Case Study:
City of Ottawa—One City, One Team

As the new city manager at the City of Ottawa, Steve Kanel-lakos was tasked with improving the delivery of city services and creating long-term sustainability throughout the corporation. Based on his previous experience and tenure with the city, he knew that he needed a plan to transition to his new role and build a cohesive senior leadership team (SLT). Together they would develop a strategy to lead this meaningful change that would go beyond tactics to capture the hearts and souls of the people they led, worked with, and served.

This chapter is a case study about the SLT's journey through the first two years (2016 to 2018) of leading a transition and culture shift to adopt the mindset, values, and behaviors of "Servant Leadership" as the new guide to their day-to-day work.[22] It provides the background and context for this change, a summary of their approach through the lens of the LMC Process, and an overview of how they created a cohesive team that inspired people across the corporation to embrace the shared purpose "One City, One Team" to achieve results that were far greater than any single contribution.[23]

→ **Background to the Case**

Ottawa is Canada's capital and the fourth-largest city in Canada, comparable in size with cities such as Austin, Jacksonville, San Francisco, and San Jose in the United States. It has approximately 17,000 municipal workers serving 1 million residents. In the beginning of this journey, the city was operating as a federation, a hierarchical organization where services were siloed and not working toward a common purpose.

In addition to needing to maintain regular operations and delivering city services, the city was facing a significant year in 2017 as it prepared to host year-long celebrations for Canada's 150th anniversary, including Canada Day festivities that would be held over four days, with expected crowds of 750,000 people from across the country and beyond streaming into the downtown core of the city in July. At this same time, the city still needed to work on its infrastructure and a project to build a new light-rail system.

It was in this context that Steve stepped into the role of city manager. Immediately, during the first few days of taking on his new role, he also had to deal with a major emergency situation that would pull all the city leaders, including the mayor, together to respond. A large water main broke and created a giant sinkhole next to a major shopping center in a downtown mall, collapsing a street and causing a gas leak, which forced the evacuation of all nearby businesses. The water leak was also near the construction site of the new light-rail system, which included a tunnel and stations being dug beneath the downtown core. Fortunately, no one was hurt.

This sinkhole emergency triggered an urgent call to work as a unified organization to fix the problem. It became clear that everyone had to change mindsets to keep the city safe and make it a great place to live, work, and play in the short and long terms. Throughout the course of the next two years, the city would face additional emergencies,

including a long-term care crisis, two floods, two tornado events, and a bus crash that resulted in multiple deaths and significant injuries.

→ Leadership, Alignment, Teamwork, and Collaboration Plan

Steve and the senior leadership team led and managed the transition process and culture shift to acting as "One City, One Team" through two years of substantial change and crisis management. In the context of the LMC Process, Figure 9 summarizes their work in each of the four stages, while Table 8 shows a Master Change Plan that outlines how Steve and the SLT planned the first eight months of activities. Look these over to become familiar with their high-level view and then follow me as we walk through the four stages in detail in the rest of the chapter.
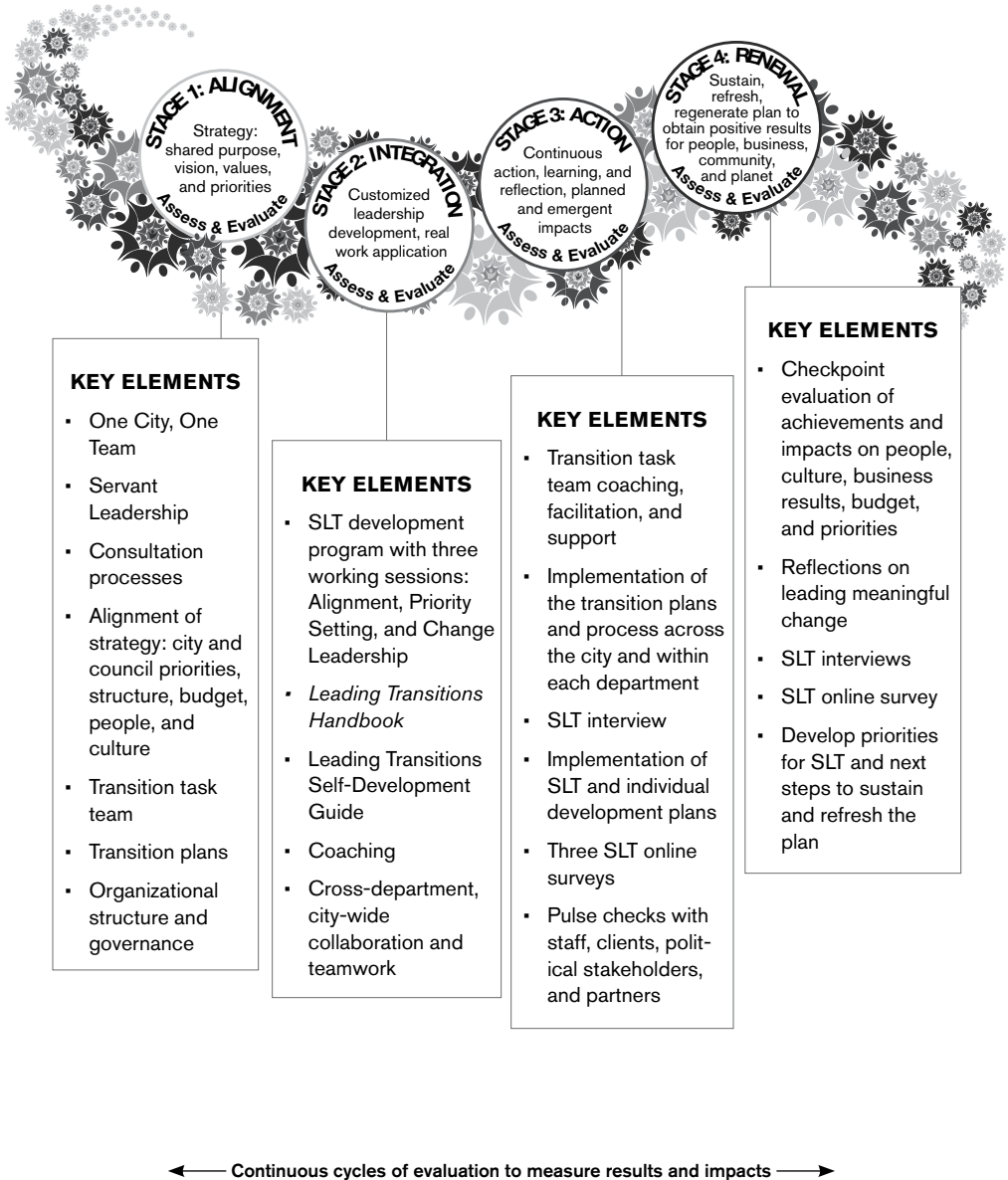
→ Stage 1: Alignment

