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## Main points

This chapter reports audits at the Teachers' Superannuation Commission and at Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology.

We report the results of the audit of the Teachers' Superannuation Plan operated by the Teachers' Superannuation Commission (Commission) for the year ended June 30, 2005.

We concluded that the financial statements of the Commission are reliable and it complied with the authorities governing its activities. The Commission had adequate processes to safeguard public resources; except the Commission needs to establish information technology security policies and procedures. The Commission also needs a written and tested disaster recovery plan.

In our 2003 Report – Volume 1, we reported that the Government's pension plans need to improve their governance processes. We continue to recommend the Commission develop strategic plans, define responsibilities and its operational information needs, develop communication plans, and establish policies for code of conduct and governance self assessment.

We also set out the findings of our audit of the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology's (SIAST) human resource processes to build its human capacity for current and future needs. Human resource processes at SIAST vary for different employee groups.

We report that SIAST, at January 31, 2006, had adequate human resource processes to build human capacity except as follows. SIAST needs processes to analyze and communicate workforce gaps and barriers. It also needs processes to evaluate progress towards current and future human capacity needs.

## **Introduction**

In February 2006, the Government restructured the Department of Learning. Effective April 1, 2006, the Department of Advanced Education and Employment became responsible for post-secondary education including the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIASST). The Department of Learning continues to have responsibility for the Teachers' Superannuation Commission (Commission).

At the time of our work, the Department of Learning had overall responsibility for the learning sector. Specific responsibilities of the Department included pre-kindergarten to Grade 12 education, early childhood development, student support programs, training programs, post-secondary education, the public library system, and teachers' pensions and benefits.

In this chapter, we set out the results for the June 30, 2005 audit of the Teachers' Superannuation Plan operated by the Commission. We also set out the results of our audit of SIASST's human resource processes to build capacity for current and future needs as of January 31, 2006.

## **Teachers' Superannuation Commission**

The Commission operates under the authority of *The Teachers Superannuation and Disability Benefits Act*. The Commission consists of seven members appointed by Cabinet. The Commission's primary roles are to:

- ◆ provide lifetime retirement and related benefits to teachers
- ◆ assist the Government of Saskatchewan in its responsibility for ensuring that there is sufficient money in the Teachers' Superannuation Fund (Fund) to pay all allowances and other amounts as they become due and payable out of the Fund

The Commission manages the Teachers' Superannuation Plan (Plan). The Plan is a defined benefit final average pension plan. The Plan consists of the Fund and the Voluntary Contributions Fund.

The Commission's 2004-05 annual report includes the Plan's financial statements for the year ended June 30, 2005. Those financial statements report that the Plan had contributions of \$14.9 million from teachers and \$87.4 million from the Minister of Finance. At June 30, 2005, the Plan held assets of \$1.7 billion and had accrued pension benefits of \$4.75 billion resulting in an unfunded pension liability of over \$3 billion.

## **Audit conclusions and findings**

This section reports the results of our audit of the Commission.

### **In our opinion for the year ended June 30, 2005:**

- ◆ **the financial statements of the Commission are reliable**
- ◆ **the Department complied with authorities governing the Commission's activities relating to financial reporting, safeguarding public resources, revenue raising, spending, borrowing, and investing**
- ◆ **the Department had adequate rules and procedures to safeguard the Commission's public resources except for the matters reported in this chapter**

### ***Governance processes***

In our 2003 Report – Volume 1, we reported that the Government's pension plans need to improve their governance processes. We recommended that the pension plan boards:

- ◆ develop and implement strategic plans
- ◆ define their responsibilities
- ◆ define and communicate their financial and operational information needs
- ◆ develop and implement communication plans
- ◆ establish policies for code of conduct and self-assessment

In September 2004, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts considered this matter and concurred with our recommendations.

As part of our 2005 audit of the Plan, we assessed the Plan's progress towards improving its governance processes. We found that the Commission has not yet developed a strategic plan including the goals and objectives of the Plan, risks the Plan and its members face, and the key strategies to manage those risks.

In 2005, the Commission prepared a document called "an evaluation of future options for administering the Plan." The document identified various administration options and the risks and strategies for managing the risks under each option. The document is a useful first step in developing a strategic plan.

