



City of Vaughan | Attraction and Retention Plan

Presentation to Council

December 2023





Project Overview

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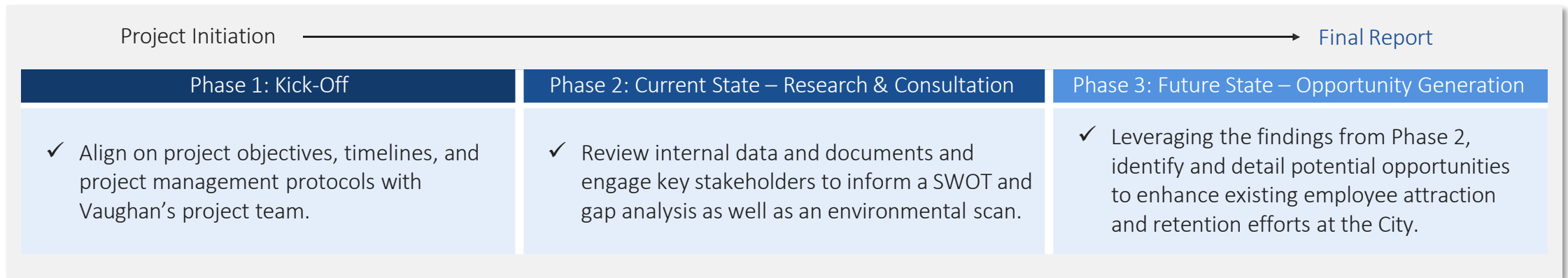
Project Context

The City of Vaughan (“Vaughan”, “City”, or “Corporation”) is dedicated to ensuring its public service can effectively meet the needs of residents, businesses, and community members. However, the world of work is rapidly changing, particularly in a post-pandemic environment, and employers, including municipalities, are contending with a range of issues and challenges, including but not limited to:

- Attracting and retaining top talent;
- Remaining competitive in a crowded marketplace;
- Advancing a diverse, accessible, inclusive, and equitable workforce;
- Integrating new technologies; and
- Promoting continued staff engagement and development.

As a result, refreshing the City’s attraction and retention strategies to align with best practices in and outside of the sector is critical to maintaining the City’s position as an Employer of Choice and ensuring it has the human capital required to support continued service excellence, in alignment with its 2022-2026 Term of Council Strategic Plan.

Scope & Objectives



Methodology and Approach



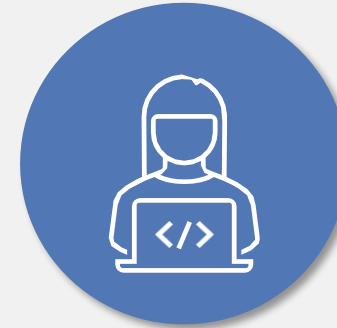
Data & Document Review

Identified and reviewed relevant internal data and documents, including reports, survey data and policies and procedures, to assess key issues and priorities and assist in benchmarking against past performance and establishing a baseline for measuring the effectiveness of proposed attraction and retention strategies.



Interviews

Conducted 1:1 interviews with City senior leaders to gather valuable insights and perspectives regarding attraction, retention, and the challenges faced within the organization. This included senior leaders from Infrastructure, Legal & Administrative Services, Finance, Planning & Growth Management, etc. It also included key members of the Human Resources team.



External Research

Extensive research was conducted to gain insights into best practices from peer municipalities, including the City of Hamilton, City of Mississauga, City of Toronto, and City of Richmond Hill, and other organizations. This involved analyzing data, reports, case studies, and policies to understand key trends and potential improvement opportunities for the City.

Key Findings



Contextualizing the Recommendations

In 2022, the City Vaughan was voted a Greater Toronto Top Employer for the second year in a row, recognizing the commitment and work underway to make the City a best-in-class employer and a great place to work. It is clear that the City is on the right track and yet, at the same time, there are broader workforce challenges in the municipal sector that the Corporation will need to be responsive to. There are many positive initiatives that the City is already driving to improve recruitment and retention, and those efforts should continue and, where appropriate, be prioritized to ensure the organization is able to meet both its workforce needs and the needs of the its workforce.

Employee recruitment and retention challenges exist across the municipal sector

Vaughan is not unique. Many municipalities are facing challenges attracting and retaining the talent they need to effectively deliver their programs and services. Although much of the current data is anecdotal, the issue is drawing considerable attention from sector leaders and associations. Notably, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) has initiated a multi-year Workforce Development Project that will engage Ontario's municipal employers and employees, municipal staff associations, and education partners to understand current workforce challenges, forecast future labour needs and identify solutions that can support municipalities with recruitment and retention.

