

Innovation Report: Continuous Improvement Impacts

Recommendation:

THAT Council receive for information the report titled “Innovation Report: Continuous Improvement Impacts” dated April 7, 2026.

Report Purpose and Summary Statement:

The purpose of this report is to highlight specific examples and stories that demonstrate how the Continuous Improvement Centre of Excellence has supported staff in enhancing internal services and improving service delivery to the community. Over the last year and a half, the work of the Centre of Excellence is yielding impactful qualitative and quantitative results by fostering a culture of collaboration and continuous improvement.

Previous Council Action:

Council received an update on the work related to continuous improvement on September 16, 2025.

Financial Impact:

The work of the Continuous Improvement Centre of Excellence provides both direct and indirect financial impacts, through cost savings by removing process waste, and by improving the ability of the City to gain revenue from higher throughput of work in areas of fee for service operations. To date \$342,761 in potential savings have been quantified.

Strategic Alignment:

Governance & Corporate Excellence

Communications:

Communication related to this work is outlined in the community dashboard for Council’s Strategic Plan and through internal communications. Additional public communication is in development to highlight the value of continuous improvement in terms of savings to taxpayers and benefits for services delivered to residents.

Applicable Legislation/ Bylaw/Policy:

Several areas of work of the Centre of Excellence have led to improvements and revisions to City policies and bylaws to improve efficiency of service delivery and reduce cost.

To: Mayor and Council

Innovation Report: Continuous Improvement Impacts

BACKGROUND:

The City's Continuous Improvement Centre of Excellence was established in June 2024, and Council has received regular update on progress implementing the centre as part of a developing a culture of continuous improvement at the City. Most recently, Council received an update on September 16, 2025, that provided some preliminary data on the number of staff trained in process improvement and the number of major projects (LIFT projects) delivered by the Centre of Excellence with the departments responsible. In addition, Council learned that self-service tools are now in place enabling on the ground innovations to happen each day by staff who use initiative to identify, diagnose and address bottlenecks and inefficiencies in their work and make direct improvements.

In September 2025, Council was advised that the City has moved from setting the foundation, to growing momentum and has now completed the growth phase in establishing the Centre of Excellence. In 2026, the focus is on ongoing transformation of the culture of staff towards an innovation mindset anchored in empowerment for continuous improvement in all areas of the City's business.

In August 2024, The City began the Development Services Optimization (DSO) project. This project is essential for modernizing Maple Ridge's development processes and aligning them with the City's strategic goals. The DSO project is being managed as a stand-alone initiative at present and is another example of work underway to support a culture of continuous improvement at the City. The DSO project is strongly aligned with the delivery of projects under the Centre of Excellence. The two streams of work are mutually reinforcing and complementary.

The DSO project has specific metrics measuring the impacts of these continuous improvements including reductions of processing times for building permit applications (up to an 80% reduction to date in the number of weeks to process a single detached dwelling building permit through the online portal). These metrics are demonstrating real impacts from innovation at the city. Council has received separate briefings on work underway in the DSO project.

ANALYSIS:

Discussion:

The Centre of Excellence serves as the bridge between ideas and execution of real innovation outcomes. Staff are building a culture of continuous improvement and systematizing innovation through a robust process. The Centre of Excellence will provide Council with a semi-annual

Innovation Report summarizing the great work done across City departments to identify efficiencies, enhance services and reduce costs for residents.

The Centre of Excellence has become a go-to resource for staff who want to improve their work. The Centre helps staff see their work through a continuous-improvement lens, supports them to implement innovative ideas, and helps quantify the impact of those improvements. This ensures that improvements are sustained over the long term and continue to deliver benefits.

Feedback from staff highlights that the Centre is a valuable resource in turning ideas into action. Anyone can propose an idea, and it is the structured execution of innovative ideas that truly drives change. Staff have moved beyond learning tools and techniques, to applying these in their day-to-day work to make a real difference. The Centre of Excellence helps them to quantify this difference and guides them to track performance in new ways to capture the improvements to services for residents in time saved, errors reduced, outcomes improved.

Maximizing Community Outcomes

The impacts of the changes implemented through the Centre of Excellence and the related Development Services Optimization project are felt by residents in several real ways, such as:

- **Reduction in tax revenue required to fund services** due to \$342,671 in estimated City cost savings since June 2024
- **Reduction in time to receive services** (e.g., building permit time reduction by 84%, joint building and fire inspections reduced by 4 days – both increasing time to construction)
- **Reducing time to construction** by using non-city resources for detailed technical reviews - reducing building officials' time needed for plan reviews through sign-off by professionals in the Certified Professional Program
- **Improvement of flexibility and capacity of staff** to respond to requests (i.e., as staff time is more efficiently used in managing permitting processes, staff have more time and are empowered to solve problems in other areas)
- **Reducing downtime and compliance costs for business owners to renew licenses through 'nudging' campaigns** that reduce the need for enforcement of business licensing regulations
- **Reallocation of staff time to critical service delivery** by reducing in staff time/cost to produce provincially mandated reports (e.g., systematizing data collection for Provincial Housing Target Reports – removing manual processes)
- **Reduction in greenhouse gas emissions** and resource usage for City services (e.g., fleet efficiencies through analytics, and reduction in paper consumption for recruiting and HR processes)

These tangible gains are the result of dedicated work by staff to implement continuous improvement tools and techniques that have been learned in training delivered by the Centre of Excellence and through dedicated support from the Development Services Optimization (DSO) project.

