THE CITY: UNDERSTANDING HOW FRONTLINE LEADERS CAN INSPIRE 
EXCELLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE

by

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We accept this thesis as conforming to the required standard

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ABSTRACT

The City is a large complex government organization that provides a diverse array of services to the community from recreation to engineering. The City has undergone services reviews resulting in improvements in technology, structure, and process in order to improve efficiencies and increase accountability to the community. In addition to the service improvements, expectations of leaders have changed in order to meet the new and changing demands of the transforming organization.

In 2012, the City released its first corporate business plan that articulated the goals and objectives of the organization; one of the goals specifically outlined the City’s desire to inspire excellence in the workplace. This study took this corporate goal and considered it in the context of frontline leaders across the organization, and this inquiry investigated the question: how frontline leaders could inspire excellence in the workplace?

Short and long-term recommendations resulted from this research inquiry, which included (1) increase the awareness of inspiring excellence, (2) develop a frontline leader excellence retreat, (3) develop a vision of inspiring excellence, (4) create a leadership framework for excellence, (5) develop a decision making framework, and (6) create an organizational culture of excellence.

This action research project was conducted in accordance with the Royal Roads University (2011) Research Ethics Policy. Every effort was taken to ensure that the research was conducted fairly, with respect and met all legal requirements. In general, the study was of low risk to both the organization and its participants, and these efforts were enhanced by keeping the organization confidential and removing all organizational identifiers.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER ONE: FOCUS AND FRAMING

The City is the local government agency with a population of approximately 600,000 residents (Statistics Canada, 2014). It offers civic services to residents and business and employs approximately 6,740 bargaining unit employees and 860 exempt employees (Research Analyst, personal communication, November 20, 2014). This inquiry was focused on the 185 frontline exempt leaders who are employed across the organization. For the purposes of this study, the name of the organization was kept confidential. This decision was made in partnership with key stakeholders prior to the research having been conducted. The decision was weighed against the purpose of the research and the desire to protect the anonymity of the study’s participants. As such, the organization is referred to throughout using the pseudonym “City”.

The organization’s change goal is to enable and support frontline leaders to “inspire excellence in the workplace” (City, 2012, p. 11). In order to support the organization achieve the desired change, this research project explored what conditions, processes, and practices leaders required to inspire excellence. Inspiring excellence in the workplace was taken directly from one of the City’s five corporate governance goals as set out in the City’s Corporate Business Plan (City, 2014a). Goal four in its entirety is “the city inspires excellence in the workplace and in its employees: The City develops and sustains a dynamic, healthy and safe workplace environment that consistently attracts and retains top-quality people and enables them to perform at their best.” (p. 10). A list of all of the corporate governance goals can be viewed in Appendix A.

The inquiry topic was determined through stakeholder consultation, alignment to corporate goals, priorities and objectives, and through my work as the City’s leadership practitioner. Stakeholder meetings, anecdotal information, personal observation, and quantitative
results in areas of engagement and enablement from the 2010 and 2013 employee engagement survey results (Hay Group, 2010, 2013) identified that there was sufficient evidence to support the need to pursue the desired organizational change.

Similar to the 2010 results, the 2013 survey identified that 42% of respondents stated that their confidence in leadership was unfavourable, and 20% of respondents stated that their confidence in leadership was neutral (Hay Group, 2010, 2013). These results were reinforced by the Manager of Talent Strategy (personal communication, November 12, 2013), who acknowledged that there is a gap between the City’s workplace excellence goal and the ability of frontline leaders to achieve it. Furthermore, it was discussed that skill and ability gaps for frontline leaders may be a result of some fundamental issues, including an understanding of how the City defines workplace excellence and a lack or a misalignment of training, resources, and tools to support frontline leaders achieve corporate goals (Manager of Talent Strategy, personal communication, November 12, 2013). In addition, my own role provided some real-time insight into the challenges and opportunities that leaders face on a daily basis—all of which further supported the need for change.

My role as the leadership practitioner for the City involves providing support for leaders by creating targeted, blended learning programs for intact teams across the City as part of the Leadership Development Program. The program has had measureable successes for its participants. There is, however, further opportunity to explore the ability of frontline leaders to inspire excellence in the workplace, as the current program is a relatively new offering at the City and has yet to reach the breadth of the 185 frontline leaders who were the focus of this inquiry.
In order to fully explore excellence in the workplace, the following inquiry question and subquestions were developed. The primary question was: How can the City’s frontline leaders inspire excellence in the workplace? In order to provide additional context to the inquiry, the following list of subquestions were included:

1. What is the definition of excellence at the City?
2. What conditions, processes, and practices currently support excellence at the City?
3. What conditions, processes, and practices could be developed or augmented to enable frontline leaders to inspire excellence in the workplace?

My personal interest in this inquiry resulted from my desire to see leaders achieve organizational goals while they work to achieve alignment between operations and strategic directives. It also stemmed from my interest in building an engaged workplace that retains and attracts high-performing employees. I have a strong level of organizational commitment and pride and wish to make a meaningful contribution to help the City achieve a unique organizational competitive advantage in the area of workplace excellence.

**Significance of the Inquiry**

Less than 30% of respondents of the 2013 employee engagement survey stated that they had confidence in leadership at the City (Hay Group, 2013), which is an issue the City has been working to address since it held its first engagement survey in 2010. In 2010, the City identified four top priorities for improvement across the organization. These areas were (a) clear and promising direction, (b) confidence in leadership, (c) development opportunities, and (d) work structure and processes—all specific indicators from the engagement survey (City, 2014b).
These priority areas were taken one step further and were transformed into action items through employee focus groups and follow-up questionnaires (City, 2014b).

One of the resulting outcomes included a specific action related to confidence in leadership. The action to enhance leadership effectiveness was established through “defining leadership expectations (leadership behaviours and skills or “competencies”), building the leadership competencies into the managers’ Performance Development process, [and] providing tools and support” (City, 2014b). This focus on enhancing leadership development created significance for the organization with regards to exploring how frontline leaders at the City could enhance their leadership competency while they created alignment with corporate governance goal number four. As a result, the following inquiry topic emerged: How can frontline leaders inspire excellence in the workplace?

The following stakeholders were identified for the purpose of carrying out this inquiry: frontline exempt leaders (i.e., the targets), the Manager of Talent Strategy and the Manager of Organizational Development (i.e., sponsors), the Director of Organizational Development & Strategic Initiatives, the General Manager of Human Resources, and several senior-level leaders (i.e., advocates). Each of these stakeholders provided organizational context information and acted as project supporters throughout the inquiry. In addition, Branch Managers and Change Consultants (i.e., change agents) and the Corporate Management Team (i.e., advocates) were identified as key roles in the implementation of any recommendations that resulted from the inquiry. Refer to Appendix B for full details of the roles of each stakeholder as identified through Stringer’s (2007) lens. Lastly, in my own role as researcher and change agent, I played a key role in the process and will continue to do so through future phases of research.
The benefits and opportunities the organization gained from exploring this topic included (a) a greater understanding of what was required for frontline leaders to inspire excellence; (b) information on what conditions, processes, and practices frontline leaders required to inspire excellence; and (c) recommendations for solutions to enable frontline leaders to inspire excellence. This inquiry also allowed for a collaborative process that engaged frontline leaders and senior leaders throughout the research process, thus building buy-in and ownership related to its outcomes.

Some secondary benefits were identified and included improved union–management relationships, improved citizen service, and an overall environment of trust that would support future change. Although these were seen as favourable outcomes, they were not considered further for the purposes of this inquiry and were deemed areas for inquiry in future action research cycles. Had the City not addressed this opportunity for change, the organization may have been at risk of maintaining the status quo and not achieving the meaningful integration of its corporate objectives into operational practices (Manager of Talent Strategy, personal communication, November 12, 2013).

Organizational Context

With a commitment to responsiveness, excellence, integrity, leadership, and learning (City, 2012, p. 8), the City’s values addressed many of the inquiry’s focus area and acted as an initial framework to link the inquiry to the organization’s ideals. In particular, the excellence, leadership, and learning values had a direct correlation to the inquiry topic of this investigation. Furthermore, the City (2012) has described its values in action as (a) being responsive to the needs of citizens and colleagues, (b) approaching work unbiased and with sensitivity, (c) being
open and honest and honouring commitments, (d) aspiring to set examples that others will follow, and (e) being a learning workplace that grows through experiences (p. 8), which connected to the change, learning, and continuous improvement approach of this inquiry.

The City is a complex system comprised of eight departments and three boards (City, 2014c). It offers services in a vast array of businesses and is structured by departments in community services; planning and development; financial services; engineering services; parks and recreation; real estate and facilities management; city manager’s office; police, fire, and rescue; and human resources. For the purposes of this inquiry, two of the City’s boards, the Police Department and the Public Libraries were not included, and the Fire and Rescue Services was also excluded. All three groups operate as distinct organizations with independent cultures and processes.

The organizational structure is directed by a community of residents, who elect the City’s governing official once every four years (City, 2014c). The organizational structure is broken down by functional area departments, all of which report up to the City Manager, and the City Manager reports directly to the Mayor and Council (City, 2014b).

Each department has a general manager, and the team of general managers, who report to the City Manager, act as part of the City’s corporate management team. A full organizational chart can be referred to in Appendix C. For the purposes of this inquiry, the participant pool was approximately 198 employees, comprised of frontline leaders and purposefully selected senior managers.