The Act sets out the general responsibilities of the Commission. The Commission needs to set out clearly the specific responsibilities of the Commission including delegation of authority and education plans for commission members and management. Also, the Commission needs to define and communicate its financial and operational reporting needs to oversee the Plan (e.g., its compliance reporting needs, frequency of its review of the Plan's statement of investment objectives). Currently, management provides the Commission with regular financial reports including numbers and types of benefits.

The Commission has not established a code of conduct for its members and developed and implemented a communication plan. However, it has established a code of conduct for management and employees of the Plan. Also, because the Commission has not fully addressed its governance processes, it has not assessed its own effectiveness.

The Plan is significant to the Department of Finance, members of the Plan, and the public. The Plan has an unfunded liability of over \$3 billion, which is the responsibility of the General Revenue Fund (GRF). The Department of Finance, through the GRF, incurs significant costs to provide pensions.

We continue to recommend that the Teachers' Superannuation Commission:

- ◆ develop and implement a strategic plan for the Teachers' Superannuation Commission that includes the Plan's goals and

- objectives, a summary of the key risks faced by the plan and its members, and the key strategies to manage those risks
- ◆ clearly set out the specific responsibilities of the board including clear delegation of authority and an education plan for board members and management
  - ◆ define and communicate the financial and operational information that the board needs to oversee the plans
  - ◆ establish an appropriate code of conduct for board members
  - ◆ develop and implement written communication plans
  - ◆ establish policies for periodic governance self assessment

Management told us that it plans to improve its governance by June 2006.

***Security policies and procedures needed for information technology (IT)***

The Commission needs to establish IT security policies and procedures.

IT security policies and procedures help ensure the confidentiality, privacy, integrity, and availability of information systems and data. Without adequate IT policies, employees may not know the rules to protect the Plan's systems and data. Also, management may not know if it has addressed all the threats and risks to the Plan's security. An IT plan can help management do so.

The Commission needs written policies and procedures for granting or removing access to vital information and programs. It also needs written procedures to monitor who has access to what systems and if that access is appropriate.

The Commission should approve the IT plan and the IT policies and procedures. Then it should communicate the approved IT plan, policies, and procedures to all employees.

1. **We recommend the Teachers' Superannuation Commission approve an information technology plan.**
2. **We recommend the Teachers' Superannuation Commission approve information technology policies and procedures.**

### ***Disaster recovery plan needed***

The Commission needs a written and tested disaster recovery plan.

A disaster recovery plan is important because the Commission's operations depend on the reliability of its information systems. The Commission needs a written and tested disaster recovery plan for all its computer systems to ensure it can operate effectively in case of a disaster.

A disaster recovery plan sets out the procedures needed to ensure the continuity of operations and the availability of data. The plan should cover all significant IT operations based on the importance of each program and service. An agency's disaster recovery plan is an important part of its business continuity plan. A business continuity plan sets out how an agency will recover from an unplanned business interruption.

Management should regularly review and approve the disaster recovery plan. Also, it should regularly test the disaster recovery plan to ensure it works.

- 3. We recommend the Teachers' Superannuation Commission prepare a written disaster recovery plan for its critical information technology systems and regularly test that plan to ensure it works.**

## **SIAST Human Resource Capacity**

Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST) was established as a public educational corporation under *The Institute Act* and is continued under *The Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology Act*.

For the year ending June 30, 2005, SIAST's financial statements report revenues of \$144.9 million, expenses of \$143.6 million, and assets of \$53.0 million. The complete set of financial statements can be found at [www.siastr.sk.ca](http://www.siastr.sk.ca) in the *SIAST 2004-2005 Annual Report*.

## Introduction—human capacity risks

Saskatchewan's workforce is the backbone of its economy. Due to demographic changes, Saskatchewan is at risk of serious workforce shortages. By 2010, large numbers of post-war baby-boomers will retire from the workforce each year. The workforce will continue to shrink for two decades—until 2030.<sup>1</sup>

Replacing these experienced and knowledgeable workers will not be easy. All Canadian provinces and many other countries also face the challenge of a shrinking workforce. Widespread shortages could mean some positions remain vacant for long periods.

