HALDIMAND COUNTY

Report CAO-02-2022 Continuous Improvement Update

For Consideration by Council in Committee on September 20, 2022

OBJECTIVE:

To provide an update on corporate continuous improvement initiatives for Haldimand County.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. THAT Report CAO-02-2022 Continuous Improvement Update be received.

Prepared by: Jerri Whiting, Project Manager, Continuous Improvement / Executive Assistant to the CAO

Approved: Craig Manley, MCIP, RPP, Chief Administrative Officer

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

In recent years Haldimand County administration has been putting more focus to effect formal and informal continuous improvement in a structured manner. The key reason for doing so is to gain efficiencies and thus better redeploy staff for value added matters and to improve customer service. Staff are currently learning and applying process improvement tools and methodologies to identify where minor process improvements can be achieved, while building out more formal and structured methodologies for tackling larger process improvement projects. The goal of these efforts is to "transform government from antiquated, bureaucratic, and wasteful systems into a customer-driven, creative, sustainable, and data-oriented government; to create a more flexible and agile organization that is able to respond to the diverse needs/demands of customers and stakeholders. In essence to improve services by delivering them "better, faster, and cheaper."" (Municipal World online article: "Create and sustain a lean continuous improvement culture".)

BACKGROUND:

At the November 25, 2019 Council meeting, report FDS-03-2019 Municipal Modernization Fund Expression of Interest was approved resulting in a *Municipal Modernization Program* funding application to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH). The proposal was to hire an independent third-party reviewer for the purpose of developing a formal report, providing specific and actionable recommendations for cost savings and improved efficiencies. Haldimand County's application under the first intake was successful and resulted in a third-party review by Perry Group Consulting of the Information Systems Division organizational structure and 15 business processes that would result in substantive efficiencies if improved. The consultant's key findings and recommendations were presented to Council in report FDS-04-2020 Municipal Modernization Final Report. It was noted that the processes improvements would take some time to implement and as such would be tackled based on impact and resources available.

Using the Perry Group's simplified Business Process Optimization (BPO) methodology and priority criteria, 15 business processes were thoroughly reviewed for improvement opportunities. The 15 business processes selected for review were:

1. Burn Permits
2. Community Guide process (design, print and distribution)
3. Customer Request Management workflow
4. Fire Inspections
5. Invoice Request Form workflow (Misc. Accounts Receivable (AR) Invoicing)
6. Library Fines and Returns
7. Marriage License Issuance
8. New Bulk Water Account
9. Parking Ticket Tracking (issuance to plate denial)
10. Road Damage Deposits
11. Road Occupancy, Entrance, Excavation and Oversized Load Permits
12. Selling a Burial Plot
13. Tax Bill Distribution
14. Taxi License Application/Issuance
15. Water Connections for New Homes/Permit.

As part of the BPO exercise, the consultant undertook a transfer of knowledge to two (2) Haldimand County staff members so that future process reviews and optimizations could be undertaken internally, using existing staff. The final report identified significant opportunity to increase efficiencies and deliver better service by undertaking and implementing process improvements through an on-going and structured review process and by using technology better to achieve process optimizations and enhance customer experiences. One of the key areas of focus required to achieve the identified optimizations was ensuring availability of resourcing.

In response to the consultant's recommendation for resourcing, the Information Services Division was restructured and renamed the Innovation and Technology Services Division (ITS) to ensure additional resources were available to better implement technology and support innovative progress. Secondly, the Corporate and Social Services Department was reorganized to create a new Division focussed on Customer Experience and Communication (CEC).

Additionally, the title/role of "Project Manager, Continuous Improvement" was added to the Executive Assistant to the CAO position to ensure a corporate focus and coordination of continuous improvement initiatives. This role is strategically positioned in the CAO's office to ensure customer, divisional and corporate perspectives are represented when making process related decisions. This position works collaboratively with ITS staff to help implement change that involves technology and will make processes more automated, efficient and accurate.

Of the 15 processes identified in the first *Municipal Modernization Program* intake, the following two processes are currently being addressed through funding under the second intake (details provided below).

1. Tax Bill Distribution
2. Community Guide process (design, print and distribution)

Further comprehensive process reviews require additional resources. In the meantime, additional incremental process changes are taking place across the organization as resources allow.

The purpose of this report is to update Council on continuous improvement activities undertaken to-date.