Another layer of organizational complexity results from the union and association relationships with the City. The City works with eight unions and collective agreements and
three associations (Research Analyst, personal communication, August 25, 2013). Each relationship is different (i.e., unions and the City have collective agreements, while associations have optional membership and liaise with the City on issues that affect the group), and each relationship outlines various expectations for the City and its members.

Corporate priorities and goals are communicated through the Corporate Business Plan (City, 2012). Through this plan, the City has said,

This document sets out the [City’s] Corporate Management Team’s unified view of the business priorities for the City over the next ten years. It is an essential management tool designed to ensure that every staff member understands the highest level priorities that have been established by the Corporate Management Team, so that the organization as a whole is able to deliver on Council priorities as well as maintain the City’s key services, with the ultimate goal of providing the best possible value for the City’s citizens and customers. (p. 3)

The plan is augmented by department business plans, whereby each department creates actions and deliverables that support the overall corporate business plan. The goal of creating the City plan was to unify longer-term planning among City departments and agencies, develop and implement performance-based management, create more integrated strategic decision-making throughout the organization, and enhance collaboration, both internally among various City departments and agencies and externally between the City and its partners (City, 2013a).

With a strategic lens on how the City provided services, business transformation was at the forefront of daily operations at the City. As noted by the City (2013a),

In 2008, the people . . . expressed that they wanted to live in a City that was working hard to address climate change, enabling economic growth, ensuring affordable housing and eliminating homelessness and that is safe and secure with a vibrant arts and culture community. In order to create efficiency and capacity to achieve these aspirations while delivering quality programs and services the City’s leadership established the City Services Review . . . in 2009. (para. 1)
The City Service Review team conducted a review of services across the organization that resulted in over 1,000 effectiveness and efficiency recommendations, of which many were adopted and change projects initiated (City, 2013b). At the time this study began, there were five projects in progress, all of which had a designated change consultant working on the project teams. Many of the projects have resulted in department reorganizations or restructures and employee lay-offs, which have placed increased pressure on leaders across the organization (City, 2013b).

The organizational context described impacted my study in several ways. There was a direct alignment between the desired change goal of the project and the expectations of leaders, but there was also increased pressure on leaders to meet the demands of the various change projects occurring across the organization as well. The rate at which change was occurring highlighted the need for increased leadership competency to meet the challenge of day-to-day operations and to be enabled to inspire excellence.

**Systems Analysis of the Inquiry**

To thoroughly consider the inquiry, an understanding of the City systems was required. As described by Kouzes and Posner (2012), leaders at the City began with a vision of what the City could look like. They had “the end in mind by imagining what might be possible” (p. 104) when they developed the corporate business plan. However, the question remained as to how inspiring workplace excellence would be achieved (Manager of Talent Strategy, personal communication, November 27, 2013). The systems that influenced this research project included Bolman and Deal’s (2008) political and human resources frames as well as Senge’s (2006) model of systems thinking.
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The City is political by the nature of its operations. It exists within a political environment where coalitions form as members of different groups require the resources and or support of others. These coalitions exist even though individual desired outcomes, values and cultures are not necessarily aligned (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 196). The seven organizational departments and one board included in this study are comprised of many work groups that are responsible for various functions of work. As a result, coalitions are part of doing business. These factors placed pressure on the system and its subsystems and result in bargaining and negations at all levels of the organization (p. 195).

Other factors that affect the political frame at the City are the Council and the eight unions. Council priorities, which have been adopted by the City into the City’s Corporate Business Plan, and are, executed daily, impact the way business is conducted. These can shift and may, depending on where during the election period the organization finds itself, be long or short-term. In addition, union–City relationships can impact business operation: for example, collective bargaining negotiations can result in an impact of the City’ ability to deliver its services. Both of these situations are cyclical and have finite timeframes. They also result in changing priorities, varying expectations and adjusting agendas that can continually influence day-to-day operations and strategic deliverables.

The human resources frame is founded in the assumptions that “people skills, attitudes, energy, and commitment are vital resources that can make or break an enterprise” (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 122). Creating linkages between motivation and mutual employee organization need as well as being able to find meaning in the work being done and feelings of satisfaction are part of this perspective (p. 122). As the City has established workplace excellence as a priority there is an
identified focus on the relationship between organization and employees. The influence this frame had on the research project was the risk associated with not having the right people in the right place to enact the desired change. Bolman and Deal (2008) noted that “when the fit between people and organizations is poor, one or both suffer: individuals may feel neglected or oppressed, and organizations suffer because individuals withdraw their efforts” (p. 137). If the leaders did not share the organization’s vision or values and if they did not want to move in the direction of the proposed change, working towards implementing the recommendations to achieve the change goals would be challenging. As Senge (2006) stated, “When there is a genuine vision . . . people excel and learn, not because they are told to, but because they want to (p. 9).

The internal and external factors that impacted the targets of this inquiry are shown in Figure 1. Within the larger City system, each leader managed the operations and employees of their subsystem, but they faced considerable influence from other internal and external sources.
Figure 1. City systems analysis including internal and external pressures: Frontline leaders.

To understand how leaders can inspire workplace excellence, consideration needed to be paid to interdependencies and influences. At the core of the figure are the leaders—their teams and day-to-day operations—that are circled by organization policy and procedures, goals and objectives,
and the support of their senior leaders. External influences identified in the system analysis (i.e., square just outside the inner circle) include the public, Mayor and Council, unexpected demands on operations, and tax dollars. All of these elements are bound by the City’s governing legislation, including the Charter (City, 1953), and the Council enacted bylaws (City, 2014d).

**Chapter Summary**

The context in which this research inquiry took place was outlined in this chapter. I provided an overview of the organization and the internal and external influences that were evident at the time the inquiry was initiated. I also outlined and detailed the desired change goals of this inquiry as well as the stakeholders involved in the inquiry.

The City is a large political organization governed by a legislative framework that is committed to providing quality public services. The organizational structure is diverse, and each business unit faces pressure from internal and external parties. With a corporate goal to inspire excellence in the workplace, this inquiry explored how frontline leaders within this organization could achieve the desired goal.

A review of relevant literature related to excellence, change management, and transformation leadership is provided in the following chapter. The goal was to explore the themes associated with the inquiry topic in order to present academic support for the desired change. In subsequent chapters, I will outline the research approach and conduct, describe the research outcomes and conclusions, and present recommendations as to how the frontline leaders can work towards the goal of inspiring excellence in the workplace.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This action research inquiry was based on the City’s desire to better understand what workplace excellence is and how frontline leaders can inspire excellence within it. As such, a review of relevant literature pertaining to workplace excellence and change management principles has been conducted. In order to explore these topics fully, definitions for workplace excellence, indicators for success, and possible hindrances that may impede an organization’s ability to achieve workplace excellence were considered. This was augmented by a review of the knowledge, skills, abilities, and attributes required to support leaders in creating workplace excellence. Through this literature review, I also considered motivation to lead, organizational culture, and the capacity for excellence and change through the lens of transformational leadership. This review of available literature provided a deeper understanding of the concepts related to the inquiry topic of how can frontline leaders inspire excellence in the workplace and provided theoretical support for the City.

Workplace Excellence

To develop an understanding of workplace excellence, the following review of literature explored how the reviewed authors view workplace excellence. Subtopics covered in this discussion include the following: (a) defining workplace excellence; (b) the knowledge, skills, abilities, and attributes leaders require to inspire workplace excellence; and (c) indicators for success and challenges that may hinder a leader’s ability to achieve workplace excellence.

**Defining workplace excellence.** In order to understand what workplace excellence is, I begin this literature review by exploring a definition through the work of several authors. Many approached excellence in the form of an excellence framework or through the total quality
management (TQM) frame. It is these approaches that can create differentiation between a good and great organization. This was supported by the work of and Al-Tabbaa, Ankrah, and Glad (2013) and Ringrose (2013), who all explored these frameworks for excellence in detail.

Ringrose (2013) wrote that “organizations implementing [excellence] frameworks outperform their industry counterparts on key performance measures” (p. 441), while Al-Tabbaa et al. (2013) stated that “the TQM approach embraces the fundamental concepts of continuous improvement, and process management” (p. 591). Similarly, they believed that workplace excellence can be a result of an excellence approach or framework (Al-Tabbaa et al., 2013; Ringrose, 2013). These findings were supported further by the research of Corbett and Angell (2011), who found that when organizations adopted TQM and business excellence, they were able to achieve their desired outcomes without any “barbed-wire barrier” that would stop an organization from succeeding (p. 767).

Developing business excellence enables organizations to create a competitive advantage and long-term sustainability (Al-Tabbaa et al., 2013; Ringrose, 2013); however, there are unique noteworthy distinctions with regards to workplace excellence between for-profit organization and not-for-profit organizations. Based on their business excellence for competitive advantage model, Aras and Crowther (2010) identified that the pillar of workplace excellence is profitability (p. 574), which is not a factor for not-for-profit or public organization. However, this does not take away from the ability of not-for-profit or public organization to employ excellence models. Al-Tabbaa et al. (2013) contradicted Aras and Crowther and stated that the adoption of traditional workplace excellence frameworks better suits organizations where bottom line results are not a driving factor (p. 606).
In the article, “Development of an Organizational Excellence Framework,” Ringrose (2013) provided a clear framework for organizational excellence. She highlighted the components of the excellence framework in three rings, which were comprised of principles, practices, and measurement and improvement (p. 445). Ringrose explained that in order to achieve organizational excellence, nine principles were required at the inner-most core of the model and, ultimately, within organizations. These included (a) leadership involvement, whereby senior management establishes and communicates organizational direction; (b) alignment amongst systems; (c) work processes and activities align with the established direction of senior managers; (d) customer focus; (e) involve people to ensure teamwork and collaboration, thus giving employees the opportunity to develop; (f) prevention-based process management; (g) develop and maintain partnerships and relationships; (h) continuous improvement; (i) data-based decision making; and (j) societal commitment (pp. 445–446). Ringrose then identified the subsequent practices required for workplace excellence. These management practices included (a) establishing good governance, which was also supported by the work of Aras and Crowther (2010); (b) using leadership to create a culture of excellence; (c) planning for the future of the business; (d) understanding the customer; (e) human resource planning; (f) improving work processes; (g) creating processes for supplier and partner engagement; (h) developing a strategy to manage resources wisely; and (i) continuously measuring and improving day-to-day operations (p. 446).