As a post-secondary education institution, SIAST helps prepare people for work in areas such as the trades, health sciences, and technology.<sup>2</sup> SIAST's role will become increasingly important over the next two decades. SIAST spends \$144.5 million annually to provide its services (2004-05).

SIAST depends on its employees to achieve its objectives. Effective human resource processes will help SIAST hire and retain the right people at the right time to provide effective services. Forward thinking and innovative employees will help SIAST to prepare for the future.

Our Office audits how major Government agencies manage their human resource risks. This section describes our audit of human resource processes across SIAST.

### ***Human capacity at SIAST***

We audited SIAST's human resource processes for full-time and part-time permanent employees, not casual or contract workers. During 2004-05, SIAST employed 1,975 workers (1,474 full-time equivalents).<sup>3</sup> In addition, SIAST employed about 500 workers on a casual or contract basis. These workers help SIAST meet its short-term needs.

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<sup>1</sup> *Statistics Canada's Daily* for December 16, 2005. Population projections 2005 to 2031.

<sup>2</sup> *SIAST 2004-05 Annual Report*.

<sup>3</sup> *SIAST Human Resources Division 2005 Annual Report*, p.14.



SIAST is a unionized agency. Most positions are within SIAST’s collective agreements (in-scope); about 75 positions (less than 4%) are leadership or management positions (out-of-scope). SIAST identifies three broad groups in its workforce.

1. The **in-scope professional services (support) group** includes administrative assistants, security officers, accountants, information technology experts, etc. These employees meet the public and keep SIAST operational.
2. The **in-scope academic group** includes instructors, their supervisors (program heads), librarians, extension consultants, etc. These employees deliver education—SIAST’s core service.
3. The **out-of-scope (leaders) group** includes division managers, program deans, campus directors, executive assistants, senior administrative staff, vice-presidents, etc. These employees are responsible to monitor risks, communicate mission-critical information, and make decisions to implement the direction chosen by the board.

## **Audit objective, criteria, and conclusion**

The objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy, at January 31, 2006, of SIAST’s human resource processes to build its human capacity for current and future needs.

To carry out our audits, we use audit criteria. For this audit, we based the criteria on private and public sector research, literature, and the reports of other auditors (see selected references). SIAST accepts our criteria as reasonable and attainable.

Our criteria describe the following key human resource processes to build human capacity for current and future needs:

- ◆ plan human resources to support human capacity
- ◆ coordinate human resource strategies across the agency
- ◆ evaluate progress towards the required human capacity

SIAST delivers education and human resource services at four campuses (Prince Albert, Saskatoon, Regina, Moose Jaw). We audited human resource processes across SIAST.

Both specialized human resource staff and other staff provide human resource services. For example, supervisors initiate the hiring process and may encourage qualified people to apply. The Human Resources Division provides advice and tools such as interview guides. These central procedures guide the hiring process to follow SIAST's policies and comply with human rights and other regulations. The Human Resources Division also promotes action toward SIAST's human resources goals (e.g., a representative workforce).

Human resource practices vary across SIAST by location and by employee group. As in other large agencies, many factors influence the way SIAST manages its human resources. These factors include the economy, the amount of its revenues, its collective agreements, the workplace environment, relations with its partners, and the supply of workers. SIAST's has focused its human resource processes on its out-of-scope group and instructors in its academic group.

**We concluded that at January 31, 2006, SIAST had adequate human resource processes to build human capacity except for its processes to:**

- ◆ **analyze and communicate workforce gaps and barriers**
- ◆ **evaluate progress towards current and future human capacity needs**

Throughout our audit, we followed the *Standards for Assurance Engagements* established by The Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants. This report describes what we expected (in italics) and what we found for our three criteria.

## Findings and recommendations—processes to build human capacity

### *Plan human resources to support human capacity*

*To plan human resources for current and future needs, we expected SIAST to:*

- ◆ *identify key competencies to meet current and future demand*
- ◆ *assess the supply of key competencies*
- ◆ *identify gaps in human capacity*
- ◆ *identify barriers to human capacity*

### **Analyzing workforce supply and demand—key competencies**

Key competencies are the knowledge, skills, and behaviours essential to perform jobs that keep an agency operational. Historically, employers depended on professional credentials or education to select employees. Now, employers try to use specific competencies to select employees. Competencies help agencies employ talented people for each position.

