

 CITY OF VICTORIA		LESSONS LEARNED POLICY	
CHAPTER:	Corporate Administration		
SECTION:	City Manager's Office		
SUBJECT:	Lessons Learned Policy		
AUTHORIZED BY:	City Manager		
EFFECTIVE DATE:	January 1, 2017	REVISION DATE:	January 1, 2019
REVIEW FREQUENCY:	Two Years		

A. PURPOSE

Every year the City of Victoria initiates a wide range and significant number of major capital, planning and other projects to meet the needs of the community. In all of these endeavours, the City is guided by fundamental principles, including:

- accountability to taxpayers and residents for the use of public dollars
- transparency in decision-making and the reporting of information

In all of its work the City is committed, as well, to fostering an organizational culture in which learning and continuous improvement are valued. In this environment, staff are encouraged to reflect on, review and learn from the organization's efforts. Reflection, review and learning, it is recognized, are essential to innovation, and speak directly to a key pillar of the organization's culture, namely that "better is possible in everything we do".

As a matter of course, staff are required to identify "lessons learned" on all major projects undertaken by the organization, and are expected to incorporate into every new project lessons learned from previous experiences.¹ The City's project management framework prompts staff to address lessons learned at the opening project brief stage, and at the post-project evaluation stage. Lessons learned from every project are reported and made available to managers, project managers and staff across the organization.

Every major project represents a learning opportunity for the City, as well as an opportunity to apply past lessons learned. Certain projects, however, are particularly important for the City to assess and learn from. In some cases, these projects will be defined by size of budget; in other cases, by their unique history, their area of service, or the level of community interest they generate. These services, however they are ultimately identified, are to be assessed separately, outside of the project management framework, under the terms of this *Lessons Learned Policy*.

B. APPLICATION

The *Lessons Learned Policy* applies to major projects identified for special review by City Council and/or the City Manager. It is expected that projects identified under the *Policy* will be limited in number. Suggested criteria to assist decision-makers in selecting the projects are as follows:

¹ Major projects are projects that are large in scale, citizen (outward) facing, and identified in Council's *Strategic Plan*. They include major capital projects, transportation improvements, park and public space enhancements, neighbourhood planning initiatives, economic development initiatives, and policy and bylaw development projects.

- *Significant Budget Value* — Major capital projects with budgeted values in excess of \$50 million may warrant review under the *Lessons Learned Policy*. Indeed, consideration should be given to conducting two Lessons Learned Reviews for each project of this type, including an Interim Review at the project's half-way point, and a Final Review at project completion.
- *Master Plans and Strategies* — Service master plans and strategies set long-term goals and direct the expenditure of City resources for several years in important areas of service, often across much of the community. There may be value in assessing these initiatives to help improve future endeavours.
- *High Community Interest* — By their very nature, certain projects will generate a high level of community interest, irrespective of budget size or any other factor. Lessons learned on these types of projects may be of particular value to the organization in future years.

For clarity, the *Lessons Learned Policy* only applies to projects that are specifically identified for review under the *Policy* by City Council and/or the City Manager. Projects not identified for special reviewed under this *Policy* are automatically assessed for lessons learned through the project management framework. The *Lessons Learned Policy* also does not apply to "business as usual", ongoing service delivery activities undertaken by staff. Such activities are more appropriately assessed through service and organizational reviews.

C. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The following points assign important roles and responsibilities under the *Lessons Learned Policy* to key participants:

- *City Council* — Council may direct the City Manager to undertake a Lessons Learned Review, pursuant to this *Policy*, on any City initiative that, in Council's view, warrants a review. Council will receive a public report on every Lessons Learned Review that is conducted by the organization.
- *City Manager* — The City Manager is responsible for administering the *Policy* and implementing it across the organization. The City Manager approves all Lessons Learned Reviews that are conducted, as well as all recommendations made, for submission to Council. The City Manager may direct staff to undertake a Lessons Learned Review, pursuant to this *Policy*, on any City initiative that, in the City Manager's view, warrants a review.

The City Manager is responsible for assembling a Review Team to conduct each of the Lessons Learned Reviews initiated. Every Review Team should include the Director / Head of the department that led the project, the Project Manager, and at least one staff member from outside of the department. At the City Manager's discretion, an outside resource may be appointed to a Team.