The knowledge, skills, abilities, and attributes leaders require to inspire workplace excellence. In order to further understand workplace excellence and the impact leaders can have on inspiring it, a review of literature related to leader knowledge, skills, abilities, and attributes
(KSAA) was conducted. The first KSAs identified in the literature as highly desirable were a leader’s ability to be influential (Greer, 2011; Pater, 2013) and his or her level of emotional intelligence (Anderson & Michaelson, 2011; Rockett, 2010). Through the literature, I uncovered a clear link between these two key leadership KSAs. Anderson and Michaelson (2011) demonstrated how emotional intelligence was a key element of a leader’s ability to influence with impact. They described influencing as “the act or power of producing an effect without apparent exertion of force or direct exercise of command” (p. 7). When they observed what people needed to do regularly at work in order to be successful, they identified that a leader’s ability to influence with impact was an essential ingredient for excellence (p. 7).

In addition to influencing and emotional intelligence, Greer (2011) noted that commitment was a necessary attribute for successful leaders. He stated,

> People expect leaders to have strong morals, to stand for something and to have conviction. . . . Committed leaders are not merely bystanders or people with a business title or positions. Followers must understand and believe that their leaders are in for the long haul. (p. 30)

This married nicely with the concepts of Pater (2013), who stated, “Leaders are able to weave together the right strands of science and art into strong organizational wrap and weft” (p. 37). Both of these two concepts also supported the outline of management practices described by Ringrose (2013). The concept of emotional intelligence, influencing skills, commitment, and morals can be linked to creating a culture of excellence through communication and accountability, as well as removing barriers for organizational effectiveness, allocating resources, and reaffirming the organization’s place in the market (Greer, 2011; Pater, 2013; Ringrose, 2013).
Additional leader KSAAs were described in the literature, which included courage, optimism, improvement focused, embracer of change, big picture thinker, collaborative, great listener, excellent communication skills, business intelligence, time management skills, and negotiation skills (Anderson & Michaelson, 2011; Greer, 2011; Pater, 2013; Rockett, 2010), all of which had connections and further supported the aspects described in the excellence frameworks and TQM approaches previously described.

All of the literature available for this review and researchers who described the KSAAs of leaders to create workplace excellence agreed that there is no simple approach to achieve workplace excellence through leadership. However, they stated that if leaders are willing and committed to making a difference and continually moving forward, the workplace environment can be positively impacted (Anderson & Michaelson, 2011; Greer, 2011; Pater, 2013; Rockett, 2010).

**Indicators for success as well as challenges that may hinder a leader’s ability to achieve workplace excellence.** Achieving and maintaining workplace excellence is a continuous process, and the ability of leaders to maintain workplace excellence may be faced with ongoing opportunities and challenges. Aras and Crowther (2010) addressed sustainability of business excellence through competitive advantage and sustained profitability, corporate reputation, and sound governance (p. 565). Their view of ongoing workplace excellence made no mention of the ability or role of leaders in this endeavour and, as such, is juxtaposed by the work of Burg and Mann (2008) and Manley (2004). These authors placed more emphasis on developing culture and values as a measurement for achieving excellence. Burg and Mann stated that employees need to understand how their work connects with the bigger picture and the goals of the
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organization in order to achieve excellence (p. 10). Furthermore, Manley believed excellence could be achieved through a simple set of key culture characteristics (p. 2). She believed that these four characteristics were a focus on people, transparent decision making, a focus on service, and developing leadership potential that is based in empowerment, continuous modernization and innovation around customers (p. 2). The writings of these authors can also be linked to the excellence framework of Ringrose (2013). In particular, Ringrose postulated that senior managers need to clearly communicate organizational direction and align the work of employees in achieving the direction (p. 446), which was mirrored in Manley’s work.

In addition to providing a conceptual framework for workplace excellence, Ringrose (2013) identified measureable indicators of excellence, including organizational relevance, capability to manage change, meeting objectives, community perception, quality of products and services, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, employee satisfaction, and financial performance (p. 447). Although Aras and Crowther (2010) limited their measurement of excellence to profitability, sustainability, governance, and reputation, they did believe that “it is the balance between [the factors] which is the key to excellence performance” (p. 573). This was similar to the work of Ringrose, who had provided criteria in all aspects of the framework to assess progress (p. 451). The result of this review is that although there are varying perspectives on how and what to measure in assessing workplace excellence, these authors agreed that measurement was a valuable tool that aligned with the pillar of continuous improvement (Aras & Crowther, 2010; Ringrose, 2013).

What has been gained through this review is an understanding of what can be defined as workplace excellence, what can enable leaders to achieve it, and what some of the challenges
and opportunities are with employing an excellence approach. In addition, consideration was given to how measuring excellence can support sustainment and demonstrate organizational value. To understand more fully how an organization can shift from its current state into a state of workplace excellence, a review of literature related to change management was conducted. In order to understand how frontline leaders can inspire excellence in the workplace, it was beneficial to consider what was required to support leaders achieve the desired change.

**Change Management**

In order to consider effective change management processes, I reviewed what change is in an organization, who impacts and drives change, and what are barriers and tools to enhance change effectiveness. The following review of the literature is intended to develop a more comprehensive understanding of change management in order to support the research study.

**Defining change management.** When considering change, the authors agreed that change is an iterative, constant process and that there are many sources and reasons for change (Gilley, Gilley, & McMillan, 2009a; Stanleigh, 2013). However, Gilley, Gilley, and McMillan (2009b) expanded the definition of change to “an evolutionary perspective as transitional, transformation, or developmental” (p. 76). This definition provides three types of change processes that are relevant in augmenting one’s understanding of the change that organizations can undergo. Gilley et al. (2009b) described transitional change as a process that improves the current state through steady change in people, structure, procedures, or technology. They noted it tends to be management-driven, with a focus on enabling the organization to get better at what it does (p. 76). This is in contrast to the concept of transformational change that is more leadership-driven and focuses on changing culture or strategic direction as a result of a merger or
acquisition (p. 76). Finally, developmental change is described as a process whereby change is rooted in continuous and manageable growth that focuses on competitive advantage (p. 77).

When further consideration was given to competitive advantage and the benefits of change, Gilley et al. (2009a) said, “Organizations that support and implement continuous and transformational change remain competitive” (p. 38). They also provided a delineation of leader roles in transformational change management by describing a process by which role clarity can be outlined and leadership ambiguity can be mitigated:

Top management develops the organization’s vision, mission and strategic long-term plans and corporate wide change initiatives. Middle management furthers executive strategies and plans by developing shorter term operational plans that give life to top management directives. Frontline managers actually implement operational plans and engage in daily work, processes, and changes required to satisfy middle and upper management proposals. (p. 39)

There were two key considerations presented when evaluating change management. In addition to the roles of different levels of leaders described above, the research considered for this review identified several similar or supporting approaches on the role of leaders in change and what can make leaders successful throughout a change process. Specifically, Gilley et al. (2009a) stated, “Leader’s thoughts and skills are manifested in actions, structures, and processes that enhance or impede change, further strengthening the linkage between leader behaviours and effectiveness in implementing change” (p. 40).

Gilley et al. (2009a) further suggested that “an interpersonal skills-based model that draws on leaders’ abilities to motivate, communicate and build teams will increase leaders’ success with change” (p. 43) and that successful change results in changed employee behaviour (p. 43). These findings were further supported by Stanleigh (2013), who noted that conducting
meetings, communicating, teambuilding, improving self-esteem, and coaching can support the success of change by reducing individual resistance to the change (p. 39). Whether individuals are categorized as “(a) innovators, (b) early adopters, (c) early majority, (d) late majority, and (e) laggards . . . motivating, communicating, and creating supportive environments are associated by positively leading change” (p. 43).

When “change failure rates [are] above 60 percent” (Stanleigh, 2013, p. 39), recent research indicated that change programs rarely have the desired outcomes and that failure can have significant impact for an organization, including lost opportunities, competitive vulnerability, and cynicism and fear (Gilley et al., 2009a, 2009b; Stanleigh, 2013). In such a situation, consideration for the skills and approach of leaders is deemed invaluable.