Goals: Create overall transition strategy for One City, One Team; establish Servant Leadership values and behaviors; assess priorities

Steve began by appointing a director to lead the transition and form a small transition team to help him plan, develop, and implement the first 30 days of his transition to city manager. This team quickly expanded to include additional experts to help them design a new organizational structure, choose a new senior leadership team, develop the transition plans for each department of city services, and ensure their alignment with each other and with the entire corporation.

During this time, I worked alongside the director and the transition team as an external organizational development and change consultant. I provided coaching, helped develop and evaluate the transition plans, and created tools and a process for the SLT development program.

As next steps, Steve conducted wide-ranging consultations to deepen his understanding of the need for change and

Figure 9 **City of Ottawa's Transformation Summarized in the LMC Process**

STAGE 1: ALIGNMENT
Strategy: shared purpose, vision, values, and priorities
Assess & Evaluate

STAGE 2: INTEGRATION
Customized leadership development, real work application
Assess & Evaluate

STAGE 3: ACTION
Continuous action, learning, and reflection, planned and emergent impacts
Assess & Evaluate

STAGE 4: RENEWAL
Sustain, refresh, regenerate plan to obtain positive results for people, business, community, and planet
Assess & Evaluate

KEY ELEMENTS

- One City, One Team
- Servant Leadership
- Consultation processes
- Alignment of strategy: city and council priorities, structure, budget, people, and culture
- Transition task team
- Transition plans
- Organizational structure and governance

KEY ELEMENTS

- SLT development program with three working sessions: Alignment, Priority Setting, and Change Leadership
- *Leading Transitions Handbook*
- Leading Transitions Self-Development Guide
- Coaching
- Cross-department, city-wide collaboration and teamwork

KEY ELEMENTS

- Transition task team coaching, facilitation, and support
- Implementation of the transition plans and process across the city and within each department
- SLT interview
- Implementation of SLT and individual development plans
- Three SLT online surveys
- Pulse checks with staff, clients, political stakeholders, and partners

KEY ELEMENTS

- Checkpoint evaluation of achievements and impacts on people, culture, business results, budget, and priorities
- Reflections on leading meaningful change
- SLT interviews
- SLT online survey
- Develop priorities for SLT and next steps to sustain and refresh the plan

←———— Continuous cycles of evaluation to measure results and impacts ————→

Table 8 City of Ottawa Master Change Plan for the First Eight Months

Where Do You Expect to Be in the Change Process?		
Understand Months 1 to 2	**Align** Months 3 to 4	**Plan and Execute** Months 5 to 8
Corporate Activities and Key Milestones		
• Council consultation process	• Council endorsement of organizational design and governance structure	• Council update on the transition plan and endorsement of the go-forward strategy, priorities, and budget
Organizational Alignment		
• Assess current state and priorities • Conduct SLT consultation process • Develop workplan • Assess organizational design, including capacity, priorities, principles, model, and accountability-governance framework • Conduct impact analysis • Develop people plan and change strategy	• Develop SLT transition strategy • SLT lead alignment processes in their departments • Develop new department organizational structures • Develop business support model, business transformation plan, and departmental transition plans • Conduct general manager consultation process to obtain feedback and input • Develop opportunities list and recommendations for council • Align organizational priorities with the budget	• Implement transition plans • Conduct consultation process • Finalize general manager alignment process and priorities with budget process • Prepare final report on the way forward and recommendations to council

Supports		
▪ Form transition task team, processes, and tools to support people through the transition and transformation	▪ Conduct SLT working session 1: Alignment ▪ Conduct general manager interviews and needs assessment ▪ Develop SLT transition strategy ▪ Coach and facilitate peer learning	▪ Conduct SLT working session 2: Priority Setting ▪ Conduct SLT working session 3: Change Leadership (shared vision of the way forward, defined mandate for extended management teams, and decision-making processes) ▪ Implement SLT personal leadership transition plans
Communications and Engagement		
▪ Develop and implement the transition and communications plan for the city manager's first 60 days ▪ Conduct employee engagement sessions that include all employee levels	▪ Develop a report on employee engagement sessions ▪ Develop transition plan and organizational alignment toolkit and supports ▪ Develop transition and communications plan, products, and supports for alignment and planning	▪ Implement communications strategy ▪ Conduct employee engagement sessions (managers and all staff)

to develop the guiding principles and priorities. In the first 60 days, he consulted with the mayor and city council, their staffs, and important city stakeholders. He also reached out to over 3,200 city employees through direct engagement sessions with groups at various sites. During this time, he received close to 15,200 ideas on what to consider when building the transition plan for the entire organization.