Changing economic conditions will continue to impact workforce development

The world of work is evolving. The COVID-19 pandemic sparked an unprecedented shift in the job market that continues to have lasting impacts on how people think about work, look for jobs, and value employment. Even in the span of this project, the economy has shifted from a job seeker's market to an employer's market and many organizations are looking to increase efficiency and productivity as they navigate increased operating costs due to inflation. It may be that this external economic volatility may drive less voluntary attrition and increase the value for the stability that the City can offer...but time will be the judge.

Meaningful change requires a multi-pronged approach and corporate support

The issues impacting recruitment and retention are complex, and many of these issues are not entirely within the City's control. To affect change, build a resilient workforce, and maintain a strong pipeline of talent, the City must take a holistic and comprehensive approach to workforce development – there is no single 'golden ticket' to solving current workforce development challenges. Rather, implementing initiatives across a range of areas – from compensation to branding – will ensure the Corporation is moving in the right direction. This will also require support, engagement, and collaboration across the entire corporation.

The City as an Employer – What We Found (1/2)

The following high-level themes emerged from our research and consultation regarding the current state of Vaughan’s ability to recruit and retain talent.



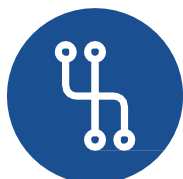
Recruitment and Retention Challenges

Recruitment success varies based on the level of positions and the departments within Vaughan. The City is currently experiencing challenges in recruiting for executive-level roles as well as in the Planning and Legal departments especially, although it is unclear as to what degree these challenges are specific to Vaughan or reflective of broader workforce issues in the sector at large. There does not appear to be particular concern with Vaughan’s retention rate. The most recent employee engagement survey found that 58% of respondents intended to stay employed with the City. On the other hand, there have been some senior departures in the last two years that have driven an increased focus on employee satisfaction and retention.



Compensation & Benefits

In the current context of a highly competitive market for municipal staff, the City may want to review its current compensation structure using a higher percentile as a benchmark. It may also want to explore opportunities to remain competitive in terms of the total compensation *package* – from new or expanded benefits to alternative or additional compensation arrangements. In a recent survey of Ontario CAOs from summer 2023, it was found that all survey respondents were either in the process of conducting full compensation reviews or planning to launch the process soon. It is understood that the City has undertaken a more detailed compensation review in conjunction with this project.



Processes & Systems

Existing human resources processes and systems are not currently optimized to enable efficient and effective HR practices as it relates to recruitment and retention. In addition, data analysis is limited and lagging technology across the corporation hinders the employee experience and adds to staff burdens. Better systems for capturing and managing data and analytics tools are needed to collect, analyze, and interpret HR data. This will help drive decision-making around recruitment, retention, employee engagement, and ultimately contribute to more efficient and effective HR management. The City is undertaking critical work to mature and invest in IT, data and analytics, which can support overall systems improvement in human resources.

The City as an Employer – What We Found (2/2)



Work Environment

Work-life balance and flexibility continue to be important priorities for municipal employees, especially post-COVID. In the City's last engagement survey, work-life balance received favourable scores from only 55% of staff – 5% lower than the benchmark and no improvement from 2019. The City has taken steps to implement policies that support employee well-being, including an Alternative Work Arrangements Policy. Although generally viewed favourably by staff, the policy is not applied consistently across the organization, which has led to mixed results: on one hand, it enables flexibility for departments and on the other, has led to some internal tensions. It may also be worthwhile to pilot other emerging policies and opportunities (e.g., compressed work week), based on demand and interest from current and prospective employees.



Organizational Culture

Corporate culture has improved since 2019 with employee recognition, career advancement opportunities, and the alignment values and vision across the organization identified as important factors in fostering a positive and engaged workforce. However, there is a perception that the City's culture and reputation continues to experience the lingering effects of past instability and challenging Council-staff relations and that this may adversely be impacting staff satisfaction as well as the City's ability to recruit talent. As a result, a focused effort on building the City's brand identify and marketing efforts is important moving forward.



Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

The City has made important strides in advancing DEI within the organization, including through the adoption of the DEI Plan and explicit inclusion of DEI throughout the City's Term of Council Strategic Plan. However, meaningfully advancing the DEI Plan and implementing DEI initiatives in a way that differentiates the employee experience and creates competitive advantage in the 'war for talent' requires investment and prioritization.



Workforce Planning & Leadership Development

Workforce planning and leadership development were identified as areas requiring improvement, although some departments are making headway in this area. Improved performance management tools, coaching and talent development require greater standardization and consistency across the organization and staff should be given the time and space to engage in these critical activities. Succession planning and leadership development is top-of-mind and important in view of OMERS data indicating that almost 60% of active, full-time members are eligible to retire in the next decade.