**Motivation to lead.** As stated by some authors, there is a link between change management and motivation (Gilley et al., 2009a, 2009b; Stanleigh, 2013), and as such, in the following review, I consider leader motivation and, in particular, their Motivation to Lead (MTL). The theory of MTL was explored through the work of Chan and Drasgow (2001). They defined MTL as the “personal characteristics that a leader brings to a situation” (p. 482). They identified the characteristics as both learned knowledge and skills and individual differences, and they looked at the social abilities and cognitive ability of individuals in order to present how an individual’s motivation to lead others can affect leadership outcomes (pp. 481–482). Three types of motivation were identified in the work of Chan and Drasgow, and the theory continues to be used and tested in studies today. The motivators identified as part of MTL, as put forward by Clemmons and Fields (2011), include:
a) some people just like to lead others and are directed primarily by affective-identity MTL; (b) others will put forth the effort to lead because of a sense of duty or responsibility and are directed by social-normative MTL; and (c) other people may only lead if they are not calculative about the cost and benefits of leading thus may be directed by non-calculative MTL. (pp. 587–588)

Based on their research on MTL, Chan and Drasgow (2001), made no assumption that people are born with the motivation to lead others, nor was it assumed that people have unconscious needs for achievement, power, or affiliation (p. 482), but they did highlight that motivating is a “within-person processes that predict the direction, intensity, and persistence of behaviour” (p. 482). Clemmons and Fields (2011) took this research a step further and described MTL as a “person’s effort to assume leadership training, roles and responsibilities” (p. 587) and can be used as a predictor “of the knowledge, skills and abilities needed for leadership success” (p. 588). The value of understanding a leaders MTL may be the ability to identify “individual-differences . . . that affects a leader’s or leader-to-be’s decisions to assume leadership training, roles, and responsibilities and that affect his or her intensity of effort at leading and persistence as a leader” (Chan & Drasgow, 2001, p. 482).

Although much of the research reviewed in this section builds upon the work of Chan and Drasgow (2001), there is more recent work that has expanded the foundation of MTL to explore how other theories can influence or impact leader motivation. The concept of emotional intelligence was added to the work of Chan and Drasgow (2001) in 2011. A study by Cantano, Hong, and Liao (2011) suggested that “individuals who were able to use their emotions related higher in terms of affective-identity and social-normative MTL, [which suggested] that use of emotions was the most salient introspective factor in motivating employees” (p. 335). As a result, there is the possibility that there is a “more proximal precursor to leader emergence and
carries the indirect effect of EI [emotional intelligence]” (p. 335). Cantano et al. went on and considered how “individuals with a real ability to use their emotions to facilitate thought processes and motivate themselves may be encouraged to achieve more and take on greater leadership” (p. 335). Similarly, Clemmons and Fields (2011) considered individual values and how they relate to MTL. In particular, they “examined the incremental contribution personal values play in determining which type of MTL a leader may have” (p. 595) and found that self-regulatory focus, the process by which people seek to align themselves to goals and standards, and personal values may predict the type of MTL a leader possesses (p. 590).

**Goal alignment for organizational success.** Through this literature review, I have looked at organizational change and what can motivate leaders to lead change. However, there are barriers that will impede the ability of change to be adopted successfully and sustained. The following explores some potential challenges to successful change and the alignment of change to organizational goals as a mitigating factor to support change success.

Although there are many factors that may result in change failure, Seo et al. (2012) described that there is rising evidence that points to the role of employees during change (p. 130). Gilley et al. (2009a) described this concept further, noting that the different behaviours, processes, frameworks, routines, values, or goals need to be adopted in order for change to occur, and therefore, it is essential to understand the individual, team, or organization that is involved (p. 40). These concepts centre heavily in the human element for successful change. Kiefer (2005) and Seo et al. (2012) both expanded on this concept, noting that organizations should promote positive experiences and minimize negative ones for their employees. Negative emotions may
lead to low levels of trust and/or withdrawal from work, whereas positive experiences can enable long-term commitment to support organizational change.

The role of leaders and leadership in creating a positive environment that can result in successful change was then explored in the literature. Gilley et al. (2009a) believed that it is the actions of leaders along with the system they act within that can influence change, which in turn, makes leader behaviours a real factor for change effectiveness (p. 40). Seo et al. (2012) also identified the role of the leader in change, but narrowed the definition of leader to the employee’s direct manager. They believed that because the direct manager is physically and psychologically closer than any other level of management, they are acutely positioned to impact the emotions, behaviours, beliefs, and attitudes of their team (p. 156).

Leadership was explored further by looking at other aspects and roles leaders may play in the successful implementation of change. Gill (2003) said, “While change must be well managed—it must be planned, organised, directed and controlled—it also requires effective leadership to introduce change successfully: it is leadership that makes the difference” (p. 307). This led to an inquiry of what leaders must do or possess in order to lead change effectively. Gilley et al. (2009a) concluded that leaders who have skills in motivating, communicating, and creating an environment that is supportive of teams will be more effective in driving change (p. 45) and that “leaders’ deliberate and disciplined actions, grounded in a solid base of interpersonal skills, enable effective change” (p. 40). Change often fails by leaders because of naïve adoptions of fads, lack of communication that leads to rumours, lack of commitment, and/or providing little to no compelling evidence for the benefits of the change (Gill, 2003, p. 307). Gilley et al. went on to describe that a lack of personal openness to change, limited or no
change management skills and limited understanding of change management principles will adversely impact change objectives resulting in little or no success (p. 40).

Lines, Selart, Espedal, and Johansen (2005) added another element to the ability of leaders to engage and successfully drive change. They identified trust as a make or break factor (p. 222). They stated that “trust is an increasingly important issue in today’s organization. In an ever more chaotic world, distrust becomes the overarching attitude” (p. 222). It was described further that at times of ongoing change, when maintaining trust is especially crucial for successful change, managerial actions are under especially close scrutiny by employees (p. 222). As employees can regard change as a “quick fix” (Gill, 2003, p. 308), there is greater need for leaders to focus on maintaining high levels of efficiency and allowing employees to perform their job in a professional and efficient manner (Kiefer, 2005, p. 892).

Gill (2003) aligned change for everyone involved. Although earlier authors had described the skills a leader requires to create an environment that will support employees during change (Gilley et al., 2009a, 2009b; Lines et al., 2005; Kiefer, 2005), Gill spoke to the importance of creating organizational alignment and stated, “Alignment is displayed by a shared understanding, common orientation, common values and shared priorities” (p. 310). He believed that in order for change to be successful, it must be presented with several key ingredients, including a vision, values, strategy, empowerment, and motivation as well as inspiration (p. 312).

A review of change management (i.e., what it is, what can motivate a leader to act, and what are the barriers that may impede successful change implementation) provided insight into change management from various perspectives. It was identified that there is a clear role for leadership and leaders in the effectiveness of change. The organization and employees rely on
the role of leaders to develop sound strategies, communicate goals, and drive outcome.

Transformational leadership principles comprise an approach for leader success.

**Transformational Leadership**

The following review considers transformational leadership principles as part of how leaders can inspire excellence in the workplace. Through this review, I will consider what transformation leadership is and its principles as well as review the associated competencies attributed to transformational leaders. Finally, I will consider transformational leadership in the context of organizational effectiveness and excellence.

**Defining transformational leadership.** Bass (1995); Bottomley, Burgess, and Fox (2014); Kendrick (2011); and Sadeghi and Pihie (2012) described transformational leadership as a leadership approach that changes individuals and social systems. It is the ability of leaders to model behaviours of fairness, integrity, and inspiration, while they set clear goals, hold everyone to high expectations, provide support and recognition, and look beyond self-interest to achieve goals. Transformational leadership was expanded in the work of Kendrick, who said that “transformational leadership involves four factors: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration” (p. 14). These four factors are described as the elements needed to clear forward movement (p. 14). They are the ability of leaders to exhibit high ethical and moral standards that build trust, the ability to set out clearly what is the right thing to do, challenge followers to question basic assumptions, and treat every individual as a unique contributor” (p. 14). These factors were resonated in the work of Sadeghi and Pihie, who believed transformational leaders can create and drive change, foster intrinsic motivation and
loyalty, and build a vision for and commitment to the future that others will also believe in (p. 188).

**The knowledge, skills, abilities, and attributes of transformational leaders.** As a result of the definition of transformational leadership, the authors have identified a series of competencies, which include essential knowledge, skills, abilities, and attributes that transformational leaders possess. McCleskey (2014) noted that transformational leaders tended to have certain qualities that their followers would model. These included the ability to motivate and inspire others while creating shared meaning. Transformational leaders also tended to be open, problem solvers, coaches, mentors, and trust builders (Bottomley et al., 2014, p. 7; McCleskey, 2014, p. 120). Bottomley et al. (2014) also noted that transformational leaders are known for their ability to achieve goals, initiate actions, and enlist the participation for others (p. 7). Whereas, Griffin, Mason, and Parker (2014) described the ability of transformational leaders to achieve their ideal self, while building strong relationships and behaving in a manner that is aligned to personal values (p. 187). Another key attribute of the transformational leader is his or her desire to create life-long learning environments, where he or she can help others develop their skills through teaching (Bottomley et al., 2014, p. 7). These leaders, therefore, are committed to finding opportunities for inclusion and collaboration when working towards achieving a goal or responding to issues (p. 7).

**Transformational leadership and workplace excellence.** As the research has uncovered, transformation may be difficult to attain as organizations do not transform, people do (Bottomley et al., 2014; Caldwell et al., 2012). That being said, the “ethical standards and commitment to virtuousness of transformational leadership are worthy ideals that can have a
profound impact on the people and society and produce outstanding results” (Caldwell et al., 2012, p. 184). In a study conducted by Maritz Research in 2010, as described by Caldwell et al. (2012), trust in leaders is very low. The research identified that only 7% of employees believe that their senior managers’ actions were consistent with what they said and that only 25% of employees have trust in their senior managers to make the right decisions (p. 175). Their review uncovered the need for a leadership system that is “ethically based . . . [and that strives for the] highest standard of moral leadership” (p. 176).