The consultation process helped Steve read the pulse of the organization and deepened his understanding of the problems and the areas that needed improvement. An overwhelming number of respondents (71 percent) to surveys he conducted stated that the organization's overall effectiveness had to be addressed. The top concerns were flattening the leadership hierarchy, cutting bureaucracy, supporting staff to do their jobs, and planning for leadership succession. Improving front-line service delivery was also a key consideration to align the change effort with the city's overall transition plan. After meeting with the city council and their staff, he also concluded that he needed to create a new organizational structure that met the council's priorities and increased the organization's effectiveness, yet did not disrupt city services.

Steve's consultation process allowed him to create a plan for the next six months that would guide him and the new SLT through the transition. The gamut of changes would require numerous culture shifts to meet the short-term needs of the city and position it for long-term success. Table 9 synthesizes the various culture shifts that Steve and the SLT realized they needed to strive for.

By the end of the first 60 days, the city council endorsed the SLT's new vision, which they named "One City, One Team." They also approved the next phase of the transition plan, focused on seven priorities that crossed all departments:

1. Financial sustainability
2. City building

Table 9 City of Ottawa Culture Shift Requirements

Transition From	Transition To
Silos and competition	One City, One Team
Hierarchical and bureaucratic chain of command; accountability and decision making at the top	Flatter organization; decisions made at the right level; clear accountabilities and responsibilities at all levels
SLT ▪ Too large ▪ Blend of expertise that made it difficult to focus on strategic issues ▪ Bottleneck for problem solving and timely and accurate decision making	SLT ▪ Smaller size to facilitate teamwork, collaboration, problem solving, and decision making ▪ Members with long service, broad reach of expertise, and a common history with the city ▪ Agenda focused on the strategic direction and open discussion
Leadership style: direct or jump to action	Leadership style: collaborate, develop, coach, mentor, and delegate; shared values and commitment to Servant Leadership behaviors
Constant churn of priorities	Focused priorities
Disengaged workforce	Engaged and empowered workforce
Risk-averse	Risk-taking
No succession plan	Succession plan and career development
Dissatisfied citizens	Satisfied citizens

3. Social infrastructure
4. Building a light-rail system and putting it into service
5. Service delivery
6. Organizational effectiveness
7. Celebrating Canada's 150th anniversary

They also put in place a new organizational structure with consolidated departments and a smaller, more streamlined, and more empowered SLT composed of nine general managers, reduced from 21 senior leaders on the previous SLT. By consolidating departments, the administration could work more effectively to meet the council's priorities and better serve the public. The new structure was designed to

- establish a leadership team committed to deliver a budget limited to a 2 percent tax increase;
- provide a clear focus for all staff in support of the city's priorities;
- flatten levels of senior management and simplify reporting relationships with clear lines of accountability;
- improve peer-to-peer relationships and empower and engage management and staff to make decisions;
- break down silos to promote greater collaboration across services and departments;
- streamline business processes to maximize value to customers and citizens; and, with an eye to the future,
- enable better succession planning and career development at all levels of the organization.

→ **Stage 2: Integration**
Goals: Develop and implement SLT development program, Leading Transitions Handbook, *and Leading Transitions Self-Development Guide*

The focus of this stage was on ongoing leadership development and ensuring the overall alignment of organizational priorities as the process moved into stage 3. The rationale was that SLT was a new and unique team, although most members (including me) already had a long history and deep roots working in the city. SLT members enjoyed high credibility and good working relationships with people inside the corporation and in the community. Their shared history and experience with the organization helped the team quickly adopt and model the culture of One City, One Team and the Servant Leadership values and behaviors. Another characteristic that members shared was that all of them were eligible for retirement within one to four years, which put the spotlight on the need for succession planning across the city, but which also created an opportunity for each member to reflect on the legacy they wanted to leave behind, both personally and professionally.

However, despite this common ground, the team was still new at working together as a smaller SLT. They needed to identify and understand the problems across the city and build solid plans to address them. Leading the city's transformation was the first task they would work on together. It was a high-profile change, and priority setting and change leadership were vitally important. The SLT members were full of hope that they could do it, yet they knew it would not be an easy journey. The change was loaded with political expectations and complex challenges that they would need to overcome together.

To support them through their own transition to their new roles and as they did their work, the plan called for the SLT to participate in a multifaceted development program called the Leading Transitions Program. This was implemented over the next six months so that it would overlap with the actual work that would be done during stage 3: action. The program included three full-day working sessions, plus intersession activities. These activities were customized to

- develop a strategy to lead and implement the city's transition plan;
- create a shared understanding of the transition plan and the way forward;
- create a shared understanding and a common vision of their roles and responsibilities and how they would work together as one team;
- obtain tools and supports they needed to develop and advance their departmental transition plans;
- obtain supports for their personal leadership development plan;
- deepen their understanding of the need for change, the strategic priorities, and the principles that would shape the new organizational design and governance framework;
- obtain clarity on their mission and role as a member of the SLT and as general manager of their department;
- obtain their input on the transition plan and deliverables; and
- obtain their commitment for the way forward.

An evaluation process was used throughout the program to assess its design and content, the SLT members' learning and development experience, and their reflections on leading and managing the transition. This evaluation also helped identify running themes and emerging patterns that needed to be addressed to support the culture shifts.

Table 10 shows the elements of the SLT Leading Transitions Program. This table is effectively an expanded view of the supports row of the Master Change Plan shown in Table 8.

Let's examine the goals and events of each of the working sessions to understand how the process supported the city's change effort.