Quantifying Innovation Impacts

In all the work carried out within the Centre of Excellence, a calculation is undertaken called the **MEATY** framework to estimate savings and real impacts of the improvements. The MEATY analysis framework—**M**oney, **E**rror, **A**mount, **T**ime, and **Y**early Cost—is used to assess key aspects of operational performance and quantify the potential benefits from improvements.

How MEATY works:

- **Money:** How much is spent on staff (staff hourly rate) and resources (supplies used).
- **Error Rate:** The percentage of mistakes made during the process.
- **Amount:** How many times is the work done or the task performed.
- **Time:** How much time does it take to complete the specific process or task.
- **Yearly Cost:** The total cost of operations, calculated by multiplying Money, Amount, and Time, to identify potential savings and areas for improvement.

The framework quantifies improvements across various city services, including public works (e.g., fleet utilization), administrative services (e.g., processing permit applications), and community programs (e.g., event coordination and facility booking). A calculation is done prior to any improvement being implemented, and then after the improvement to determine the new yearly cost. When one or more of the factors are reduced through continuous improvement, this results in a direct saving to the City in terms of the yearly cost, and this in-turn translates to savings in efficiency, effectiveness and cost to residents as well. A copy of the MEATY guide for staff is included in Attachment 2 as an example of the resources available at the Agile Centre of Excellence Hub.

Savings identified through process improvement and other innovations can be one time or represent an ongoing benefit. Where ongoing savings can be identified, the potential impacts are even greater over time and represent a cumulative benefit for taxpayers by removing waste and reducing the budget required to deliver ongoing services in key areas.

Direct savings refer to the actual removal of costs from a process. These occur when, due to improvements, the City no longer needs to pay for a resource, step, or activity that was previously required. *For example:* During the Facility Booking Process Review in Recreation Services, the recommended process improvements enabled the team to eliminate the need for an auxiliary staff position, resulting in approximately \$24,000 in direct annual savings.

Indirect savings refer to efficiency gains such as reduced cycle time, reduced rework, and fewer handoffs. These improvements often lead to throughput gains, meaning more output can be achieved with the same level of resources. *For example:* In the Animal Control Process Review, the creation of clear workflows now prevents staff from spending unnecessary time seeking supervisory clarification. This not only reduces wasted time but also improves response times for field requests - an essential benefit in urgent and time-sensitive situations where every second matters.

In September 2025, Council received a presentation outlining \$177,000 in approximate MEATY savings to date. As of March 2026, a further \$165,761 in MEATY savings have been identified through the work of the Centre of Excellence resulting in a total estimated saving of \$342,761 to date. **This is a return of approximately \$3.60 for each dollar invested in the Centre of Excellence.** The breakdown for these more recent quantified continuous improvements is included in Table 1.

Table 1. Expected Savings from Quantified Continuous Improvements to Date

| Service Area | Expected Savings |
|--|------------------|
| <i>Savings reported in September 2025</i> | <i>\$177,000</i> |
| Additional Savings: | |
| - Fleet telematics | \$100,000 |
| - Vehicle sharing program | \$10,000 |
| - Facility booking improvements | \$25,000 |
| - In house delivery of training | \$26,000 |
| - Reduction in printing costs per recruitment | \$5,761 |
| <i>Subtotal</i> | <i>\$165,761</i> |
| Total estimated savings to date (MEATY) | \$342,761 |

Attachment 1 outlines detailed examples of these savings. A brief summary of the service areas examined, the improvements underway and the expected innovation impacts are also provided in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary of Service Impacts through Continuous Improvement

| Service Area | Improvements Underway | Expected Innovation Impacts |
|---|--|--|
| Fleet management process review | Implementing telematics that use data analysis to track utilization of vehicles, fuel consumption, and maintenance and damage costs | \$100,000 in manual process efforts can be saved through automated vehicle telematics improvements |
| Use of pool vehicles for engineering inspectors | Created a process and tracking system to support use of pool city vehicles by Engineering inspectors was the first phase of this project. This improvement is now leading to a phase II project to establish a city-wide Shared Vehicle Pool Program | Improved efficiency by reducing time needed by engineering inspectors to find and use a City vehicle, thereby maximizing use of City vehicles. The next phase will move on to mapping locations of vehicles and centralizing key collection and vehicle bookings, which will reduce the number of stalls used in city parking lots thereby freeing up spaces for residents and visitors |