SIAST recruits employees based on their professional credentials, education, and work experience. SIAST does not list competencies it considers essential to provide quality services except for its out-of-scope group.

SIAST's current approach to recruiting emphasizes credentials. This approach could lead to hiring employees with technical credentials (e.g., hire experienced RN as campus nurse), but without the specialist skills and knowledge required to do the job (e.g., immunize students, identify communicable disease, counsel distressed students). SIAST has begun to move to a more competency-based approach.

SIAST uses four essential “prerequisites” to help it recruit appropriately. It also uses optional, job-related, “desired qualifications.” SIAST consistently uses the prerequisites to advertise and describe its jobs. Three of the prerequisites are basic employability skills (communication, interpersonal relations, ability to work with persons of all equity groups). SIAST uses the fourth prerequisite (instructional ability) to recruit its instructors. SIAST could strengthen its recruiting process by expanding its

prerequisites and using key competencies to help recruit strong candidates for its current and future needs.

SIAST identified key competencies for out-of-scope leaders in its *Performance Management Reference Guide 2005* (e.g., leadership, results orientation, adaptability, taking initiative). Two thirds of the job descriptions we evaluated contained these key competencies. The Guide's key competencies do not include future-oriented behaviours such as innovation, a SIAST value.<sup>4</sup>

SIAST has not yet identified the key competencies for its in-scope staff. Knowing these key competencies would help it plan. Alternatively, SIAST could plan its workforce by identifying the key positions or occupations that are essential to operate. In 2004, SIAST identified the out-of-scope and academic positions it considers key to its operations. It has not identified key positions or occupations in the support group.

SIAST considered its internal supply of workers by assessing the impact of retirements on two groups. In 2004, using employee ages, SIAST calculated its risk of losing human capacity due to the retirement of its out-of-scope leaders and in-scope academic staff.

SIAST depends on its staff to be aware of the external supply of workers or potential shortages in the local community. It does not track shortages or difficult-to-recruit positions over time to help identify long-term trends. SIAST does not have a system to assess the future external supply of key occupations essential to its own operations. Identifying key positions that are important to its daily operations could assist SIAST to monitor future shortages.

### **Identifying workforce gaps and barriers**

SIAST identifies workforce gaps and barriers in an ad hoc way. It does not monitor vacant positions to assess the type and length of vacancies. SIAST does not use a framework or guide to help all divisions identify and overcome gaps and barriers to workforce capacity.

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<sup>4</sup> SIAST Business Plan 2005-2010 p.1.

SIAST has not done a complete analysis of its workforce to assess whether its current workforce meets its present and future needs. Such an assessment would help SIAST prepare for the future by assessing the gaps in its human capacity across all positions, programs, and locations.

SIAST has a *Human Resources Strategic Plan 2003-08* (Plan). The Plan contains four goals and actions that relate to the priorities of SIAST. It sets out timeframes and costs, and assigns a person or unit to each action. The Plan mentions the risk of "high turnover expected over the next decade due to retirements and competition..." (p.3). It does not describe current or anticipated gaps or barriers to SIAST's human capacity.

Although not noted in the human resources Plan, SIAST identified that increased retirements could create gaps in its future human capacity. It analyzed the ages of its out-of-scope leaders and its in-scope academic group. The age data for the academic group showed that one campus and some programs are at greater risk; it did not identify the positions most affected. Analysis of peak years for retirements by type of position across the agency would help SIAST to manage these risks.

Descriptive, written reports to the board and executive managers from the Human Resources Division mention general obstacles to human capacity. For example, the January 2006 report stated that a competitive labour market caused delays in the recruiting process.

SIAST's Human Resources Council includes its senior human resource staff from all SIAST campuses. The Council meets regularly to discuss current activities and barriers across the whole agency and find solutions. The Council could provide valuable advice about potential gaps and barriers to SIAST's future human capacity.