Table 10 City of Ottawa SLT Leading Transitions Program

Alignment Process		
SLT WS1: Alignment	SLT WS2: Priority Setting	SLT WS3: Change Leadership
Intersession Activities		
▪ Obtain coaching and support from transition team. ▪ Implement working sessions and cross-department collaboration activities. ▪ Develop and implement departmental transition plans aligning strategy, structure, budget, people, and culture. ▪ Develop and implement general manager and SLT development plans.		
Evaluating Culture Shifts Process		
▪ SLT individual interview 1 ▪ SLT evaluation survey 1	▪ SLT evaluation survey 2	▪ SLT evaluation survey 3

SLT Working Session 1: Alignment

The first session reviewed and discussed the five key themes uncovered during Steve's consultation process—leadership, alignment, teamwork, collaboration, and focused results—grounding them in real-life examples that team members could relate to. These themes would become the principles that the SLT would use to guide their work throughout the process.

In the first session, each SLT member was given a *Leading Transitions Handbook* to help them develop their departmental transition plans and align them with the city's

larger transition plan. It included timelines, tools, supports, and resources. Each member of the new SLT was asked to design their own departmental transition plans to mirror the larger corporate organizational structure and principles created in stage 1 to update the city's operating model. This was a complex process, and many SLT members had to make difficult decisions involving their staff, budget, and the impact of their departmental transition plans on the services they provided to city residents. By the end of the first meeting, the SLT members signed a call to action that included the following tasks:

- Develop a transition plan for their department.
- Align their departmental transition plan with the city's business transformation plan.
- Understand and create the support for the new organizational design and accountability framework.
- Clarify the direction going forward, accept the new priorities, and affirm their role in leading and managing the next phase of the transformation.
- Identify impacts, concerns, and issues that needed to be addressed in the next 30 to 90 days and how those would affect the entire city.
- Develop a people plan that included leadership development, succession planning, and needed supports to lead and manage their people throughout the transition process.
- Develop a communications plan that included key messages and a consultation process to help them lead and manage the implementation of the organizational alignment process and transition plan in their departments and with their stakeholders.
- Create a consultation process to obtain feedback and input from their staff and stakeholders.

SLT members also received a Leading Transitions Self-Development Guide to reflect on their own new roles as general managers and members of the SLT (a generic version, the Leading Meaningful Change Self-Development Guide, is included in the part 2 toolkit). They used this guide to develop their personal transition plan, which they would share with Steve for his input and feedback. The themes and patterns from this exercise also informed the corporate learning and development strategy that was developed later in the process. The transition team assisted the SLT members as they developed and implemented their transition plans and the intersession activities.

SLT Working Session 2: Priority Setting
This working session occurred several months after the first working session, so SLT members were already engaged in developing their departmental transition plans. As prework for this session, SLT members had to work with their transition team advisor to prepare a presentation on their transition plans that they would share in the working session. The transition teams also met prior to the session to review all the transition plans and track the themes and patterns. From that, they prepared a summary report that they sent to the SLT members for their review prior to the session. This process helped develop a common understanding among all SLT members and the transition team about the current status of the departments, the common issues and concerns that crossed over all service areas, and the unique department-specific issues. This exercise was invaluable in assessing the alignment between the overall city-wide strategy and priorities and the individual transition and departmental plans. It revealed the synergies, dependencies, interdependencies, and opportunities for collaboration that would be discussed in the working session.

- As part of this process, SLT members also participated in individual interviews with me in my role as a coach

to the team. Together, we began crafting their personal leadership development plans.

· In the full-day working session, our objectives were to
· create an opportunity for all SLT members to learn more about each other as leaders and how they saw their role on the SLT;
· provide an opportunity to discuss each person's reflections on leading through the transition; and
· create a common understanding of the themes and patterns, both current and emerging, as they led the transition.

SLT Working Session 3: Change Leadership

By this working session, SLT members were nearly six months into their transition work. In this full-day session, they reviewed the results of the second evaluation survey and discussed their progress on implementing their transition plans and culture shifts. They completed a customized version of the Evaluating and Sustaining Meaningful Change Exercise described in part 2 in order to assess their progress on their own transition plans and culture shifts. They also finalized an SLT charter, mandate, and governance process. Lastly, they planned next steps for their personal development as general managers and how they would sustain the cohesiveness of the SLT going forward.

All three working sessions also featured a communications exercise designed to help the SLT develop key messages about the transition plan and next steps for each of the audiences and stakeholders. This exercise helped the team practice their communication skills, speak with one voice, and ensure consistent messaging across the city.

→ Stage 3: Action
Goals: Champion leadership, teamwork, and collaboration

This stage involved applying the tools, putting the transition plan into action, and monitoring and measuring the

planned and emergent impacts. (To be clear, segments of stage 2 and stage 3 overlapped, in that the second and third working sessions discussed above occurred during milestone periods in stage 3.)

To start their action plan, each SLT member used the same consultation approach as Steve to learn about the priorities in their own departments. In a coordinated and parallel process, each general manager, along with their respective management teams and other people in their department, designed their own departmental transition plan, ensuring that it aligned with the overall corporate transition plan and adhered to the organizational design principles. At this level of the organizational design, the following key changes were implemented:

- Departments were flattened, with fewer management levels and increased accountability.
- Business support services and functions were streamlined into consistent branches across the organization.
- Service delivery functions that had been integrated into different departments were consolidated.
- This new structure promoted greater efficiencies, identified clear accountabilities, empowered employees, and helped create succession plans that would ensure long-term sustainability and quality service delivery throughout the city.

This transition was a complex process and had to consider the entire organizational system. SLT members also had to focus on their personal transitions as they took on their new roles while at the same time leading others through the transformation process in their departments across the city, including community partners and other stakeholders. Change thus had to happen at the individual, SLT, organization, and community levels. The working sessions of stage 2 supported people through these challenges.

