
TO: Mayor Jeff Lehman and Members of Council

FROM: Rhonda Bunn, Executive Director, Innovate Barrie

NOTED: Carla Ladd, Chief Administrative Officer

RE: Innovation at the City

DATE: 15 May 2017

The purpose of this memo is to provide an overview to Council regarding the innovation activities at the City in 2016, as per amendment 17-G-024.

Background

In the Council Strategic Plan 2014-2018, Council identified, under Responsible Spending, that the City “Embrace innovation to improve how we do business.” Innovation has many different interpretations, and therefore defining innovation is paramount to setting a corporate direction for innovation. Municipal innovation has been interpreted widely across the country, however most leading practice municipalities have invested resources into one or more of three main tactics for promoting innovation in their organization: staff training, formal organizational structures and public/private partnerships. Innovate Barrie has adopted parts of each of these leading practices into our delivery of the program.

The City of Barrie’s Approach to Innovation

The organization restructure at the City of Barrie in 2013, led to the creation of Innovate Barrie, which combines Information Technology and Human Resources departments under one Strategic Portfolio, which is a recognition that people, process and technology are required to enable innovation. The addition of the Innovation Analyst in 2014 was the first resource allocated in part to analyze and develop a program designed to drive innovation at the city.

Our goal is to build a culture of continuous improvement throughout the organization by identifying the tools and resources the organization needs to enable innovation, and then developing the support framework that is required. Our approach in the analysis phase has been to research successful models in other municipalities and then test their effectiveness in Barrie in a low risk, no cost approach. To date, we have tested inter-municipal collaboration with the Municipal Innovators Community and Municipal Innovation Network, trialed the innovation coach model with 12 coaches in 2016 and an internal support and recognition pilot to explore how it might impact innovation activities and culture.

Municipal Innovators Community (MIC)

Deloitte’s study *Innovation in government: Conversations with Canada’s public service leaders* published with Public Policy Forum in 2011 identified that while municipalities are facing similar challenges, there is little engagement between municipalities to develop innovative solutions, which has created “an irresistible opportunity for an inter-jurisdictional network that supports the exchange of best practices, processes and innovations for public service organizations.”ⁱ Barrie is working to improve sharing between municipalities using www.municipalinnovators.ca. Municipal Innovators Community (MIC) is a free network for municipal employees interested in municipal innovation that was launched by Innovate Barrie in 2015 with a one-day municipal innovation conference, *Driving Innovation in Municipalities*ⁱⁱ. The objective of MIC is to create conversation and collaboration between municipalities who deliver similar services and experience common challenges. MIC’s website has a membership of over 240 employees across more than 80 municipalities, a monthly newsletter with over 400 subscribers and will host its third annual conferenceⁱⁱⁱ in Guelph in 2017. Dana Clarke is currently the chair of the MIC Steering Committee.

Municipal Innovation Network

The Municipal Innovation Network is an invite-only network of municipal employees working specifically in innovation roles in municipal government. The network offers innovation panels and cross-municipal training opportunities to improve communication and reduce training costs.

2016 Innovatology Pilot Overview

Innovatology is the study of innovation throughout our organization, including the discovery, recognition, and facilitation of innovative practices at the City of Barrie.

In 2016, during World Creativity and Innovation Week^{iv}, we launched a pilot innovation coaching program with 12 employees from across the organization. Our objective was to build a pilot that would engage staff in talking about innovation, recognize that innovation is happening every day across the city, and facilitate the cross-pollination of innovative best practices across departmental silos.

The Innovatology Team 2016 consisted of the following members:

Amanda Dyke, Carlissa McLaren, Cheri Harris, Chris Glanville, Dana Clarke, Erin Christopher, Heather Cassis, Jenna Webb, Jennifer Roberts, Kate Foster, Katie Thompson, and Shauna Dunsford.

The pilot began with a two day training on April 20-21, led by Dana Clarke. Our training objective was to learn the framework for 4 corporate innovation workshops by participating in them, and to use the Innovation Lab workshop to generate ideas for building an innovation program at the City of Barrie. In addition to becoming trained innovation facilitators, the team developed 3 ideas designed to discover and recognize innovation at the City into a pilot program including coaching, tools and recognition supported by an intranet site^v.

The team selected three desired outcomes for our pilot program:

Coaching:

The innovation coaching program supports the empowerment of staff to be innovative through training and facilitation. The results were positive over the first six months of the program, and the team delivered 13 workshops to 198 staff, plus two workshops to committees, including the Public Art Committee and the Downtown Market working group.

