

Staff Report

Report To: Service Review Implementation Ad Hoc Committee
Report From: Bethany Chandler, Human Resources Specialist
Meeting Date: October 9, 2024
Report Code: CR-24-109
Subject: Project 1a1 - Comprehensive Onboarding Program Update

Recommendations:

THAT in consideration of Staff Report CR-24-109 respecting Service Review Project 1a1 Comprehensive Onboarding Program Update, the Service Review Implementation Ad Hoc Committee recommends that City Council receive the report for information purposes.

Highlights:

- A comprehensive onboarding program will ensure employees are engaged and set up for success when they enter the organization.
- Implementing Citation Canada as a training platform will assist in onboarding new employees and ensuring all required training is assigned and completed.

Strategic Plan Alignment:

[Strategic Plan](#) Priority: This report supports the delivery of Core Service.

Climate and Environmental Implications:

There are no anticipated climate or environmental impacts.

Previous Report/Authority:

[Report CR-24-095 – Human Resources Metrics – Recruitment and Retention](#)

Background:

Service Review Project 1a1 directed staff to create and implement a comprehensive onboarding program to ensure employees are engaged and set up for success when they enter the organization.

The objectives outlined in the Project Charter are to enhance employee engagement and streamline processes for hiring managers, divisional staff, and new employees by improving the employee onboarding program and developing a coordinated approach to providing new employees with the required information and training.

Historically, the City has not had a comprehensive onboarding program, and each department has handled the onboarding of new staff in different ways without clear and concise direction. This has led to a number of inconsistencies in training and orientation, notification to other staff and departments, and overall engagement of new hires, and has impacted corporate culture as a whole. An onboarding program plays a crucial role in aligning organizational structure with the functional model to enhance efficiencies in several ways:

1. Clear Communication of Goals and Values

- **Orientation to Structure:** Onboarding introduces new hires to the organization's structure, including critical functions, roles, and reporting lines. This helps them understand how their position fits within the organization.
- **Cultural Integration:** By embedding the organization's values and mission from the start, onboarding fosters a sense of belonging and alignment with the organizational culture.

2. Role-Specific Training

- **Function-Specific Learning:** Tailored training helps employees understand their responsibilities and how their roles interact with other functions. This clarity reduces misunderstandings and streamlines workflows.
- **Skills Development:** Effective onboarding programs equip new hires with the skills to perform efficiently within their functional model, minimizing the learning curve.

3. Collaboration and Networking

- **Interdepartmental Connections:** Onboarding often includes introductions to key stakeholders across departments, encouraging collaboration and communication from day one.
- **Team Integration:** Engaging new hires in team activities fosters relationships, facilitating smoother collaboration and information sharing, which enhances overall efficiency.

4. Feedback Mechanisms

- **Continuous Improvement:** Onboarding programs often include feedback loops where new hires can provide insights on their experience, helping the organization refine processes and improve alignment over time.

5. Goal Setting and Accountability

- **Aligning Objectives:** Onboarding can set clear expectations and performance goals aligning with the organization's strategic objectives, ensuring that all employees work towards common outcomes.
- **Accountability Framework:** Establishing accountability from the start helps new employees understand their contributions to the organization's efficiency and success.

6. Access to Resources

- **Utilizing Tools and Systems:** New hires are trained on organizational tools and systems that facilitate communication, project management, and information sharing, helping them navigate their roles more effectively.
- **Resource Awareness:** Onboarding educates employees about available resources, reducing the time spent seeking assistance and improving task response times.

7. Cohesive Workflow Integration

- **Process Familiarization:** Understanding key processes and workflows during onboarding helps new hires integrate seamlessly into their teams, minimizing disruptions and enhancing productivity.
- **Identifying Redundancies:** Engaging new hires can provide fresh perspectives on existing processes, allowing organizations to identify and eliminate inefficiencies.

An effective onboarding program engages new employees with the organization, their roles and the team and promotes a cohesive understanding of the organizational structure and functional model, fostering collaboration, clarity, and greater operational efficiency.

This report serves as an update on the status of the deliverables outlined in the project charter and any anticipated changes to milestone dates.

Analysis:

Recruitment and Retention have always been key focus areas for the Human Resources team. Fostering employee growth and retention leads to higher engagement and motivation, increasing employee satisfaction, creativity, and productivity.

According to the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), the cost of replacing an employee can be substantial, often amounting to six to nine months of the employee's salary, including recruitment, onboarding, and training expenses. Hidden costs involve project disruptions, increased workload for existing staff, and potential morale decline. By investing in employee retention strategies right from onboarding, the City can decrease employee turnover and reduce associated costs.

With the changes in the human resources department over the last year, there have been opportunities to reflect on current processes and gain insight from internal stakeholders on how to increase the efficacy of the onboarding process for hiring managers, current staff, and new employees.

To date, the service review project team has completed the following objectives:

- Documented the current processes and highlighted areas for improvement;
- Researched other onboarding processes;
- Developed onboarding procedures and flow charts;
- Defined roles and responsibilities between human resources and hiring managers; and
- Developed templates, forms, documents, and checklists for human resources and hiring managers.

Starting in September 2024, the City rolled out a new onboarding and training platform, Citation Canada (formerly HR Downloads), designed to

enhance and streamline all staff members' training and onboarding experience.

This new platform offers a range of features to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the City's training programs. These include:

- **Interactive Modules:** Engaging and up-to-date training content can be accessed anytime.
- **Enhanced Onboarding:** A more comprehensive and user-friendly onboarding experience for new hires, including integrated training modules and policy or paperwork sign-offs.
- **Tracking and Reporting:** Improved tracking of training progress and completion rates to ensure compliance and identify areas for improvement.
- **Resource Accessibility:** Easy access to various resources, templates, documents, and support materials.

Since the rollout, mandatory training has been assigned to all staff on the Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) and Workplace Violence and Harassment. Completing these modules annually helps maintain a safe and compliant work environment, reinforces the City's commitment to employee well-being, and ensures everyone remains current with regulations and best practices. Department teams have also started to utilize the platform to assign training modules to staff that apply to their organizational roles.

Next Steps

By the end of the first quarter of 2025, the project team will continue to gather information and develop processes to build the onboarding program, centralize information, and execute the changes. Education sessions with managers and facilitation of the new onboarding program are set to take place in March 2025.

Financial Implications:

Citation Canada training and onboarding platform cost \$21,000.00 for a three-year term.

It is anticipated that further changes will be cost-neutral.

Communication Strategy:

Once the comprehensive onboarding program has been completed, managers and staff will be trained on the processes and expectations of each individual in the process. A final report will be presented to Council for information purposes.

Consultation:

Service Review Project Team

Society for Human Resources Management (SHRM)

Attachments:

None.

Recommended by:

Bethany Chandler, Human Resources Specialist

Janet Ashfield, Manager of Human Resources

Kate Allan, Director of Corporate Services

Submission approved by:

Tim Simmonds, City Manager

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