Pfeffer (as cited in Caldwell et al., 2012) addressed workplace excellence specifically through transformational leadership, stating,

It is in pursuing excellence, motivating others to become their best, seeking the best interests of both the individual and the organization, and constantly learning that organization are able to create high trust and the high performance work cultures that produce increased profitability and long-term sustainability. (p. 177)

Furthermore, Caldwell et al. (2012) believed there were several factors that would support workplace excellence as a direct result of transformational leadership. These factors included mutual benefits for the team, organization, and society due to behaviours that would result in others perceiving the organization as ethical and trust worthy, as well as relationships with employees based upon shared pursuits of a moral purpose (pp. 177–178).

**Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, a review of the relevant literature related to workplace excellence, change management, and transformational leadership was provided. Through reviewing the literature, I looked at the role of leaders in creating excellence and what is available for leaders looking to develop excellence in the workplaces as well as what is change management and how the
motivation of leaders can support or impede change initiatives. I also considered transformational leadership and how this leadership approach can impact the creation of workplace excellence. This review was meant to help provide external context and research related to the inquiry topic to the reader and provide a basis for understanding the data collected for this inquiry. This literature also provided empirical information to support the conclusions reached in this study, which can be viewed in chapter four.
CHAPTER THREE: INQUIRY APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I describe the research methodology that was used for this inquiry. The following methodological outline was specific to answering the inquiry question: How can the City’s frontline leaders inspire excellence in the workplace? It was designed to consider the subquestions of this inquiry, which were meant to define what excellence means at the City; determine what practices, conditions, and resources currently exist to support excellence in the workplace; and determine what conditions, practices, and processes could be developed or augmented to enable managers to inspire excellence. The inquiry approach; project participants; inquiry methods, which include the data collection tools, study conduct, and data analysis; and finally the ethical issues considered throughout this research are presented.

Inquiry Approach

As part of this inquiry, I used a qualitative research approach that employed action research with an appreciative stance. The process involved “a collaborative change management approach [and] problem solving relationship” (Stringer, 2007, p. 44). In addition, by using an appreciative stance, I placed focus on the four phases of appreciative inquiry, whereby the research looked at what was currently happening, what was desired for the future, what constructs needed to be built to achieve the vision, and what considerations were needed to sustain the goal (p. 47).

As part of the Royal Roads University School of Leadership organisational action research process (Rowe, Agger-Gupta, Harris, & Graf, 2011), this study focused on the readiness cycle, whereby I developed context and purpose, planned and gathered data, analysed the
collected data, and then prepared recommendations that could be initiated in the change intervention cycle. The organisational action research cycle is presented in Figure 2.

Coghlan and Brannick (2009) described action research as an approach that enables researchers and participants to engage in a meaningful process that is based on growth and change (p. 3). Stringer (2007) expanded further by noting, “The collaborative processes of action

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research are designed to promote high levels of enthusiasm and active participation (p. 57). The combination of meaningful and collaborative processes and the ability of action research to spark individual enthusiasm are why I chose this approach. The participatory and democratic approach of action research allowed me to develop insight of the issues and collaboratively explore why the pursuit of change was beneficial (Coghlan & Brannick, 2009, p. 3).

The tradition that action research is a joint process was a particular benefit to the research inquiry. The extent to which action research comprises iterative cycles of gathering data, providing feedback, and taking joint action (Coghlan & Brannick, 2009, p. 5) built a key element of organizational and individual accountability that was important to this inquiry. As the desired outcome of using action research in this inquiry was to move beyond solutions and focus on learning combined with evidential support (p. 5), the use of action research brought key stakeholders together to build capacity in real-time.

Coghlan and Brannick (2009) explored various research techniques as part of action research. Unlike the clinical approach that focuses on problems, appreciative inquiry focuses on appreciating what is working (p. 47). For this reason, I chose to incorporate this approach as part of my action research inquiry. Having employed an appreciative stance throughout the action research process, I was able to focus the research on what was working well and then allow for an action process where leaders focused on how they could inspire excellence in the workplace. There was also a direct link between using an appreciative stance and my second inquiry subquestion, which was meant to identify what conditions, processes, and practices existed to support excellence at the City.
This study was suited to a qualitative approach because it sought to understand social systems and allowed for the exploration of the inquiry through subjective, inductive, and contextual means. This inquiry was human centred. I tried to understand the behaviours of humans (Atchison & Palys, 2008, p. 7) while trying to “gain greater clarity and understanding of a question” (Stringer, 2007, p. 19). The inquiry looked at how leaders can inspire excellence, and within this context, the leaders were thinking, motivated participants within the systems we were trying to understand and enact the desired change (p. 7). It was the desire and buy-in of each leader that created a meaningful inquiry and would support a sustainable change initiative in future action research phases.

As an inductive inquiry, I considered observation, built theory, and then looked at the data collected within the everyday context of the organization (Stringer, 2007, p. 31). The advantages of using the inductive approach were that it enabled me to bring forward my personal interests in the inquiry topic and allowed me to utilize my personal knowledge and the knowledge of others as part of the research (p. 34).

Overall, the inquiry employed a sequential, multi-method approach. The inquiry used three methods for collecting data, which included interviews, a non-probabilistic survey, and focus groups. These techniques were used to address the first phase of action research, which included “constructing, planning action, taking action, and evaluating action” (Coghlan & Brannick, 2009, p. 8).

**Project Participants**

The participants identified for the inquiry were leaders at the City. The City has approximately 850 leaders (i.e., individuals with employees reporting to them), who were
defined as leaders for this inquiry. A purposeful selection of City leaders was chosen from this sample for the inquiry process. Based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria established for each data-collection technique, there was a total participant pool of approximately 13 senior leaders and 185 frontline leaders. The senior leaders were engaged in the interviews, and the frontline leaders were engaged in the survey and focus groups. The specific inclusion and exclusion criteria applied during the inquiry are described fully for each data collection technique.

Across the spectrum of the 850 City leaders, the inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied. For the inquiry, this included community services, planning and development, financial services, engineering services, parks and recreation, real estate and facilities management, city manager’s office, and human resources. In addition, all union members were excluded from the inquiry, which placed the focus on exempt leaders.

For consideration in the interview section of the inquiry, the following inclusion criteria were applied. All participants needed senior status in the organization. They must have had involvement in the creation of the corporate business plan: in particular, involvement in the creation of the corporate governance goal number four or accountability for the City successfully achieving corporate goal number four. In addition, the senior leaders must have had the authority to create definitions related to the goals set out in the corporate business plan. This resulted in a total participant pool of approximately 13 leaders.

As part of the non-probabilistic survey, an inclusive purposeful selection took place. The inclusion criterion for the survey was that all participants were frontline leaders at the City. This was defined, for the purposes of the inquiry, as the first level of managers who were excluded
from any collective agreement and individuals who led people within the organization. This resulted in a total participant pool of 185 individuals.

For the focus groups, with an approximate desired participation rate of 12 people, a purposeful selection was made from the same pool as the survey. The focus groups called for voluntary participation from the 185 frontline leaders, with a purposeful representation of participants from every department. The threshold was set for a desired minimum of two participants from each department within the context of the inquiry. Because of this threshold, all participants were informed at the time of invitation that participation would be considered on a first-come/first-serve basis, but that a cross-section of department representation was desired, and therefore, spots might be held to meet the desired representation.

The result was that inquiry participants were selected to best address the needs of the inquiry by working specifically with the change targets and corporate decisions makers. It was my goal that the research process would be most effective as a result of working with these targeted groups of leaders because of stakeholder involvement and direct interaction between participants and researcher (Stringer, 2007, p. 32).

An inquiry team was engaged throughout the inquiry and was comprised of my project sponsor, five colleagues, and one external Master of Arts in Leadership student—who became a City employee mid-way through the inquiry. A full list of inquiry team participants and their roles can be found in Appendix D, and their team member confidentiality agreement can be reviewed in Appendix E.

The inquiry team of seven took on various roles from facilitation to data analysis support. All inquiry team members agreed to review interview, survey, and focus group questions. Two
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of the inquiry team members were chosen because of their specific work at the City: one worked in data analysis and the other in change management. These two individuals were also selected because they both graduated from Royal Roads University Masters of Arts in Leadership program. This was a significant benefit to the inquiry because these individuals brought combined workplace knowledge and skills as well as a keen understanding of the action research inquiry process. In addition to my project sponsor, two other managers participated on my inquiry team, who brought high-level strategic organizational insight to the project. The research participants were engaged in the research through the three inquiry methods, and the inquiry team supported the data collection and analysis process. Each of the inquiry methods are described fully in the proceeding section.

**Inquiry Methods**

The multi-method, sequential data-collection approach of this inquiry included small qualitative, large non-probabilistic quantitative, and a second small qualitative approaches. The first small qualitative method was used to develop a base line understanding of what inspiring excellence in the workplace is, which then reinforced and created a definition of how the City defines excellence in the workplace. This definition was used to inform survey participants of the context under which they explored excellence throughout the survey. The intent of using the second small qualitative approach (i.e., focus group) was to develop a deeper understanding around the topic and build further upon the themes that emerged from the survey (i.e., large non-probabilistic quantitative).