Staff Tools:

The online innovation toolkit facilitates access to innovation tools and builds engagement with staff around innovation. The results of this program saw intranet site visits of 150 times per month, and contains over 20 tools and resources that staff can use independently.

Recognition:

The awards program drives staff engagement in recognizing innovation and innovative practices at the City of Barrie. The divisional monthly innovation award program recognized 20 innovations across the organization, including some community-facing initiatives, as well as internally-focused activities designed to improve productivity. The list below outlines a few of the community-facing initiatives that received awards:

- Licence 2 Ride - A collaboration between Recreation and Access Barrie, the Licence 2 Ride pilot offered youth aged 12-15 the opportunity to use transit and recreation programs for free. 886 youth participated, increasing transit ridership by 5000 and recreation visits by 1822.
- Trick, Treat or Play - A collaboration between Recreation and Access Barrie, Halloween Trick, Treat or Play offered residents an opportunity to stand out in treat bags with the City of Barrie's discounted Halloween Swim/Skate Passes. For 50 cents residents could treat young ghosts and goblins to one FREE drop-in swim or skate at one of the City's three community centres. 3300 passes were sold, and plans are being discussed for future promotions.

- 360 Views of Facility Rentals - Recreation implemented 360 degree visual panning views for all community centres, ice rinks, pools and sports fields to enhance the customer experience in facility bookings to increase revenue.
- Pothole Repair Logging System - A Pothole Repair Logging System was developed collaboratively between staff in Roads, Parks & Fleet and the GIS Branch of Information Technology and has resulted in savings in staff time, as well as materials savings. Along with its feature to capture real-time location information through an external GPS unit, other attributes such as size and depth of potholes, applied material, work order number, date, time and who performed work were also captured through very few key strokes and stored in computer's hard drive.
- Sedometer - Once sediment depth exceeds 6 inches, a cleanout is required. However, the current tools are designed for wastewater and make accurate readings for stormwater very difficult. The Sedometer is the Roads Operations Branch's inventive tool to improve monitoring.
- Parking Post Straightener - Bent parking meter posts are an issue that impact revenue and operations. The staff in the Traffic/Parking branch worked with a local fabricator to build a tool that would straighten the post but leave the base intact.
- Water Ops Research Partnership - A partnership between our Water Operations Branch, the University of Toronto, and NSERC, has led to reductions of 50% in coagulant dosage and increased life expectancies of the Granular Activated Carbon media used to mitigate possible taste and odour concerns in our water from 3 years to 10 years or more.

The pilot culminated in an Innovation Day event April 20 at City Hall attracting 150 staff showcasing innovation projects, tools and staff.

Lessons Learned:

The innovation awards program worked well for starting conversations about innovation ongoing at the City and has produced great results. The existing culture has shown that city staff consider continuous improvement activities as part of their daily operations, which is a positive indicator of an innovation mindset in staff for their day-to-day responsibilities. Another lesson we have learned is ensuring that we dedicate time to facilitate cross-functional collaboration on innovation initiatives will also help us problem solve, prioritize and implement activities. Finally, we need to continue to support communication about innovation with staff in Barrie, and other municipalities, to maximize the benefits of best practices in municipal innovation.

Next Steps:

We will continue to support the intranet innovation tools library built in 2016, and the monthly divisional awards. A new round of innovation coaches has been selected and will be trained in Q2 2017. Following a similar format as 2016, these staff will be trained on innovation tools and workshops they can deliver throughout the organization, and they will also undertake a new project to continue building the innovation culture at the City.

In addition, we are investigating an Invention Convention with the Roads, Parks and Fleet department that will let staff showcase physical inventions built to improve city operations.

An emerging trend in municipal innovation is the creation of civic innovation projects that invite the resident and business community to participate in solving city problems from brainstorming ideas to prototyping solutions to co-development of marketable products. In Q3 2017, Creative Economy staff from Invest Barrie will launch our first open innovation pilot to engage the business community to help us solve 4-5 city challenges. This is a great step forward to engaging and collaborating with both our private and public partners.

Over the next year, we will be engaging with the City of Toronto about the Bloomberg Philanthropies' Innovation Team program to explore the possibility of applying for the next round of funding.

ⁱ <https://www.ppforum.ca/sites/default/files/11-916G%20PS%20PPF-Innovation-Strategy-report-EN-WEB.pdf>

ⁱⁱ <http://municipalinnovators.ca/mic-conferences/2015-2>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://municipalinnovators.ca/mic-conferences/2017-conference>

^{iv} <https://wciw.org/>

^v <http://insite/Our-Projects/Innovatology/Pages/default.aspx>