Strengthening the Transition Team

By this stage, the changes were more complex and needed to involve more people across the corporation, so the transition team was expanded to include additional expertise and supports. The new service innovation and performance department (SIPD) was created, led by its own general manager, and a new business integration team (BIT), comprising business support services (BSS) managers from each department, was formed to play an active role in executing the transition plans. This team worked as internal consultants, advisors, and coaches to the SLT members and to their extended departmental teams and other project teams across the city. BSS managers provided expertise in strategy development, change leadership and change management, organizational development, governance, human resources, organizational design and effectiveness, finance, information technology, and communications.

Table 11 summarizes the responsibilities of the SLT general managers and the SIPD and the BIT, illustrating how they all worked together as partners to lead and manage the transition.

→ **Stage 4: Renewal**

Goals: Conduct evaluation process; understand and evaluate culture shifts

The change process and culture shifts were evaluated throughout the transition process. The major evaluations that took place during stages 1 through 3 included three SLT online surveys and a set of SLT individual interviews. The SLT also conducted several pulse surveys with staff, stakeholders, city councillors, and community partners. The final evaluation, done as part of my research during the renewal stage, included a second set of SLT interviews and a fourth online survey. Let's look at the intermediary online and phone interview evaluations before discussing the final evaluation.

Table 11 **Summary of Responsibilities for Leading and Managing the Transition at the City of Ottawa**

SLT General Manager Responsibilities	SIPD and BIT Responsibilities for Supporting SLT
• Champion, steward, and lead the development and implementation of the city's transformation strategy and transition plans in their departments • Align their departmental plans with One City, One Team; Servant Leadership values and behaviors; and the city's priorities, budget, timelines, and people plan • Participate in three SLT working sessions • Develop key messages, provide content, and communicate regularly to Steve and each other on the progress on the plan	• Lead and manage the development and implementation of the city's transition plan and alignment process, including people, organizational culture, and communications strategies • Provide expertise in human resources, organizational development, change, process improvement, performance analytics, communications, administration, and program management • Provide dedicated resources, a framework, a process, and tools to develop and evaluate the department alignment process, transition plans, and organizational culture • Design and facilitate the formation of the SLT mandate, governance structure, and working sessions • Oversee the design and management of the organizational assessment and the development of the departmental organizational structure to ensure cross-departmental integration

Online Surveys

The first three SLT online surveys were completed after each SLT working session. These online surveys helped assess the

- progress made up to that point on advancing the transition plan, objectives, and results;
- effectiveness of the program design, tools, and supports;
- development of change leadership competencies; and
- adoption of the new values and servant leader behaviors.

These surveys included several self-assessments that we tracked over time and reviewed at the start of each working session. The results of each survey were rolled up into a team report to help the SLT develop a collective understanding of their personal and team journey, celebrate their successes, and make faster course corrections as needed. Here are some of the survey questions:

Change Leadership Competencies. Each SLT member was asked to answer each question using a scale from 1 = no agreement to 8 = full agreement.

1. I understand the vision, direction, and context for leading the changes.
2. I have strategies in place to lead the transition in my department.
3. I have strategies in place to lead the transition with key stakeholders outside my department.
4. I am confident in my ability to lead the transition at the city.
5. I understand my role in leading the changes.
6. I am effective developing and implementing strategies to help people overcome resistance and adapt to the changes.
7. I am effective working in the SLT to lead change.

8. I am effective working with my management team to lead change.
9. I am effective building collaborative relationships to lead and implement the transition plan.
10. I am effective communicating change.
11. I am effective engaging my staff in the change process.
12. I am effective developing, coaching, and mentoring others.
13. I am achieving my goals and objectives in leading this transition.
14. I have effective practices, tools, and support for my own learning and development.
15. I am fully engaged in this process.

Values Self-Assessment. In each online survey, SLT members were asked to respond to the question: How well am I living our SLT values and behaviors?

1. Trust
2. Respect
3. Collaboration
4. Teamwork: One Team, One Voice
5. Integrity
6. Communication

Servant Leadership Self-Assessment. Each SLT member was asked to respond to this question: How well am I living our Servant Leadership competencies? [24]

1. *Person of character:* I make insightful, ethical, and principle-centered decisions; I am able to maintain integrity; I demonstrate humility; I serve a Higher Purpose.

2. *Puts people first:* I am able to help others meet their highest priority development needs; I display a servant's heart; I mentor and develop others; I show care and concern.

3. *Skilled communicator:* I listen earnestly and speak effectively; I demonstrate empathy; I invite feedback; I communicate persuasively.

4. *Compassionate collaborator:* I am able to strengthen relationships, support diversity, and create a sense of belonging; I express appreciation; I build teams; I collaborate and create communities; I negotiate conflict.

5. *Has foresight:* I imagine possibilities, anticipate the future, and proceed with clarity of purpose; I am a visionary; I display creativity and innovation; I take courageous and decisive action.

6. *Systems thinker:* I think and act strategically, lead change effectively, and balance the whole with the sum of its parts; I am comfortable with complexity; I demonstrate adaptability and agility; I consider the "Greater Good."

7. *Leads with moral authority:* I am worthy of respect, inspire trust and confidence, and establish equality standards for performance; I accept and delegate responsibility; I share power and control; I empower others; I create a culture of accountability.

The data from the online evaluation process were invaluable in helping us validate the success of the transition plan process and the SLT's development in the moment and over time, as well as identify themes and patterns that still needed to be addressed to shift the corporate culture and support the departmental transition plans. The results were shared with SLT members to help them reflect on their journey and plan next steps for their own leadership development. For example, in the first working session at the end of 2017, SLT members identified the following measures of success as they looked forward to 2018. This is what they hoped to achieve and actually realized:

1. We are living our values and culture of One City, One Team. General managers, departments, and city council are aligned.