ANALYSIS:

With the above-noted structures and resources in place, Haldimand County as an organization has started to evolve to meet changing service demands while continuing to be responsible to tax payers. Some of the key objectives and responsibilities of the continuous improvement function are:

- Ensure the County is evolving to meet the changing service needs of the community in a way that is responsible to the tax payers
- Foster a business improvement culture across all operating departments and functional areas
- Provide support and leadership in:
    - o the establishment of key performance indicators (KPI's)
    - o continuous improvement measures
    - o process improvements; and
    - o quality management initiatives
- Increase efficiencies, productivity and improve overall service level performance.

Continuous Improvement Advisory Committee (CIAC)

In an effort to integrate the corporate focus on continuous improvement within the organization, a Continuous Improvement Advisory Committee's (CIAC) has been established with representation from a variety of divisions and functional areas. The CIAC is an informal advisory committee under the advisement of the CAO's office and currently meets on a quarterly basis. The Committee's purpose and responsibilities are:

- Foster a culture of business improvement at Haldimand County
- Be an ambassador for ongoing business improvement initiatives
- Demonstrate leadership in the establishment of performance measurements, continuous improvement measures, process improvements and quality management initiatives
- Support reducing costs and errors, as well as increasing efficiencies, productivity, reliability, in order to drive customer service improvements, positive client experiences, and overall service level performance
- Working within current staffing resources:

    - o Collaborate and provide support to staff within their own Division regarding business improvement opportunities and initiatives (including liaison with ITS staff when required)
    - o Identify, prioritize, implement, monitor, and communicate divisional business improvements over time to the committee
    - o Support cross functional collaboration for business improvement opportunities and initiatives
- Identify when opportunities and initiatives may require additional resources
- Provide input on prioritization of business improvement solutions for departmental and corporate initiatives

Process Improvement Methodology

When process improvement initiatives come forward, principles from Lean, Six Sigma, Business Process Optimization, Project Management and Change Management practices are utilized. Staff have a multitude of tools, templates and resources available to help prioritize projects, define the problem, identify stakeholders, set project objectives, identify the deliverables, quantify the problem, measure and monitor the project performance, analyze and prioritize the root causes, and identify the appropriate method for addressing the project.

Within the above practices there are a variety of process improvement methods available, ranging from simple to advanced depending on the difficulty and complexity of the problem. Regardless of the method used, the goals are always to reduce errors, reduce waste, optimize resources, create faster and more efficient processes, and provide simpler, faster, better, less costly and more value-added services to the customers.

Completed & Ongoing Projects/Initiatives:

Details of completed and ongoing continuous improvement projects or initiatives are provided below.

Project/Initiative	Description	Status
Corporate Continuous Improvement Lead/Involvement		
Online tax billing and community guide distribution (Municipal Modernization Program – Intake 2)	**Role:** Contract management of vendor resource (external project manager) In early 2021 the Province provided funding to implement projects identified under the previous intake. Staff received approval to implement two (2) of the 15 processes as follows: 1. Tax Bill Distribution enhancements (through implementation of Virtual City Hall) 2. Community Guide print and distribution optimization These two processes were selected given their probability of realizing real, hard dollar savings over an extended period of time. In addition, they directly correlate to two of the recommendations outlined by the Perry Group consultants in FDS-04-2020, as follows: 1. Moving to self-service for internal staff and external customers. 2. Transitioning County residents from mailing to emailing or other digital communication channels. As part of the VCH implementation, customers (mainly lawyers dealing with property sales) can request, pay for and receive tax certificates online. While this has a relatively small customer base, the impacts of moving the process online are significant for both the customer and staff.	**In progress** The process change implementations under the second intake of the Program are currently underway. Grant reporting due to MMAH by September 30, 2022 and September 30, 2023. A report detailing the project accomplishments will be presented at a future Council meeting. **Success metrics** (tax certificates only): ✓ 98% of registered accounts have opted into online tax certificates ✓ 24/7 access and instant receipt of certificates, reducing wait times by up to one week ✓ Significant reduction in staff time required for manual fulfilment of requests