- 4. We recommend Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology analyze competency gaps for its entire workforce and provide periodic updates to the board.**
  
- 5. We recommend Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology identify barriers to its current and future human capacity and provide the board with a plan to address the significant barriers.**

### **Coordinate human resource strategies across SIAST**

To coordinate human resource strategies across SIAST, we expected SIAST to:

- ◆ *communicate significant gaps and barriers to capacity*
- ◆ *design human resource strategies to address barriers and gaps in all programs*
- ◆ *develop staff to enhance key competencies in all programs*
- ◆ *recruit talented candidates with key competencies in all programs*
- ◆ *retain staff to meet SIAST objectives*

### **Coordinate by communicating gaps, barriers, and strategies**

In November 2004, as part of a succession plan presentation, SIAST told the board its out-of-scope retirement risk could lead to significant gaps in human capacity. SIAST has not given the board or senior managers a complete report of the agency's current or future human resource gaps.

SIAST designs and coordinates its human resource strategies for specific employee groups (i.e., out-of-scope, in-scope academic, and in-scope support). For example, SIAST has two strategies for age-related human capacity issues. For in-scope employees, since 2000, it has used an incentive plan so that a few employees retire earlier, allowing for knowledge-transfer to new employees before many employees retire at once. For out-of-scope employees, SIAST has a Leadership Succession Planning Process. In future, SIAST plans to extend this succession plan to key in-scope positions.

SIAST has more human resource strategies for academic and out-of-scope employees than for its support employees. A coordinated approach that helps to address this potential imbalance is SIAST's online *Guide to Delivering Technology Enhanced Learning*. One of SIAST's priorities is to use technology in the learning environment. To achieve this priority, *The Guide* helps program heads, instructors, librarians, and technicians work together to achieve SIAST's goal. Coordinated, goal-oriented strategies help build required competencies across employee groups.

- 6. We recommend Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology regularly inform staff involved in the**

**recruiting process about trends in workforce gaps across SIAST and effective strategies to overcome barriers to human capacity.**

**Coordinate employee development to enhance competencies**

SIAST provides training and development for its employees. It manages employee development differently for its in-scope and out-of-scope groups. For all its in-scope employees, SIAST has a professional-development day annually at each location. The content of these events may relate to agency priorities (e.g., safety, distance learning). A coordinated agency training plan could further strengthen this approach.

SIAST asks employees to determine their own training needs and makes resources available in response to employee requests. SIAST invites employees to keep an electronic record of their training activities.

The Professional Development Committee considers requests from employees in the support and academic groups for funding to attend training events.<sup>5</sup> The Committee allocates funds based on hours worked (seniority) and prior spending by that employee. The Committee does not focus its funding on training related to key competencies, but supervisors can encourage development of this type.

In addition to these training opportunities, SIAST has a coordinated development plan for instructors in the in-scope academic group. The instructors' development plan includes an orientation, a faculty certificate program (primarily related to adult education techniques), and twice yearly updates on program issues for instructors who are program heads.

Employee development includes performance appraisal, coaching, and mentoring as well as training. An electronic reminder encourages supervisors to coach in-scope employees on their performance during the probationary period. After the probationary period, the collective agreement emphasizes seniority rather than supporting formal evaluation of staff performance; it is silent on coaching or discussion of development

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<sup>5</sup> Professional Development Committee members represent all three employee groups at SIAST—management, the academic group, and the support group.

with a supervisor. Some supervisors informally recognize strengths and encourage employees to develop their skills; others do not.

SIAST's out-of-scope senior leaders discuss their development needs with their supervisor using a personal development plan. SIAST approves resources for out-of-scope employee training on a case-by-case basis. There is no coordinated training plan that all leaders complete (e.g., personal accountability, conflict resolution, coaching or developing others, implementing agency values such as innovation and excellence).

### **Coordinate recruitment of talented candidates**

For the in-scope academic group, SIAST human resources staff and academic program heads worked together to design recruitment strategies for specific program needs. SIAST has not communicated these initiatives to other program areas, or identified other areas of SIAST where they would be appropriate.

In 2001, the nursing faculty set up a Recruit-Retain-Rejuvenate Committee to consider ways to attract talented candidates. With input from human resources staff, the Committee designed two main recruiting strategies that it continues to use. It gives faculty who attend conferences a brochure to promote SIAST. It also promotes a policy of financial support for study-leave. The nursing program budgets for these recruitment strategies.