2. The new organizational structure is effective. We have in place a strong leadership team and highly functioning cohesive department teams. People understand their roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities. SLT meetings are effective and supported by the city manager's office.

3. The work climate is positive. People understand how they contribute and have a sense of fulfillment, meaning, and satisfaction with their work and life. Employee engagement survey scores have improved.

4. I have achieved my personal development plan and transition goals. I am still engaged, proud of my legacy, making a difference, and contributing to a higher purpose.

5. We have demonstrated improvements in service. Citizen satisfaction scores have improved and there is a reduction in complaints. Council and partner feedback is positive.

6. A talent management and succession plan is in place and working well.

7. We have financial stability.

8. Light-rail transit is in revenue service. (This goal was still a work in progress at the time of this publication.)

In addition, by the end of the first and second stages of the change process, there was a 4 percent increase in employee job satisfaction, and the city had achieved the corporate efficiency target of $14 million for both 2017 and 2018 through a combination of efficiencies, new revenues, and alignments. These included

- increased revenues through property sales;
- implementation of the new senior leadership structure;
- completion of an organizational alignment process;
- implementation of the departmental transition plans;
- completion of a service review program, including a review of winter operations; and
- completion of an administrative restructuring.

Phone Interviews

SLT members also participated in two 60-minute phone interviews. The first one was to serve as a baseline and was conducted at the beginning of stage 1. These interviews were designed to help SLT members reflect on their personal transition and identify their needs for further personal development as they moved into their new role as general manager and as they managed their departmental transition plans. The phone interview was also an opportunity for coaching and supporting their personal leadership development. Through this process, their feedback was used to inform the design of the overall leadership development strategy and specifically the Leading Transitions Program discussed above.

Each SLT member was asked the following questions during the interview:

1. What must we keep top of mind as we design a leadership development strategy to support you as you transition into your new role and lead the development and implementation of the city's transition plan?

2. As part of the Leading Transitions Program, we will be conducting three working sessions for the SLT. What approaches and topics must we include in our design that will support your learning and advance your work?

3. As general manager and given your new mandate, what are your goals and aspirations for the next 90 days?

4. What supports and development do you and your management team need to be successful working with your stakeholders?

5. What personal, departmental, and organizational effectiveness goals do you want to reach by the end of this term of council?

6. How will you measure success at the end of this term of council?

7. What do we need to ensure your full participation in the upcoming working sessions?

8. Do you have any additional suggestions or comments?

Final Evaluation

In this case study, the final evaluation of the alignment and transition process consisted of a second set of SLT interviews and a fourth SLT online survey. This evaluation process was completed in December 2018, which was a significant milestone. It was the end of the city council's term and just as the new council was formed. The results of this evaluation process helped the SLT to reflect on their journey and plan their next steps.

The second set of SLT interviews and the results of the SLT online survey were consistent with those conducted earlier and discussed above. The survey revealed a positive trend in meeting and exceeding expectations in leading the various departmental transitions and in the overall meaningful change journey. SLT members expressed some uncertainty about the future work they still needed to do as the SLT and in their role as general managers to address the anticipated changes coming from a newly elected provincial government and expectations of a newly elected city council.

This was also a time of renewal for the SLT. They were transitioning to working with the new council and needed

to refresh or adapt their plan for the next four years to ensure it was aligned with the new council's commitments. They were reflecting on what they needed to do to sustain the changes, the culture of One City, One Team, and the Servant Leadership values and behaviors. It was also a time to reenergize and renew their commitment as the SLT responsible for leading the next phase of the city's transformational journey.

Given this context, there was general agreement among all SLT members about the focus for their next steps:

- Sustaining cohesive teamwork in the SLT
- Continuing to build a culture of One City, One Team
- Continuing to model and live the Servant Leadership values and behaviors
- Developing supervisors and front-line staff
- Continuing with succession planning
- Focusing on realizing results, outcomes, and the return on investment

As you can see, this SLT went through a significant journey. They embodied a shared purpose and established a solid foundation for One City, One Team and the Servant Leadership values and behaviors that are sure to be sustained in the next phases of change in Ottawa. They were also very successful working with teams and teams of teams and collaborating across the city. For some, their journey continues, and for others, their legacy was just beginning as they approached retirement.

→ **Reflections on the Journey Two Years Later**
As part of my research for this book, I met with the SLT members two years after the start of our work together to gather their reflections about leading a meaningful change (one member had already retired and been replaced with a new team member). This group interview took place one year after my last working session with them. They had

already participated in the fourth SLT online survey and the second individual interview with me. Their personal memories and experiences are worth citing, as they demonstrate the power of the team and how to create and lead truly meaningful change.

First and foremost, all members of the SLT were honest, humble, and sincere as they participated in this reflection process. They were proud of how they had worked together to foster a culture of One City, One Team and modeled the Servant Leadership values and behaviors for their departments. They shared a deep appreciation for having had the opportunity to work together as a team and were very proud of the work they accomplished and the contributions they made, and continue to make today, to ensure they leave the city a better place. They affirmed that they had each other's back in good times and especially when they were under fire, which is when it counts. They learned a lot over those first two years and are still learning about leading change today. They valued and appreciated working together to develop their strategies and solve problems. They had high trust and respect for each other. They established a strong foundation, ethical decision-making processes, integrated planning, and a city culture that staff and residents feel proud of.

The SLT was confident that the culture of One City, One Team and the Servant Leadership values and behaviors that permeate across the city could be sustained over time. When reflecting on their work on the SLT and with their teams, partners, stakeholders, and city council, many talked about achieving a truly *shared* purpose. They used the pronoun "we"; no one used "I." This speaks volumes about their shared values that they continue to model and hold each other to account for. All SLT members also spoke about the strong leadership and coaching they received from city manager Steve Kanellakos, whom they saw as a key contributor to their success.