Project/Initiative	Description	Status
Council report review optimization	**Role:** Project Manager In partnership with Clerks Division staff, oversight of efforts to optimize software features to streamline report reviews by staff prior to presentation to Council. This process is regularly re-occurring and touches every division, which means that even small improvements have a significant impact on organizational efficiencies. **Benefits achieved**: ✅ Reduced duplication of effort (ie. manual updates of various tracking lists) ✅ Fewer steps, fewer emails, more streamlined ✅ Improved ability for staff to see live report review status ✅ Reduced lead-time by implementing consistent expectations ✅ More consistent processes creates training efficiencies and easier crossover	**Substantially complete** Assessment of additional improvement opportunities ongoing as feedback is received. **Success metrics:** ✅ Reduced number of days required for report approvals by **4 business days** ✅ Increased report deadline compliance by **23%** so far
Staff onboarding, off-boarding	**Role:** Consultation and facilitation Review and coordination of information required by all divisions involved in onboarding and off-boarding staff to efficiently and effectively handle staffing changes. Removing manual requests and reducing duplication by ensuring all information is collected as early in the process as possible. Includes new position approval/creating to staff departures or transfers. Incremental process changes as manageable within current staff work plan and resources in Human Resources and Innovation and Technology Services Divisions, in consultation with all user divisions.	**Ongoing** While much progress has been made, there is still many opportunities for improvement. Continued work is ongoing to develop a more robust orientation program using existing ITS and HR resources. **Success metrics:** ✅ Eliminated requirement for multiple manual notifications

Project/Initiative	Description	Status
Agreement tracking management	**Role:** Project Manager Working with Clerks Division and Legal and Support Services Division staff, review current agreement tracking process(es), identify gaps including all areas of risk. Prioritize and implement process improvements to bridge the gaps, reduce risks and save staff time and hard dollar costs.	**In progress** Expected completion in 2023
Legal Services Requests (LSR) automation	**Role:** Consultation and facilitation Automation of paper request form utilizing staff intranet, including workflow approvals and reporting/tracking abilities. Streamlining request process, file creating and storage area.	**In progress** Roll out to staff pending.
Bulk water account set-up	**Role:** Consultation and facilitation Working with Finance and Customer Experience staff to make minor adjustments to the bulk water account set-up process. A more comprehensive process review is required including all stakeholders, however availability of current staffing resources and impending software changes require this be on hold.	**Complete** (Consideration of future full review)
Leadership Development Program Implementation	**Role:** Initiate and hand off Working with the CAO and HR staff, developing a comprehensive, multi-level Leadership Development Program for the corporation. This has resulted in better use of training resources and tracking of training activities.	**Complete** Training and Development Specialist has taken on the administration of the program.
Website	**Role:** Consultation Working with Customer Experience and Communications and ITS staff to review and recommend opportunities for improvements to the Haldimand County website.	**Ongoing**
Remote work policy	**Role:** Facilitation Working with HR staff, facilitate development of remote working policy, ensuring required inputs from all stakeholders received on time. Development of required draft forms and application process.	**Complete** Policy finalized and rolled out to staff

Project/Initiative	Description	Status
Continuous Improvement Advisory Committee (CIAC)		
Proposed project list	Development and tracking of proposed continuous improvement initiatives	**Ongoing**
Multi-Factor Authentication	Participated in the pilot program providing input to ITS staff on issues/successes.	**Complete**
Software implementation testing	CIAC members to be utilized to help test various software modules as they are implemented and champion changes within their work groups.	**Ongoing**
Corporate Communications Standards	Form working group including CIAC, ITS, CEC and HR to develop corporate communications standards to increase efficiencies.	**On hold** Software upgrade roll-out required
Tech Tips	In partnership with ITS staff, develop and roll out quick tech tips to help all staff be more efficient in their roles. Post quick references and short videos on the staff intranet. Promote "Technology Minutes"—tech talks at the start of all departmental or divisional meetings—to encourage staff to develop efficiency skills.	**On hold** Software upgrade roll-out required
CIAC Terms of Reference	Committee is in the process of developing terms of reference.	**In progress**
Process mapping standards	Committee to develop/recommend corporate process mapping standards.	**On hold** Decision regarding corporate software solution required.
Process mapping software solution	Research and recommend corporate process mapping solution.	**In progress** To be reviewed with IT Working Group.