Overview of Recommendations

Overview of Recommendations

Although many of the current workforce challenges facing the City are not unique to it, there are initiatives and best practices that the City can advance to ensure it has the organizational capacity and bench strength needed to remain a top employer.

This report identifies 37 recommendations to support the City on this journey, which have been grouped into the following six categories, each of which includes specific measures to enhance various aspects of the organization's human resources practices and prepare for future workforce needs and trends.

It is important to note that many of these recommendations are already underway within the City, with some advising enhancements to existing practices and others offering new opportunities for further exploration, pending capacity and resources.

OF RECOMMENDATIONS



Improve efficiency of HR services (1/2)



HR Processes & Systems

The HR team provides a range of important services to the Corporation, so it is important to ensure that the processes and procedures related to these services are as efficient and effective as possible. Increasing efficiency through automation, better technology, etc., will both increase staff satisfaction with these services and reduce HR team burn out.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- R1 Improve overall documentation and communication of HR processes by developing a services catalogue that clearly articulates the key information for each service.
- R2 Complete a thorough HRIS review, focusing in on pain points, understanding the business requirements of the future, and completing a future-state systems architecture to address current state issues and risks.
- R3 Develop a centralized data repository for the effective utilization of employee-related data and enhance HR data analytics capabilities to effectively utilize real-time, employee-related data when making decisions.
- R4 Increase the availability of self-service options for staff to complete basic HR actions to increase management’s accountability for their teams, increase collaboration with HR, and promote feelings of empowerment around people-based decisions.
- R5 Redesign the HR Team’s Operating Model to address pain points and gaps in existing capabilities and create a roadmap for implementation.
- R6 Strengthen HR department's efficiency, workflow, and effectiveness through evaluation of existing processes and opportunities for automation/digitization of processes.
- R7 Create HR “playbooks” that clearly outline how key HR processes are completed and ensure that all staff are effectively trained in all HR processes and procedures.

Improve efficiency of HR services (2/2)



HR Processes & Systems

The HR team provides a range of important services to the Corporation, so it is important to ensure that the processes and procedures related to these services are as efficient and effective as possible. Increasing efficiency through automation, better technology, etc., will both increase staff satisfaction with these services and reduce HR team burn out.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- R8 Develop a playbook to guide corporate internship programs to enable standardization across the organization.
- R9 Implement knowledge management and transfer tools and processes to increase the availability of knowledge sharing opportunities as to support employee engagement efforts.
- R10 Proactively review all job descriptions to ensure that they reflect the most up-to-date realities of the position and its responsibilities and complete job evaluations where descriptions are not accurate.
- R11 Introduce a process for connecting with candidates who have declined offers and document common themes and inform future improvement opportunities.
- R12 Enhance partnerships with educational institutions, labour unions, and professional associations to provide opportunities for internships, co-op placements, etc. as a means of creating a pipeline of skilled talent, especially in areas identified as “high risk” (i.e., planners and lawyers).
- R13 Update approach to campus recruitment events so that they are used more consistently as a tool, targeting programs in high-risk service areas and consider unique strategies to foster deeper engagement from post-secondary students.

Continue to improve employer brand and reputation

☆ Employer Branding & Reputation

Given the lingering historical perceptions that continue to impact Vaughan's brand as an employer, proactively working to develop a deliberate, well-defined employer brand and marketing strategy to support promotion of the brand is important to increase the attractiveness of the City as an employer and the likelihood of successful recruitment efforts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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- R14 Market open positions more broadly and focus key messages on benefits of the role beyond, and in addition to, compensation, such as available development opportunities, high-growth environments, and fulfillment in the role.
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- R15 Consider leveraging roles like the Junior Coordinator, Media & External Communications position, to enhance the use of existing social media accounts (i.e., LinkedIn, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube) to both drive recruitment and proactively shape Vaughan's brand as an employer.
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- R16 Develop and execute an Employer Brand Identity that clearly articulates Vaughan's desired brand including its unique value proposition as an employer.
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- R17 Work with the Corporate and Strategic Communications Team to develop a targeted HR Communications & Marketing Plan to support implementation of the Employer Brand Identity.
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- R18 Participate in job fairs and other career development opportunities in the community to spread awareness of Vaughan's breadth of positions, drive engagement with younger residents, and educate possible candidates about how Vaughan would support the development of their career.
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Enhance leadership development and staff training