Reflecting back over the two years since my work with them, it was striking that no one said that they had a defining moment when they regretted taking on their new job and wanted to leave. People definitely faced serious challenges, such as dealing with the sinkhole, floods, tornados, a long-term care crisis, development of the light-rail transit system, and other public and political challenges—all while maintaining daily operations and delivering the usual services. Despite these pressures, during each crisis, each general manager looked deep inside and asked themselves, "If not me, then who?" In response, they each stepped up to lead the way.

In the surveys and interviews at the end of the process, I captured a number of conclusions that individuals drew about meaningful change. These are some of their thoughts, supported by direct comments from various SLT members:

1. *Meaningful change is a personal feeling of accomplishment.* Steve phrased this conclusion the best when he said, "When you are successful leading meaningful change, it means that you have captured the hearts and souls of the people. They believe in a higher purpose, something greater than their own single contribution."

Others described meaningful change as "the magic sauce." "There is something happening. I can feel it. Things are changing. It's hard to put into words and measure it."

2. *Leading meaningful change must have a realistic plan that has meaning for people.*
Meaningful change is more than designing and implementing a new process, policy, or procedure. The vision, destination, and method for how you will get there must be legitimate, realistic, and compelling for people to want to achieve it. They need mutual awareness (not only one perspective) and understanding of the desires, needs, and challenges of the clients, stakeholders, staff, partners, or anyone involved or impacted by the changes.

One general manager described it this way: "Meaningful change means that people find value and meaning in the change. The change is thoughtful, relevant, and results in actions that help people behave differently, adopt new behaviors, and achieve the desired results." In this case, the general manager was proud of how they had built teams working across the city, specifically with the SLT and their departmental leadership teams working with the extended departmental leadership team, which included all directors from across the city. She was also proud of how they had put into place the teams that provided business supports such as human resources, organizational development, information technology, communications, and other services across the city. They persevered through many new challenges and delivered services that added value, as explained by one general manager who used the business support services. She described one defining moment of "collective brilliance":

> This moment of collective brilliance occurred in the early part of the transition. SLT had participated in a very long strategic planning session. At the end of the all-day working session, the wall was full of divergent ideas and priorities posted on sticky notes. I remember being overwhelmed and thinking the plan would be impossible to achieve given our workload and capacity. Two or three days later, the service innovation and performance department (SIPD) who designed and facilitated the process pulled together the results of the session on one page that included three key areas of priority: our people, our service, and our city. This was a moment of collective brilliance. SLT could not have done this work without the SIPD team. It was an epiphany and concrete example of how we as the SLT would continue to work together with the SIPD. At this moment of the presentation, all the "noise" fell away. There were no more "me" issues. No more "the sky is falling" comments;

instead, anything was possible. Everyone was on board, including councillors, partners, and staff.

3. *Leading meaningful change must consider the well-being of the people involved and impacted.*

Leading meaningful change must consider not only the work that needs to be done, but also how you lead people through the changes. You especially need to focus on the well-being of the people in the approach you take to develop the plan, assess the impacts, and create the organization required for long-term success. This means developing people so they can be the best they can be to serve others, including clients, residents, stakeholders, and each other.

In Ottawa, the SLT built a solid foundation for fostering a culture of One City, One Team by making the development of people a priority. They talked about how to eliminate barriers and took action. They asked themselves, "What's working and why? What's not working and why not?" at all levels of the organization. Accountability was no longer just a template; they were living it in their day-to-day actions. They put in place training and development supports, including leadership forums, formal leadership development programs, coaching and mentoring, and a fair and clear succession planning process. In addition, they put a lot of effort into communicating and engaging others across the corporation.

One general manager said, "Great leaders of people are always evolving as leaders themselves, and building their internal supports. People at the city are talking about 'how' they are developing their people and sharing their success stories and wise practices. There is a positive energy and buzz that is exciting and palpable."

Another general manager spent time understanding the employees by focusing on their needs as people, not just on the role they played and the work that had to be done. She learned about their career aspirations and interests, as well as their desired impact and legacy. She aligned the

development plan with the vision of One City, One Team and the principles and values of Servant Leadership, then put in place the processes, tools, and supports to develop people in real time.

4. *Meaningful change requires leadership.*
SLT members believe they played a key role in leading the culture shifts by modeling the values and behaviors of One City, One Team and Servant Leadership in everything they said and did inside and outside the organization. SLT members were committed to creating opportunities to grow their people and adopt a new mindset that would help each person be successful. They wanted and expected everyone to participate in the journey. They developed values and principles that shaped the way they coordinated and collaborated with each other in the SLT and with others in the city. They developed strong relationships, making it a priority to take the time to understand the people issues by walking around and checking the pulse of how people were thinking and feeling. They listened to find out what was working and not. They incorporated what they were learning in their plans. They kept at it and never stopped.

Leaders need to be present and in the moment to inspire, coach, mentor, and develop people to embrace the vision and see themselves as an integral part of the change. One general manager described it in the following way: "Leadership is about supporting the organization and our people so they are equipped to provide high-quality services that are relevant and responsive to the needs of the community, and at the same time, make the workplace better by making it easier to deliver services." Other leaders talked about leaving a legacy and ensuring that their work had a lasting, positive impact in the lives of others and made the city a better place.

5. *Leading meaningful change requires continuous evaluation.*
There must be continuous monitoring of how well we, as the

leadership team, and the organization are doing as we live and work with a shared purpose, mindset, values, and behaviors. Success happens when the desired changes occur as the natural way of working and when you as a leader don't have to manage them. It happens when people appreciate the value and meaning of the changes and can apply them in their day-to-day work.