Project/Initiative	Description	Status
Divisional Initiated Process Improvements		
Building telephone queue enhancements	**Building Division** - Changes implemented to address concerns regarding customer wait times. Improved telephone queue structures and processes to increase live phone responses and issues being resolved at the first point of contact.	**Ongoing** **Success metrics:** ✓ 98% calls receive live answer (increase from 66%) ✓ 100% receive response within 48 hours
Staff hire approval automated workflow	**Human Resources Division** - Streamlining and automation of a previously paper-based process for approval to post and hire for a position. Implemented automated workflow approvals utilizing the staff intranet online forms. This was especially critical during the pandemic when most staff were working remotely. This provides the ability for live tracking of requests and approval status as well as easy reporting.	**Complete** **Success metrics:** ✓ 269 requests received so far in 2022 ✓ Reduction of time required for staff hire approval from up to 5 days to just a few hours
Form improvements	**Human Resources Division** - Conversion of previously paper-based processes related to staff onboarding, off boarding and transfers between positions to automated forms (including automated workflows where possible) accessed on the staff intranet. Provides HR staff with immediate notification of requests/action required and easy reporting abilities. Sampling of forms received YTD: • Staff Change Notifications – 483 • Request for Offer Letter – approx. 200 • Exit Questionnaire – 11 • New Hire Orientation Checklist – 42 • Employee Applications (internal) – 611	**Ongoing** Form improvements ongoing
Certificates of Insurance Submission	**Legal and Support Services** - Conversion of manual submission process to online submission via staff intranet. Requirements outlined and updated as required to eliminate the need for multiple emails.	**In Progress** Online submission live. Communication and general roll-out pending.

Project/Initiative	Description	Status
Subdivision Process	**Engineering Division in partnership with Planning & Development** - Documentation of subdivision process from pre-consultation/pre-servicing to construction and assumption. Creating/updating forms for each step of the process to provide consistency amongst all applications.	**In Progress** Once all forms are in place, implementing electronic plan review and approvals.
Online planning, building and by-law complaint portal	**Building and Municipal Enforcement Services and Planning Divisions** - Implementation of [CityView portal](#) which allows customers to apply for building permits and submit planning applications and by-law enforcement complaints, check the status of applications, pay fees, and request inspections online at any time of day.	**Complete**
Annual Average Daily Traffic Data (AADT)	**Engineering Division** – Creating procedures, updating current process, and scheduling for Annual Traffic Counts.	**In Progress**
Municipal Consent Application	**Engineering Division** – Reviewing the process for the Municipal Consent applications and approvals. Creating standardized application forms. Once all forms are in place, creating an online/automated process for applicants.	**In Progress**

Internal Staff Committee / Work Group Representation

Continuous Improvement staff are involved in the following staff committees to maintain a corporate focus on continuous improvement efforts:

- Continuous Improvement Advisory Committee (CIAC) Lead (as noted above)
- Business Application Software (BAS) Replacement Project – Steering Committee
- IT Working Group
    - Reviews all initiatives that have a technology component.
    - Identifies any overlaps, similarities, and/or existing solutions.
    - Reviews and creates a plan for all IT initiated projects.
    - Provides comments and recommendations for the proposed projects.
- IT Governance Team
    - Responsible for the decision making processes related to technology and IT impacts and how they align with Haldimand County's business strategy.
    - IT Governance's goal is to increase consistency and transparency in the decision making process and prioritize initiatives.
- Work planning/prioritization committee
- Purchasing card steering committee
- Purchasing policy steering committee

Continuous Learning

In addition to the knowledge transfer during the Business Process Optimization (BPO) under the first intake of the *Municipal Modernization Program*, staff have continued to develop their skillset by completing the following related courses:

- Six Sigma Green Belt For Service Organizations (Schulich)
- Yellow Belt Lean Six Sigma (Ontario Municipal Leadership Institute)
- Change Management Practitioner Program (Prosci)
- Certificate in Business Process Improvements (uOttawa)

Networking

Staff explore networking opportunities in the developing municipal continuous improvement environment through a variety of avenues in order to connect with colleagues facing similar challenges. Connecting and sharing information and ideas with other municipal employees from across Ontario and Canada enables group problem-solving around common municipal challenges. Municipalities are looking at and considering innovation in the public sector in order to move ahead and meet future demands.

FINANCIAL/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

Not applicable.

STAKEHOLDER IMPACTS:

Corporate continuous improvement efforts/focus will enhance external customer experience, improve internal customer services, create efficiencies and improve productivity and allow for more value-added services to our customers.

REPORT IMPACTS:

Agreement: No

By-law: No

Budget Amendment: No

Policy: No

REFERENCES:

1. "Create and sustain a lean continuous improvement culture" Municipal World online article
2. FDS-03-2019 Municipal Modernization Fund Expression of Interest
3. FDS-04-2020 Municipal Modernization Final Report

ATTACHMENTS:

None.