**Data collection tools.** The data collection techniques used for this research inquiry included interviews, survey, and focus groups. Each will be described in detail in this section
Interviews. The interview technique was selected as a starting point to better understand the intent behind corporate governance goal number four and to develop a definition of inspiring excellence. The benefit of selecting interviews, particularly at this point, was that they had “natural basis in human conversation and allows the researcher to adjust the pace and style of asking questions so as to bring out the best in the respondents” (Hannabuss, 1996, p. 22). This natural basis provided the opportunity to ask reflective questions, dive deeper, and explore further relevant information when I met with each of the 13 senior leaders.

The interviews also enabled me to create a baseline upon which to build the survey. The definition of what inspiring excellence in the workplace means was required to frame the survey. I established early on that inspiring excellence in the workplace may have various meanings, and in order to align with the corporate intent, interviewing the senior leaders provided the understanding of excellence the frontline leaders required as a starting point. With this understanding, the frontline leaders were able to share their insights as to what was working well and what was required for the future.

Interviews were also selected for this intervention because of the small participant pool. Before reviewing the data from the interviews, each participant received a transcript of their results for further input and clarification. A copy of the interview questions can be viewed in Appendix F.

Survey. A non-probabilistic survey was used next as a first step to exploring the research inquiry with the change targets. This was the introduction of the definition used for the inquiry, and the frontline leaders began exploring what condition, practices, and processes existed to enable them to inspire excellence in the workplace. “The major advantage of questionnaires is
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that they generate a substantial amount of data relatively question and cheaply” (Atchison & Palys, 2008, p. 157). The survey was chosen because of the potential participant pool of 198 identified for the inquiry. This intervention was completed using the Canadian online survey tool Fluid Survey®. This method was also chosen because of the ease of use and accessibility it presented for the participant pool. All frontline leaders had access to the Internet and email during the regular course of their day.

The survey was relatively short and comprised of only 11 questions. This was intended to increase engagement while still allowing me to collect meaningful information. It was also deemed to be acceptable to conduct a shorter survey, as the change targets were also the primary participant pool for the third and final data-collection technique, where the inquiry was taken deeper with the participants in a team forum. As a result, the outcomes of the survey were used to inform the focus group process, and the themes of the survey were explored further during the focus groups. A copy of survey questions can be viewed in Appendix G.

Focus groups. The final intervention was two focus groups. In addition to exploring the outcomes of the survey further, Weisbord (2012) described group interventions as a benefit because they allow groups to gather to talk about and influence the intended changes (p. 668). It was for this reason that focus groups were selected over other group interventions. A copy of the focus group questions can be viewed in Appendix H.

Study conduct. Using the look, think, action model of action research described by Stringer (2007), I approached this descriptive study with a “constant process of observation, reflection, and action” (p. 9). The process began with an evaluation of organizational need with my project sponsor and continued to evaluate need as the study moved forward. The subsequent
phases explored and analyzed (p. 8) what was happening in the organization related to the ability of leaders to inspire excellence in the workplace. After the ethics board review, data collection was completed through interviews, a survey, and focus groups. The focus groups provided a unique opportunity to begin the action phase of the action research cycle. The goal was to use the focus groups as a source of data collection, but also to create a community that would begin to immediately invest in the change (p. 11).

Throughout, the inquiry team monitored and reviewed each component of the research inquiry. A full list of inquiry team members and their roles can be reviewed in Appendix D. In general, they had active roles in the preparation and execution of the research process from the creation of tools to data analysis.

Every participant in the study was contacted directly by me, as the researcher. Invitations were sent by email. A copy of the invitation letter for the interviews and focus groups can be reviewed in Appendices I and J, respectively. Participants in the interviews and focus groups also signed informed consent forms prior to commencing each session (see Appendices K and L, respectively). The survey invitation and consent were part of the survey message to participants (see Appendix M). In addition, all three of the invitations had a copy of the Research Information Letter attached. This outlined the specific details of the overall inquiry as well as specifics of each particular intervention. A copy of the Research Information Letter can be viewed in Appendix N.

In addition to the email invitation letter for the interviews (see Appendix I), I contacted the senior leaders by phone. This allowed me an opportunity to strengthen relationships and provide them with information on the inquiry and my leadership studies. I chose this method of
contact because it supported senior leaders’ engagement and allowed for some initial dialogue related to the inquiry that I hoped would support longer-term buy-in.

All research questions were developed in consultations and tested with my inquiry team. At each intervention point, several inquiry team members would provide insight on the development, while others acted as testers. As a result, and if required, adjustments were made to the questions and the structure prior to sharing the data collection technique with the participants.

Data were analyzed and themed at each phase of the research collection and used to inform the questions for the next phase. The data were themed and coded in conjunction with my inquiry team for each method.

As Atchison and Palys (2008) described, an important aspect of descriptive research is accuracy. They emphasized the importance of minimizing bias, maximizing representativeness, and ensuring measures are valid (p. 42). In order to achieve this, I employed the inquiry team to ensure that research questions were not leading, but I also utilized their services to theme and code all data. In order to further support the goal of limiting biases, I included some checks and balances in the collection of data. At the end of the interviews, I shared the individual interview transcripts with each of the senior leaders who were interviewed, which allowed them to validate their information. I also used the focus groups, where participants played an active role in further developing the data received from the surveys.

At the end of the project, I shared the findings with the organization. First, I debriefed my project sponsor on the outcomes and then presented the findings and recommendations to a group of organizational decision makers. This will influence the next phase of action research, whereby the organization can implement the proposed recommendations.
Data analysis. Once the data were collected, they were coded, categorized, and themed for analysis. Using a categorization system (Atchison & Palys, 2008, p. 200), I, with the support of the inquiry team, coded and themed the data related to frontline leaders who had identified what was needed to inspire excellence in the workplace. The interviews were recorded, and a transcription of the raw data was prepared. This allowed me to employ the techniques of Renner and Taylor-Powell (2003) to become very familiar with the data and determine the quality of the data (p. 2). Based on the desired outcome of this phase of research, to create a definition of inspiring excellence, I determined that the data met the needs, and I began evaluating the content so that it could be organized into “coherent categories” (p. 2). For this evaluation, word repetition was used informally. The review team read and re-read the content and pulled out words that were used often (Bernard & Ryan, n.d., Word Repetitions section, para. 3). This was then followed by pawing through the transcripts (Pawing section, para. 1), using various highlighters and post-its to identify relationships and similarities throughout the transcripts and then cutting and sorting (para. 1) this information to visually see the relationship between the pawed information.

As a result of the survey being administered online, the data were available electronically. A similar approach was used to analyze the outcomes of the survey as to the interviews. However, a more formal text analysis approach was employed. Word frequencies were measured by producing a list of unique words in the text and counting the number of times each occurred (Bernard & Ryan, n.d., Word Repetitions section, para. 4). In addition, where it was possible during analysis of the survey data, I determined the frequency of responses to identified specific conditions, processes, and practices that enabled them to inspire excellence.
This provided some statistical analysis in terms of number of respondents and averages rates of response. These data were used to look at how often a frontline leader believed a factor was evident and compare factors to others. To support the reliability of the data, I labelled the survey text results as skills (S), needs (N), conditions (C), processes (A), practices (P), and resources (R) to easily sort and organize the data (Renner & Taylor-Powell, 2003, p. 3). The goal here was as described by Atchison and Palys (2008): to enable “different individuals . . . to code the same material or event independently and come to the same conclusions and by having different individuals complete the coding we will be creating inter-rater agreement” (p. 202).

For the analysis of the focus group data, a key-word-in-context approach and a combination of formal and informal word repetition analysis was used (Bernard & Ryan, n.d., “KWIC,” para. 1; Word Repetitions section, para. 3-4). The focus groups were recorded for accuracy, and a table observer took notes and documented word frequency in real-time. The participants agreed through the informed consent process for the session to be recorded. This process allowed for a comparison between the narration and the key-word analysis completed during the sessions. In addition, a compare-and-contrast approach was used to develop the themes (Compare and Contrast section, para. 1). This allowed for a comparison between the two different focus groups and between the focus group results and the survey information.

Lastly, prior to developing categories and themes, a review of all data collected was completed. This allowed for triangulation, whereby I looked at overall reliability and validity in the qualitative study through multiple data sources and key information (Atchison & Palys, 2008, p. 42). Once the inquiry methods were selected and the approach of data analysis was defined, a
full review of the real and perceived ethical issues related to the study was conducted. These are explored fully in the next section, Ethical Issues.

**Ethical Issues**

This research project followed all Canadian ethical guidelines and principles (Royal Roads University, 2011; Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada [Tri-Council], 2010). Through a thorough evaluation of the potential ethical issues that existed as part of this inquiry, it was determined that they were minimal. Potential ethical issues related to the inquiry were significantly mitigated by the lack of power authority I had over the research participants and across the organization. As the leadership practitioner and a human resources consultant for the City, I do not have any direct reports who participated in this study. However, the following steps were taken to address the ethical guidelines and principals related to “Respect for Persons, Concern for Welfare, and Justice” (Tri-Council, 2010, p. 8).

**Respect for persons.** Respect was addressed by treating every potential participant and actual participant with respect. Each person’s participation was voluntary, and free and informed consent was explained to them both verbally and in the consent forms (see Appendices K, L, and M). They were also given every opportunity to withdraw and were acknowledged for their support.

**Concern for welfare.** Welfare was addressed by ensuring that the environments where the research was conducted were safe, supportive, and, if possible, confidential. Where confidentiality was not possible (i.e., focus groups), each participant was asked to maintain the respect of other participants by observing confidentially within the meeting room. Confidentially
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was reinforced and observed by using non-personal identifiers during the session and throughout this report.