6. *Leading meaningful change requires teamwork.*
Change can be easy to make in good and stable times, but it can be especially challenging when we are dealing with emergencies and are under fire. Although I conducted the phone interviews with individuals, it was striking that they consistently spoke with one voice, as one team. They said that they could pick up the phone and call anyone around the table for advice and help if and when needed. One general manager expressed this sentiment as follows: "I know my SLT colleagues have my back. I can reach out to anyone and they will say 'Okay, what do you need?' I know I can count on their support and make it happen."

→ **The SLT's Advice for Other Teams**
In my meeting with the SLT, I also asked if they had any advice for other teams who are leading a meaningful change journey. These are their recommendations:

1. *Spend time planning and aligning:* Don't underestimate the value of the alignment phase. Create a common purpose, values, and principles that will guide your work. Ensure your vision and strategy are aligned with your organization's priorities, operations, and business. Make sure you do this first, then focus on the people. Just look around and get out of your comfort zone. Purposely sit with other people whom you don't normally work with; this will result in a different conversation and learning experience for you and others.

2. *Develop a concrete, clear plan:* Be strategic, laser-focused, methodical, and tactical in planning your change. It's not enough to just say the words, "We are going to change." You need to figure out what you want and need. Be specific about what is changing and then constantly check for progress and understanding about what people need, where they are being successful or not, and the impacts of the change on the entire system. This will help people to see change happening and their role in the process, as well as their impact. What gets measured gets implemented.

3. *Model and embody the change:* Take time to develop change leadership skills—both individually and as a team.

4. *Engage others:* Make time for people. Sometimes you can't hurry them. Sometimes you have to take time to talk, listen, reassure, coach, and have meaningful conversations. Understand and address their "me" issues. Expect people to contribute and help them understand how they will be included and what their opportunities are to provide input. Engage and involve staff and those impacted in the process of understanding why the change is needed. As for the changes, seek out their thoughts and ideas every step of the process. Begin with "This is what I am thinking..." or "Here is what is happening...," then ask, "What do you think?" and "What do you want to accomplish?" Walk around and check the pulse regularly, and keep at it.

5. *Honor teamwork:* Pick the right team. Take time to form and develop a cohesive senior leadership team who will work together, have each other's backs, and support each other through good times and under fire, when it counts. Pay attention to the team's dynamics. It takes work, just like a good marriage.

6. *Create a shared legacy:* Make a commitment to each other. Keep your principles alive by living them. Respect each other. Trust yourself and trust others on the team. Develop ways to work with the diversity of opinions that will make the team stronger.

7. *Master your Use-of-Self:* Develop empathy. Be humble, be self-aware, and understand your impact. Leave your ego at the door. Remember everyone is on the same team. Be easy on yourself and remember that sometimes you don't get it right. Be yourself and be true to your style and personality. You are the real deal. Stretch yourself. Get out of your comfort zone and be vulnerable.

8. *Be open to feedback:* Be open to receiving feedback and constantly seek the feedback you need, not just feedback that will make you feel good. Pay attention to the intent of the message. Identify your go-to people to get meaningful feedback.

9. *Build support systems:* It is lonely at the top. Find ways to know how and when to rely on others. Pick strong allies at the beginning and be patient.

10. *Develop your people:* Grow your people. It's hard to do if you are just building a name for yourself. Focus not only on providing people with the tools, resources, and supports to lead and manage change, but also on seeking the change in mindset required to work differently. Model the values and behaviors that are needed and be clear on what is expected when people show up for work. This change in mindset and behavior is the real stuff. It's inside you.

11. *Pay attention to the financial realities and context of the changes:* However, don't let these stop you from driving change or advancing your strategic initiatives. You might be surprised with the results you can achieve when you are leading in the right place with the right people who have the right skills and clarity about the direction. Anything is possible!

12. *Build and nurture relationships and networks:* Develop the skills to work with and manage the political, stakeholder, and partner relationships and networks. This too requires building cohesive teamwork.

13. *Communicate:* Maintain open, honest communication. Share the employee engagement results and recommendations so people can contribute and develop solutions. Make sure you, as a leader, are present and visible with the people you are leading in operations. It is not always easy to do, given the many geographic locations and the daily pressures you may experience on the front line. Spend time doing ride-alongs and check-ins with people to learn about their day-to-day concerns. Let people walk you through their day and tell you what they are thinking as well as their issues and ideas for improvements.

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This approach to leading meaningful change is more effective than the top-down hierarchical change paradigm. The LMC Framework and Process is a collaborative effort and personal journey. It is well worth it because it yields better results and saves time. This approach is more impactful than speeches and memos that try to enlist support for change. The LMC Process builds strong relationships, provides clarity for everyone about the direction, engages people in shaping the path forward, and helps leaders empower others so they want to support and participate in the change.

This case study illustrates the power of thoughtful leadership, exceptional teamwork, and conscious collaboration. As a small, passionate cohesive team, the senior leaders at the City of Ottawa were successful in creating a culture of One City, One Team by capturing the hearts, minds, and souls of the people they led, worked with, and served. They inspired thousands of city employees and an elected city

council to embrace a mindset, values, and behaviors that continue to permeate across Ottawa at all levels of the organization and beyond.

The City of Ottawa SLT's story is inspiring. It calls us to reflect on our own approach to leading meaningful change. The SLT's courage, commitment, and dedication to a higher purpose as individuals, as leaders, and as a team bring to life the importance of understanding and being intentional about the choices we make in our Use-of-Self and the actions we take to lead change. Together, we can make a positive difference in our workplaces, communities, and society.