in identifying challenges and opportunities.”

Lessons Learned:

The QI Team learned other valuable lessons in how to connect tools and concepts related to QI in a meaningful way and found full-day training sessions offered through E-QIP valuable. It was important



but challenging for the QI team lead to find time to meet with others in the project which helped keep everyone involved, complete paperwork, and still have time to do the work of change. Another key learning was the importance to take the time to measure data as a means to see if improvement efforts are working.

Current state and next steps:

The implementation of the labour calculator has resulted in a financial surplus. The ongoing budget analysis that has occurred by utilizing this tool has increased sustainability of employment and increased further employment opportunities. The labour calculator has provided a guideline to schedule the appropriate amount of catering hours required for each catering job, promoting a more efficient scheduling process.

The first cook position has been implemented successfully, mentoring the catering team and providing assistance to the chef and small business assistant.

At Catering Plus, the opportunity to participate in and learn from the E-QIP initiative may truly be the difference between being employed or unemployed for people in their region living with mental health challenges or barriers to employment. This is a powerful example of the life-changing impact that a focus on Quality Improvement can have on people's lives.

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