

# Continuous improvement in City of St. John's



Victoria Etchegary, Manager, Organizational Performance and Strategy at the City of St. John's has led large change initiatives including the development of the city's public engagement framework. She can be reached at [vetchegary@stjohns.ca](mailto:vetchegary@stjohns.ca).

After a 2013 reorganization and corporate-wide program review in 2016, the City of St. John's committed to advancing its core value of continuing to do things better and building a culture of continuous improvement (CI). The organization required CI support to:

- deliver training to advance CI capacity across the organization; and
- provide guidance on the development of a CI culture, including advice on the development of a communications and change management plan.

The overall aim was to introduce CI thinking and practices to help build capacity and expertise across the organization. The city released an RFP in 2017 for the required support, for which Leading Edge Group (LEG) was the successful bidder and was awarded the contract.

## Training

Working with city staff, LEG completed relevant planning and preparation to support the implementation of the RFP, beginning with the following training programs.

**1. CI for senior leadership** – Participants in this one-day workshop included the mayor, the city manager and deputy city managers, directors and senior staff from the St. John's Transportation Commission, and St. John's Sports and Entertainment.

**2. CI introduction for union executives** – Participants in this one-day workshop were executive members from city unions. The aim of the workshop was to help participants understand what CI is and how it would work in a municipal organization.

**3. CI for management staff** – This training was delivered over four one-day workshops for approximately 100 managers and directors.

**4. Advanced CI training** – Following the delivery of the training programs, and taking into consideration the insight received from the various groups trained, candidates were chosen to receive advanced training aimed at developing the capability to lead improvement projects.

**5. CI train-the-trainer toolkit** – An adaptable CI train-the-trainer toolkit repository was developed to provide the city with a support framework based on instructional design and training delivery best practices, as well as relevant Lean/CI subject matter expertise.

## Post-Training Process

Following the training delivery, LEG worked with city management on deployment, communication, change management planning, coaching, tools, and resources. They outlined the process for creating a CI roadmap and reconvened with senior leadership to facilitate a two-day strategy workshop to debrief on progress and finalize a plan for wider deployment and sustainability.

The organization continued to be supported through monthly mentoring and coaching aimed at providing relevant support and guidance to enhance the city's CI journey. In addition, the city was provided with a relevant CI resource pack incorporating a range of tools and templates for applying/implementing CI across the organization.

## Outcomes for City of St. John's

Over a six-month period, the city had: more than 100 managers and senior leaders trained on CI orientation and the implications of leading culture change; an appreciation for and understanding of CI among union executives; a governance structure with effective terms of reference to sponsor, oversee, and guide CI deployment; a vision and strategic roadmap for CI at the city; internal trainers with relevant materials and resources to deliver basic CI training to all staff; and a CI community of practice with the capability to deliver improvement projects across the organization.

Today, the city has sustained results from round one projects. And, it is continuing to grow its CI capacity with additional training to be delivered in 2019, along with the execution of strategic improvement initiatives by Green Belt trained employees. ♦



John Whelton is VP of Operations for Leading Edge Group, a provider of Lean/continuous improvement consulting and training support for municipalities. He has more than 20 years of experience, including consulting and training in instructional design. He can be reached at [jwhelton@leadingedgegroup.com](mailto:jwhelton@leadingedgegroup.com)