| Service Area | Improvements Underway | Expected Innovation Impacts |
|------------------------------------|--|---|
| Tracking non-conforming properties | Planning and Bylaws teams collaborated to establish a clear workflow to manage properties not permitted under bylaws | Reduced safety risk and compliance costs associated with non-permitted properties, increased compliance rates, and clearly documented roles and responsibilities across departments. |
| Animal control process mapping | The City took on animal control responsibilities in 2025 and required a clear process map for animal-related case management and best practice guides for staff | Improved response times for urgent public calls such as dog bites, injured animals and animals at large Documented roles and responsibilities and negotiated approaches with SPCA to improve service delivery |
| HR recruitment processes | Review of recruitment process to remove unnecessary steps that lead to printed copies of documentation | Estimated savings of \$5761 in printing costs representing a 40% reduction in paper used in the recruitment process Savings related to purchase of paper, printer costs, and staff time to print and share paper copies is being estimated |
| Facility Booking process | Improve the pipeline and process for facility bookings online | Process savings remove the need for use of auxiliary staff time to process facility bookings saving \$24,000 annually |
| Staff Training | Deliver Centre of Excellence training in house rather than through third party contractors | Saved \$26,000 in costs for training delivery. Improved the training experience through in-person sessions that build capacity more effectively. |
| | 550+ staff received WISE process improvement training 18 staff received level 1 project management training 16 staff received level 1 change management training | Staff are now implementing training tools and techniques to undertake independent improvements Example 1: A Development Services Technician (DST) was trained in change management. They now support fellow DSTs in embracing the changes associated with the digitization of the permitting process. They were also better equipped to ask informed, constructive questions to the project team. Example 2: a member of the Animal Control team took process improvement training that enabled them to train other staff and new hires faster and more effectively in their processes. |

Some continuous improvements are more easily quantified than others, but in all cases the impacts are tracked and reported. In many cases the savings are not one-time reductions but represent ongoing savings on an annual basis (e.g., removal of \$24,000 annual average cost for manual facility bookings by an auxiliary employee)

Planned Activities and Training

The WISE training program will continue to train additional staff cohorts in process improvement, project management, and change management. In 2026, the Centre of Excellence will launch new in-house courses, including Project Management Level 2, Change Management Level 2, and Lean Management at both beginner and intermediate levels. Lean is a globally recognized methodology focused on eliminating waste and improving process efficiency that complements the WISE methodologies implemented to date.

The pipeline for LIFT programs is robust with several complex process and program reviews planned or in progress in 2026; examples include:

- **Childcare Licensing Process Review** - This project focuses on improving the experience for individuals seeking to open childcare facilities. Currently, there are three to four different entry points across the City for childcare-related inquiries. This is not as effective as it could be and opens opportunities to improve the customer experience and increase efficiency of the processes for staff. To address this, the Centre of Excellence is developing a clear, streamlined process with well-defined roles and responsibilities to ensure accurate, consistent, and timely support for clients.
- **One City Experience Program** – The One City Experience Program is the City’s new customer experience (CX) initiative, designed to strengthen how we serve both the public and internal teams. This program brings together several key initiatives including Voice of the Customer (VoC), CX Standards and Guidelines, CX Training Frameworks, and Customer Journey Mapping under one umbrella. Given the breadth of this work, there is a need for an overarching program evaluation framework in development through the Centre of Excellence. This framework will define specific metrics and tracking tools for measuring the effectiveness of the program and will further illuminate the ways in which customer insights can drive continuous improvement in service delivery for residents. These insights will build public trust and confidence in the program.
- **Certified Professional (CP) Program** – the Centre of Excellence will support development of an evaluation framework for the CP program to quantify the time savings and other quality improvements made by integrating certified professionals into the development services process in a new way. This will enable program evolution over time based on data collected on the impacts the program has for the City (resource utilization) and the development community (cost, time to market).

What began as a pilot project has become a One City way of working across departments and services. Many teams have proactively reached out to the Centre of Excellence with 2026 workplans seeking support for multiple process improvement initiatives. While capacity constraints mean projects will be prioritized, it demonstrates the value staff see from continuous improvement and how they are empowered to identify opportunities to enhance services for residents.

Strategic Alignment:

Governance and Corporate Excellence is fostered through the impactful projects delivered through the Continuous Improvement Centre of Excellence.

CONCLUSION:

The diverse impacts generated through the continuous improvement work happening across the City have reduced risks (lower error rates, fewer failure points, improved compliance), improved throughput (greater output with the same resources), increased efficiency (reduced cycle times, less rework, fewer handoffs), enhanced quality (fewer defects, improved accuracy), and delivered real benefits to the community (higher satisfaction, faster response times).

The Centre of Excellence will continue to focus on systematically delivering improvements that deliver quantifiable benefits for residents.

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Attachments:

- (A) Attachment 1 – Impact Summary - Continuous Improvement Centre of Excellence
- (B) Attachment 2 – MEATY Analysis Guide

Report Approval Details

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| Document Title: | Innovation Report - Continuous Improvement Impacts .docx |
| Attachments: | - Attachment 1 - Impact Summary - Continuous Improvement Centre of Excellence.pdf - Attachment 2 - MEATY Analysis - Guide.pdf |
| Final Approval Date: | Mar 30, 2026 |

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

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