**Justice.** Justice was addressed by creating an environment where every participant was treated fairly. The same opportunities were offered to all potential participants and participants throughout. In addition, all research records were stored confidentially, and when the survey was conducted, FluidSurvey® was used to ensure that Canadian standards for the protection of information were met (Tri-Council, 2010). Lastly, a full review and assessment of real and perceived conflicts of interest were conducted.

**Conflict of interest.** In addition, through consultation with my sponsor and two senior managers in my department, we determined that there were no real conflicts of interest. We did, however, identify a potential perceived conflict that may have existed. Through my day-to-day work, I engage regularly with many of the directors to whom the participant frontline leaders report. This may have been a perceived conflict because participants may have felt that I would share their insights with their director. Further consideration was given to this perceived conflict, and the result outlined that the potentially impacted participants were approximately 15 of the 198 identified frontline leaders. This was determined as minimal; yet to address this issue, I communicated the full process, including confidentiality and reporting process, with all those who participated in the inquiry (Stringer, 2007, p. 55).

Furthermore, in order to address the perceived conflict of interest, I was open and transparent about my role in the organization, and in the inquiry, to all participants, and I did the same for every member of the inquiry team. These steps, as well as advance written notice related to the inquiry, including what action research is, information on the methods, process of
data collection and protection, and information on voluntary participation, provided further mitigation of power imbalance, coercion, or conflict of interests. When it comes to ethical issues, Stringer (2007) described that action research participants have greater input and control on the outcomes of the inquiry they participate in. As a result, they will have greater insight into the process and outcomes than they would in other research approaches, as participants would have greater control over the inquiry (p. 55).

In general, this study took a humanistic approach and treated every participant with respect and dignity (Atchison & Palys, 2008, p. 70). I underwent a formal ethical review process, where ethical issues were reviewed by a third party. I also used formal invitation processes, clearly addressing that participation was voluntary and used free and informed consent (Stringer, 2012, p. 55), which provided participants the ability to withdraw.

**Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, I have outlined the approach used for this research inquiry and specifically explained why a qualitative research approach with an appreciative stance benefited participants and the organization and was ultimately engaged for this study. As the inquiry was designed to explore social systems, a qualitative research approach was explored and rationale was provided on why this research approach was taken. I then explored the project participants, study conduct, data collection and analysis, as well as the ethical consideration and approach used for the study. Each of these variables was considered in context of the organization and inquiry change goals. The City wanted to explore how frontline leaders could inspire excellence, and it was within this frame and the goals of action research that the approach and methods were chosen. The data were captured through a sequential methodology that included interviews,
surveys, and focus groups. I also outlined a detailed process for data analysis so that the study could be repeated. The research findings that emerged from the interviews, surveys, and focus groups are discussed in the following chapter, as well as the conclusions and research limitations drawn as a result of the data analysis.
CHAPTER FOUR: ACTION INQUIRY PROJECT RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

How the City’s frontline leaders can inspire excellence in the workplace was explored through engaging senior and frontline leaders in an action research process. Using an appreciative inquiry stance, data were collected and analyzed to build understand of the inquiry and actively include leaders in the research and change process. In order to provide additional context to the inquiry, the following subquestions were considered: (a) What is the definition of excellence at the City, (b) What conditions, processes, and practices currently support excellence at the City, and (c) What conditions, processes, and practices could be developed or augmented to enable frontline leaders to inspire excellence in the workplace?

Through interviews with senior leaders and a survey, and focus groups with frontline leaders, data were collected to address the research question and subquestions. The interview phase of research included 13 invitations to participate that yielded seven participants. This resulted in over 300 minutes of raw data and began the exploration of this inquiry. The purpose of the interviews was to determine a clear definition of what inspiring excellence in the workplace meant to the organization. The interviews also provided an opportunity to hear from senior leaders what excellence looks like to them and what conditions, processes, and practices they believed frontline leaders require to inspire excellence.

Following the interviews, a survey was sent to 185 frontline leaders across the organization. This group of frontline leader participants included a large cross-sectional pool of leaders from Engineering, Parks, Community Services, Planning and Development, Corporate Services, and Real Estate and Facilities. Responses were received from 65 frontline leaders, which resulted in an overall response rate of 35%. This same group of 185 frontline leaders were
then asked to participate in the focus group phase of research. Two focus groups were hosted with five participants involved in each, for a total of 10 focus group participants overall.

To maintain confidentiality and anonymity of the participants, the following participant codes have been used to cite from the research. Quotations from the interviews have been cited as IR1 through IR7. Information cited from the surveys has been code SR, and participants from the focus groups are coded using FG1(a-e) and FG2(a-e).

**Study Findings**

Through analysis of the data, several key findings were observed. These included:

1. Senior leaders echoed the Corporate Business Plan when defining excellence at the City.

2. Senior leaders identified a set of key conditions, processes, and practices through the interviews as requirements for frontline leaders to inspire excellence in the workplace. These conditions, processes, and practices were generally believed to be essential by frontline leaders as well.

3. Frontline leaders identified purpose and direction as essential requirements to enable them to inspire excellence.

4. Frontline leaders do not feel supported by the organization to inspire excellence, but rather received support or placed emphasis on the role of their direct leader in their ability to inspire an excellent workplace.

5. Leading by example and role modeling are driving factors for frontline leaders.

6. Fearlessness in the workplace and the ability to lead without fear or fear of reprisal were deemed highly favourable when trying to inspire excellence.
Finding 1: Senior leaders echoed the Corporate Business Plan when defining excellence at the City. All seven of the interview participants were asked to share how they define excellence in the workplace. This information was identified as an important aspect of the overall inquiry because inspiration and excellence could have been interpreted differently by each participant involved in the inquiry, and it was believed that having a single definition allowed for a common understanding of the corporate goal for this phase of research.

The Corporate Business Plan (City, 2014a) noted that “the City develops and sustains a dynamic, healthy and safe workplace environment that consistently attracts and retains top-quality people and enables them to perform at their best” (p. 7) as a subset to the corporate governance goal number four: “The city inspires excellence in the workplace and in its employees” (p. 7). Upon initial observation, it was not clear if this description was tangible enough for frontline leaders to enable them to achieve the goal; therefore, the interviews were deemed necessary for clarification.

What became evident through the interviews was that senior leaders understood and believed inspiring excellence in the workplace was encompassed in the ability of the organization and its people to be dynamic. One senior leader believed there are a lot of trade-offs and balancing required across the organization, and that things and people need to be very flexible. They stated “Everyone is going through change, and some groups are more stable through that change than others—some are quite dynamic” (IR4).

The interviews also identified emphasis on having the right people at the right time to do the job and creating an environment that supports leaders and is safe and rewarding for all. One senior leader who was interviewed stated that “doing a better job of figuring out what is it that
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we’re looking for [in leaders] and who those people are and then supporting them when they step into the role” (IR4) is essential to the success of leaders in creating excellence in the workplace (IR4). This interviewee went on and described that defining expectations and getting the right people for the jobs is “an ongoing culture change, a thing that will take some time to work through” (IR4).

A key theme that emerged through this research was the concept of being dynamic—particularly in times of change. All of the senior leaders touched on the constantly changing environment that is impacting leaders and their ability to inspire excellence. One leader described that constant change has placed increased pressure on the expectations required of leaders. The interviewee said teams have had to respond to changing demands by changing how they do their work (IR7).

The interviews also revealed that senior leaders place significant emphasis on the ability of frontline leaders to enable their teams to perform at their best and drive results. Forty-three percent of the respondents stated that leaders need to know their teams and what motivates them. One interviewee stated that it is important to “understand what motivates [team members] and recognize that they’re all different and find ways to deal with that. Find ways to engage each and every one of them and what they can do” (IR2). Another senior leader stated ideal situations of excellence are when “people are number one—motivated. So they clearly feel that there’s a positive reason for them to be where they are and to continue to do what they’re doing” (IR3).

The analysis revealed considerable parallel between the terms and definitions provided by senior leaders and the subset of the corporate business plan governance goal number four, particularly in areas of being dynamic, talent (i.e., labour), and performance.
Finding 2: Senior leaders identified a set of key conditions, processes, and practices through the interviews as requirements for frontline leaders to inspire excellence in the workplace. These conditions, processes, and practices were generally believed to be essential by frontline leaders as well. Frontline leaders were asked to identify and evaluate how they would rate each of the conditions, processes, and practices listed on the survey in terms of what is currently occurring in the workplace to support them to inspire excellence in the workplace. Broken down within the three areas of conditions, process, and practices, the following was revealed during the analysis.

Of the 24 conditions listed in the survey, frontline leaders identified the top three conditions that existed to support them to inspire excellence were taking ownership, having pride in their work, and communicating task information with their teams. Ninety-one percent of respondents stated that taking ownership was the top condition that enabled them to inspire excellence in the workplace. This was followed by 84% of respondents who said that pride in the work they do enabled them to inspire excellence, and 83% of respondents stated that by communicating task information with their team, they were able to inspire excellence. At the opposite end of the scale, the lowest three conditions available that enabled frontline leaders to inspire excellence were identified as the following: (a) team members are rewarded for their successes (19%), teams are rewarded for their successes (19%), and (c) right tools to be effective at my job (33%). All of the factors can be viewed in Figure 3, where the factors identified as essential by senior leaders are compared to the responses of the frontline leaders during the survey. Of the top conditions recognised by the frontline leaders during the survey, half of the conditions were explicitly identified by the senior leader interviewees.
In addition to a comprehensive list of conditions to support frontline leaders to inspire excellence, an analysis of the survey data related to conditions resulted in five themes. These included conditions that were personal in nature, business knowledge specific, team based, resources based, and conditions related to recognition. These themes provided additional context to enable leaders to inspire excellence. Of the top 10 conditions identified by the frontline leaders, three themes emerged. These included personal conditions, business knowledge, and teams. All of the themes and conditions can be reviewed further in Appendix O.