Performance Management,
Training & Development

Ensuring an internal pipeline of talent development into more senior positions is critical to ongoing retention efforts and to the maintenance of institutional knowledge. Some departments are already prioritizing this effort and are focused on internal talent development and growth. Employees should also be provided with ‘continuing education’ and training opportunities to build their skill-sets and competencies over time.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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- R19 Develop a strong culture of leadership development including identifying and nurturing high-potential talent, providing comprehensive leadership development opportunities, and promoting a culture of learning and growth at all levels.
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- R20 Allocate dedicated time for managers to focus on performance management and support career advancement. In addition, the City could consider compensating management to acknowledge the effort required to effectively develop their people, which exists in other organizations (e.g., WSIB).
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- R21 Consider updating the performance management framework to improve effectiveness and strengthen buy-in from all levels of the Corporation to drive engagement with, and value from, the process for all involved. The process should be simple and straightforward and clearly articulate how performance information is collected and used to inform HR-related decisions.
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- R22 Enhance and increase opportunities for training and development of all staff and promote a culture of learning by ensuring that leaders encourage, and provide time and space, for staff to participate. This could include an additional day of paid leave or budget allocations for professional development.
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- R23 Building on the *Emerging Leaders Program*, develop a resource (i.e., playbook) to support leaders with workforce planning to ensure business continuity as the required skills and competencies across teams evolve. This includes identifying the skill needs of today and the future and working with HR to ensure that recruitment and retention efforts are aligned to meet those needs.
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Ensure competitive compensation

\$ Compensation & Benefits

The City regularly reviews compensation against a 50th percentile benchmark. Given increasing competition for talent, economic pressures and rising costs of living, the City may want to reevaluate its compensation package and structure to ensure it remains an attractive and competitive employer.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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- R24 The City should consider increasing the percentile benchmark and complete a compensation review of all roles using the new benchmark to address disparities and maintain market competitiveness and enhance negotiation power. *This work is underway and will be reported on separately.*
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- R25 Map career paths and progression across the corporation and assess the job levels and the time it takes to progress through levels to right-size salary schedules and create more consistency across the Corporation. The City could consider beginning this review with the Planning and Legal teams first, as they identified opportunities for improvement in this area specifically.
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- R26 Complete a review of benefits and consider replacing or adjusting benefits offered to focus more on holistic well-being, provide more individualization, and better meet the evolving needs of a modern workforce.
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- R27 Consider supplementing base salaries with alternative compensation strategies to better attract and retain top talent. While the City utilizes some alternative strategies now, it can increase and strengthen its use of these tools to develop a more competitive *total* compensation. Alternative strategies may include pay-for-performance, overtime pay and lieu time.
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Focus on relationship-building and continued engagement

Employee Engagement

The City of Vaughan has already undertaken many efforts to improve staff engagement and is seeing positive results, based on the findings of the most recent Employee Engagement Survey. However, there may be additional opportunities to continue to foster positive relationships and collaboration between Council and staff, between departments and among employees.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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- R28 Continue efforts to build a respectful and collaborative culture, including as it relates to Council-staff relations. In addition to the *Code of Ethical Conduct*, the City may wish to update its Council-staff Relations Policy with clear expectations around Council-staff interactions and communications to continue to foster productive and positive relationships and build trust and accountability.
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- R29 Review the effectiveness of the Employee Engagement Survey (timing, length, etc.). Consider implementing a short employee engagement survey that takes the “pulse” of the Corporation’s culture at more frequent, regular intervals to closely monitor how culture is changing and course correct when / if necessary.
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- R30 Consider more two-way opportunities for staff to provide feedback, share ideas, and ask questions in an open and safe environment (e.g., digital “suggestion box”, two-way feedback system in the performance review process to allow staff to bring forward challenges and issues).
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- R31 Communities of practice may be established to increase collaboration and engagement from staff across departments, enhance competencies and capabilities across the Corporation, and provide more opportunities for staff to connect with one another while exploring shared interests.
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- R32 Consider establishing stronger and more open employee recognition opportunities (e.g., recognition newsletter or an intranet page where staff are encouraged to share messages of thanks and praise across the Corporation).
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- R33 Develop an employee catalogue that highlights each person’s skills, interests, and desired opportunities to enhance visibility and improve collaboration and networking.
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Continue to focus on building an inclusive culture and supportive work environment