In 2005, SIAST's human resources staff designed a compensation strategy to recruit instructors for the emergency medical technician program where earnings in the community are higher than SIAST's instructor salary range. Also in 2005, human resources staff worked with the automotive service technology staff to do a workforce planning exercise. Together they designed strategies to recruit from a shrinking pool of candidates where salary was not the issue. SIAST hopes to use this approach again in future.

SIAST's collective agreements influence its recruiting practices for in-scope positions. SIAST posts vacancies internally and considers employees with seniority first. As their seniority builds, employees become eligible for part-time or full-time positions for which they have the basic qualifications. If SIAST hires an external candidate, it is often on a



casual basis, limiting its potential applicants to those who are interested in short-term work. Building seniority takes time—SIAST may miss opportunities to hire talented external candidates.

### **Coordinate employee retention to meet priority objectives**

SIAST uses a range of strategies to retain its employees. Historically, SIAST's agency-wide turnover is 4-5% each year, suggesting its strategies to retain its employees are successful. SIAST monitors employee turnover for the agency but not for key positions within each division or location.

Some of SIAST's policies that help retain employees are set out in its collective agreements. For example, its policies of earned days off and a shorter work-year enable employees to balance work and family roles. SIAST offers training related to technology change to its employees. Beyond the collective agreement, SIAST has a wellness strategy that also helps retain its employees. The strategy includes health promotion, influenza vaccine, and support for smoking cessation or weight loss.

Recognition of good performance also helps to retain employees. SIAST recognizes employees who demonstrate its values. For example, the President's awards recognize excellence and innovation. SIAST also has a long-service recognition program and a special retreat opportunity for instructors who demonstrate excellence.

### ***Evaluate progress toward required human capacity***

*To evaluate progress toward required human capacity, we expected SIAST to:*

- ◆ *collect reliable data on human capacity*
- ◆ *facilitate an overall review of progress by senior managers and the board*
- ◆ *adjust human resource strategies as required in response to its evaluation of progress.*

### **Reliable information to evaluate progress**

SIAST uses a management information system and has procedures to ensure the accuracy of its human resource information. For example,

every week, human resource administrative assistants and managers verify the accuracy of information entered for that week. SIAST has procedures to keep the data secure and protect its integrity.

SIAST's information system is capable of reporting human resource data by location or program area, but it is difficult to access. The system requires a technician to program requests for unique reports. SIAST does not share a central analysis of data with those who need to know the information. SIAST told us it had limited resources to create reports.

In 2005-06, every user decides what information to request, what parameters to use, how often to request it, and whether to communicate it to anyone else. The managers we spoke to did not routinely analyze internal workforce information to help evaluate human capacity. The four human resource managers prepare monthly activity reports for their campuses; they do not develop strategic information about internal trends or progress toward SIAST's human capacity goals.

### **Using information to evaluate progress and adjust strategies**

To gain an overview of progress in meeting human resource goals, the board and executive managers receive a written descriptive report at least twice yearly. These reports describe activities taken toward the four goals of the *Human Resources Strategic Plan 2003-08*.

The *Human Resources Division Annual Report* explains progress using SIAST's twelve performance measures. The Annual Report compares three-year trends for SIAST to industry benchmarks. Statistics for human resource activities are also set out for three years and the report highlights some activities for the year. An electronic *Human Resources Division Annual Report* is centrally available to all staff on the intranet.

To help it take timely action to adjust human resource strategies, SIAST needs some quarterly information about its workforce and its human resource risks. For example, the board could monitor progress more easily if it received quarterly analysis of trends in key measures (e.g., turnover, hard-to-recruit vacancies, representative workforce). This information could help the board respond to risks, particularly if the reports compared progress across SIAST (e.g., by location, employee group, division or program area).

- 7. We recommend Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology’s board work with management to identify the content and frequency of reports necessary to monitor human resource risks and evaluate progress toward its human capacity objectives.**

## **Next steps**

SIASST’s human resource processes are important to its future success. We plan to monitor SIASST’s progress in improving human resource processes to build its human capacity.

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