- *Review Team Lead* — The Review Team Lead is the Director / Head assigned to the Review Team. The Lead is responsible for submitting the Review to the City Manager within the allotted time, and for presenting the results of the Review to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), and to Council.
- *Review Team* — The members of the Review Team are expected to participate in all team discussions, and share the work required of the team to complete the Review.

The Team as a whole participates in the presentation of the report to Council and the SLT.

D. LESSONS LEARNED REVIEW

Each Review Team may choose its preferred approach to conducting a Lessons Learned Review. The report produced for the Review, however, must conform to a standard format, as follows:

Project Title

The title of the project being reviewed, as identified in Council's *Strategic Plan*.

Project Summary

A summary of the project being reviewed, including the following points:

- description of the project
- purpose and objectives of the project
- connection to Council's *Strategic Plan* and, where applicable, Council policy or resolution
- project budget
- process and timeline followed
- outcomes of the project
- level of community engagement in the project
- project team that undertook the project, including outside consultants

Review of Project

An examination of the following elements:

- *Objectives of Project* — Were the purpose and objectives of the project clear to staff? Were stakeholders (including staff) clear on the project's relationship to Council's strategic initiatives?
- *Process Followed* — Were all stakeholders clear on the process that was designed to conduct the project? Were opportunities to streamline the process (e.g., by scheduling separate tasks concurrently where possible) pursued? Were timelines for all stages reasonable? How did lessons from past Lessons Learned Reviews inform the development of the process for this project?
- *Budget* — Overall, was the project completed within budget? Were certain phases or elements of the project significantly over or under budget? Was there a need to request additional funds from Council? Which other City initiatives were impacted by budget overruns on this project?
- *Risk* — What potential risks to the City and/or taxpayers were anticipated at the outset of the project? What measures were put in place to minimize the City's exposure to risk? How effective were these measures? Over the course of the project, were all of the City's policies designed to govern the expenditure of funds, procurement of services and supplies, use of contracts and management of risk, followed properly? Over the course of the project, did problems arise that were not anticipated? What steps were taken to mitigate any negative impacts? Could these problems have been identified earlier or pre-empted altogether?

- *Timeline* — Were all phases of the project completed on time? Where delays occurred, what were the causes? How could the delays have been prevented or minimized? What factors were beyond the City's control?
- *Project Management* — Were roles and responsibilities of the project manager, project staff and consultants clear? Were clear lines of reporting in place? Was the project set up, managed and monitored in accordance with the City's project management framework? Was the SLT kept informed of progress and, in particular, problems encountered, such as delays? Was Council informed, as appropriate, on progress and/or issues?
- *Community Engagement* — Was an engagement strategy developed for the project? Did the strategy follow Council's policy on community engagement, as developed through the Public Engagement Roadmap? Were all major stakeholder concerns anticipated, and were efforts made to address the concerns early? How effective were these efforts? Did other concerns arise to threaten or delay the project?
- *Other* — What other factors emerged as important over the course of the project?

Lessons Learned

A listing of the lessons learned, based on the examination of the key elements. The following questions should be addressed:

- What was particularly good about the way in which the project was undertaken? How can the City replicate these benefits in other projects?
- What were the most significant issues encountered over the course of the project? What measures can be taken to avoid these issues in future projects?
- If the City were starting the initiative today, what should the City do differently, based on what is now known?
- Based on the experienced gained, are there opportunities for innovation, efficiency or savings that could be pursued in the design and/implementation of other projects?
- What is the single most important lesson learned that should be used to inform future projects?

Signatures

Once complete, the Review is to be signed by the Review Team Lead and each member of the Review Team. The City Manager must approve the Review and its findings.

E. REPORTING OF REVIEW

Each Review is to be presented first to the SLT for comment, then to City Council for consideration. The Project Manager, supported by the full Review Team, is expected to make the presentations. The presentation to Council is to be accompanied by a Council Report that introduces the Lessons Learned Review, and that summarizes the lessons learned.

Reviews that are undertaken pursuant to the *Policy* are public documents, intended to account for the use of public dollars, and to share useful advice and findings — i.e., lessons learned — that can help inform the design and implementation of future City initiatives.

F. TIMING

Each Lessons Learned Review should be completed and reported to SLT and Council within three months of the close of the project, unless otherwise determined by the City Manager.