Work Environment

Vaughan has made significant progress in improving the culture of the organization. However, culture-building is always a work in progress, and there remains continued opportunity to promote progressive policies that respond to the needs of current and prospective employees.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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- R34 The City has developed a DEI plan to support corporate DEI initiatives. To realize progress on implementation of the *2022-2026 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan* and demonstrate the City's commitment to DEI to current and future employees, the City should prioritize and support the Diversity and Inclusion Officer by providing resources and internal advocacy support for funds to execute the actions outlined therein.
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- R35 Promote Vaughan's DEI efforts, particularly in leadership roles, inside and outside the Corporation to improve employer brand and reputation, and attract more diverse talent (e.g., social media campaign celebrating diversity, sponsor local Pride initiatives, incorporate DEI into the recommended Employer Brand Identity and Marketing Strategy).
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- R36 Assess and address any gaps or areas of improvement in the hybrid work model and drive the more effective use of collaboration tools (i.e., Teams) through the development of clear expectations / guidelines around the use of such tools. Continue to monitor employee utilization and satisfaction with the current hybrid model on an ongoing basis and make changes or improvements as required.
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- R37 Promote and improve work-life balance across the Corporation by implementing strategies to reduce the risk of burn out. This includes exploring or piloting emerging practices such a 4-day work week, a day per week where meetings are discouraged, and development of a work-life balance policy.
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Implementation Planning Guidance

To ensure the successful implementation of the recommendations, the City will need to consider available resources (people, technology, budget, etc.), planning cycles, other Council strategic priorities and objectives to ensure changes are implemented efficiently, effectively, and most importantly, sustainably. The following steps can be developed to support the City as it defines the path forward.



Prioritize recommendations and identify resources for implementation

- Review the City's capacity to implement recommendations.
- Prioritize recommendations based on an effort to impact ratio.



Develop and execute an Implementation Plan around key initiatives

- Organize prioritized recommendations into work streams.
- Develop a detailed Implementation Plan outlining sequencing, responsibility, and implementation timelines.



Establish and execute a clear Change Management & Communications Plan

- Build a Change Management & Communications Plan.
- Execute the Plan to emphasize the purpose and added value of each change to drive transparency, develop trust, and build staff support.



Monitor and evaluate impacts of changes and adjust as needed

- Assess the impacts at regular intervals; course correct quickly when / if required.
- Define the key performance indicators (KPIs). Consider using:
 - Turnover Rate
 - Staff satisfaction / engagement
 - Time to Hire
 - % of successful recruitments
 - Average staff tenure

Next Steps | Sequencing of Recommendations

Each recommendation was scored across 4 categories – effort, time, cost and value / impact – and prioritized based on the average score across the 4 categories. Further operational planning will be required to prioritize and integrate these initiatives into the City’s budgeting and workplan processes. Successful implementation of these recommendations will require alignment, support and resources from across the Corporation.

Existing	Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 2b	Priority 3
<i>Continue ongoing work.</i>	<i>Prioritize completion of these recommendations first as they are overall relatively simple to implement.</i>	<i>Priority 2a: Create formal corporate projects and start the planning and preparation activities required for initiation.</i>	<i>Priority 2b: Prioritize execution of these while planning for priority 2a recommendations is underway.</i>	<i>Delivering moderate to low value and requiring high investment of time / people / \$, these should be advanced when there is adequate capacity.</i>
R8 Intern Program Playbook	R20 Allocate Time for Performance Management	R2 HRIS Review	R37 Promote Better Work-Life Balance	R9 Enhance Knowledge Management
R7 HR Playbooks	R1 HR Services Catalogue	R27 Enhance Use of Alternative Compensation Strategies	R4 Self-Service Options	R29 Reconsider Employee Engagement Survey
R12 Enhance Recruitment Partnerships	R30 Increase Two-way Communication with Staff	R3 Centralized HR Data Repository	R34 Invest in Executing DEI Plan	R36 Monitor Hybrid Work Model
R13 Increase Presence at Campus Recruitment Events	R31 Establish Communities of Practice	R5 & R6 HR Operations Review: (R5) Redesign the HR Team’s Operating Model; HR Process Review & Improvement (R6)	R15 Enhance Use of Social Media	R26 Review & Enhance Employee Benefits
R23 Support Workforce Planning	R22 Enhance Employee Training & Development	R16 & R17 Vaughan Brand & Marketing: (R16) PlanDevelop Employer Brand Identity; HR Communications & Marketing Plan: (R17)	R19 Enhance Leadership Development	R24 Update Compensation Percentile Benchmark
R18 Participate in Community Career-Related Activities	R14 Increase Recruitment Marketing		R11 Develop Failed Recruitment Lessons Learned Process	R33 Develop an Employee Catalogue
R28 Continue to Improve Culture			R25 Map Career Progression & Right-Size Salary Progression	R10 Review & Update Job Descriptions
R35 Promote DEI Efforts			R32 Create Strong, Open Employee Recognition	R21 Update the Performance Management Framework



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