Of the processes that existed to enable frontline leaders to inspire excellence in the workplace, frontline leaders identified that performance development was the number one process that enabled them, with 53% of respondents noting that performance development processes supported them in achieving the excellence goal. This was followed with a 51%
response rate, whereby leaders stated that a safe environment, both physical and psychological, existed, and 48% stated that opportunities to participate in process development enabled them to inspire excellence. Effective recruitment process, collective agreements, and recognition process were deemed by frontline leaders as lower than the other processes that enabled them to inspire excellence; each rated less than 30% on the survey. In Figure 4, I present the full break down of the current processes frontline leaders believe enabled them to inspire excellence. The four areas that senior leaders deemed as key processes for frontline leaders to inspire excellence are also presented; these factors noted in green.

Figure 4. Processes available for frontline leaders to inspire excellence.

A correlation emerged between the processes identified by senior leaders and those identified by frontline leaders (see Figure 4). Three of the top five processes were identified by frontline leaders and senior leaders alike. However, in general, processes yielded a lower response rate when compared to conditions and practices. One survey respondent identified that no factors existed to enable him/her to inspire excellence. Several other respondents noted...
“other” processes when completing the survey. Through the analysis, these “other” factors were identified as general comments or as conditions or practices not processes, and as such, they were evaluated as part of the other survey questions. The full breakdown of the data analysis related to processes can be viewed in Appendix P. The themes that emerged through the analysis are also highlighted in Appendix P. In summary, four themes emerged that included governance, commitment, engagement, and hiring. The themes focused on processes that help leaders manage their work, the level of commitment an individual or the organization put forth, the practices that supported people to put forth their best efforts, and elements related to recruitment and retention.

Finally, senior leaders and frontline leaders explored the practices that existed to support them to inspire excellence in the workplace. Senior leaders identified many of the processes that are required to support frontline leaders to inspire excellence. Of the top 10 factors that the survey respondents stated existed, the senior leaders interviewed also identified eight of them. The two factors senior leaders did not identify were “I make myself available to my team” and “Engaging with team in a non-work related way.” Interestingly, the top factor identified by frontline leaders was one of the factors not identified by senior leaders. Frontline leaders responded, with 86%, that making themselves available to their team was a process required for inspiring excellence. This was followed by relationship building and communication style. The full breakdown and representation of process factors is presented in Figure 5.

Two themes emerged out of an analysis of the practices that currently exist to enable frontline leaders to inspire excellence. These included internal factors and external factors. One unique subtheme emerged when analysing the internal theme. Teams emerged as a unique consideration and, therefore, were identified and considered separately. The two themes and one
subtheme focused on span of control and who was impacted by the outcomes. When participants were asked if other practices existed to inspire excellence, two respondents provided additional comments. One comment was an outlier related to sustainable community (SR). The other noted that none of the practices identified support frontline leaders to inspire excellence at an organizational level; however, “[At] the business area or at the individual leader level, many of these are used and used effectively” (SR). The full outline of the data analysis related to processes can be viewed in Appendix Q. A balance between internal and external factors emerges in the results.

**Figure 5.** Practices available for frontline leaders to inspire excellence.

**Finding 3: Frontline leaders identified purpose and direction as essential requirements to enable them to inspire excellence.** Through the focus groups, three themes emerged related to purpose and direction. The themes of vision, top-down communication, and
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autonomy were uncovered as requirements for frontline leaders to inspire excellence in the workplace.

The theme of vision was identified and supported in several aspects of the research. Frontline leaders identified that they wanted to understand the big picture and then align the work of their teams to it. For example, one focus group participant believed people needed to understand what is expected of them and that “there cannot be any surprises about what they are being asked to do” (FG1c). Several other frontline leaders spoke to the importance of painting a picture for their team members so that everyone understands where we are going (FG1b; FG1d; FG2b). The analysis also showed that “leaders need to be clear with the goals” (FG1a) because “it is easy to get distracted” (FG2c). A survey respondent noted, “Alignment with corporate goals and priorities, plans to achieve and measure progress towards those goals, motivated employees, and healthy relationships amongst the team” (SR) were important aspects to inspire an excellent workplace. Another respondent noted that “regular check-ins and understanding of the work that is being done” (SR) and that reinforcing the common objective or direction we are striving or working toward (SR) enables them to inspire excellence. Vision was also deemed as a condition required to inspire excellence by senior leaders, and 60% of survey respondents stated that they understood the City’s vision.

At this point, the analysis uncovered the role of communication in inspiring excellence. In particular, the analysis revealed communicating purpose and direction was needed to inspire excellence. One focus group participant noted that “communication at all levels, and particularly top down” (FG1c) was a key aspect for understanding direction and purpose.
The final theme was related to the ability of individuals to achieve organizational purpose. To be able to inspire excellence, frontline leaders need to be able to lead. They need to be trusted to do their job and do them well. One focus group respondent said, “people’s trust in me to do my job” (FG2a), and another said, “[The] degree of freedom in how I manage how I do my job” (FG2b) enabled him/her to inspire excellence. This was supported through the survey findings, and one respondent believed that the “ability to see daily tasks and their path to aligning and achieving corporate goals” (SR) allowed him/her to inspire excellence.

**Finding 4: Frontline leaders do not feel supported by the organization to inspire excellence, but rather received support or placed emphasis on the role of their direct leader in their ability to inspire an excellent workplace.** During the focus groups, participants were asked how the organization supports them to inspire excellence. As a result, frontline leaders shared that they do not feel supported by the organization, but many leaders shared that they do feel supported to inspire excellence by their direct leader. One focus group participant said, “I don’t feel that the organization, the City as a whole, supports me to inspire excellence. There are certain pockets for sure, and for me, it all depends on who my boss is” (FG2d). This was supported by several other members of the focus group (FG2a; FG2b; FG2e). One respondent even stated that she/he “get[s] a lot of support from my [direct] boss” (FG1b). When the focus group data were compared with the results of the survey, a parallelism emerged between the two data sets related to where frontline leaders looked for support. The analysis uncovered that in both data collections, frontline leaders did not feel or believe they were supported by the organization, but rather that they were supported at the direct business unit or workgroup level and by that direct leader.
Several focus group participants spoke to the fact that face-to-face contact is important for inspiration to occur, and although “connections at all levels matter” (FG2e), “an inspired workplace looks like your boss. It is about who you work for, not the organization” (FG2b). In addition to direct contact as a theme that emerged in this analysis, the idea of culture also resonated as part of this analysis category. Several frontline leaders who took part in the focus groups spoke to the idea of culture, or the lack thereof, to support inspiring excellence. One frontline leader felt there was no support from the organization to inspire excellence in the workplace and said, “This needs to be part of our culture for it to work, and I do not feel that the organization has done a good enough job at this” (FG1d).

Two themes emerged here that were further supported by the survey findings. When survey participants were asked about the conditions that enable them to inspire excellence in the workplace, 70% stated that support from their manager was required.

**Finding 5: Leading by example and role modeling are driving factors for frontline leaders to inspiring excellence.** Throughout the research, concepts related to modeling the desired behaviour and leading by example developed. Frontline leaders relayed the importance of setting the example and “walking the walk” in order to inspire excellence in others.

In response to the survey, frontline leaders spoke to the efforts put forward in modeling desired behaviour. One survey respondent said an inspired workplace could be achieved by role modeling a respectful, trusting, and supportive environment, and another survey respondent noted that she/he needed to “be more positive with [his/her] team and lead by example.” A focus group participant described how there is no pill to take that will make a leader show up happy every day and that it is essential leaders are aware of their behaviours and how they impact on
others (FG1a). Several focus group participants spoke to the value in authenticity. They noted that leaders are authentic and give themselves to their people, “you start to hear the echo. . . . You hear the words you have said [come] back to you” (FG2c). Another frontline leader noted that he/she did not “seek to be inspirational, but [was] aware that how [he/she] interacted in the world can be reflected in what other people do” (FG1b), and therefore, leaders must make an effort to be what they hope their team will be (FG1b). This analysis and grouping of themes led to the highlighted role of leading the way and modeling behaviours as tools to inspire excellence.

Finding 6: Fearlessness in the workplace and the ability to lead without fear or fear of reprisal was deemed highly favourable when trying to inspire excellence. The sixth finding developed from the research was related to a workplace that is free from fear. The topic was addressed in the survey, with little indication as to the gaps that existed due to fear. However, themes related to fear emerged significantly during the focus groups.

In response to the survey, 51% of respondents noted that they could make decisions without fear of reprisal. As a result, this factor ended up as a mid-range variable during the survey. Out of all 24 factors, it did not initially emerge as a theme or topic to consider more fully. However, this shifted during the focus groups, where the theme of fear became more prominent.

As a result of the two focus groups, fear-based decision making and fear of reprisal related to decision making were uncovered. When participants were asked about the leadership skills that they require to inspire excellence and what an excellence-inspired workplace looks like to them, many statements related to removing fear and feeling safe were shared. One focus group participant said that it is “our job is to facilitate and not be afraid to advocate for our team”
Inspiring Excellence in the Workplace (FG2b), while another said the role of an inspirational leader is reflected by “inspiring people not to be fearful, that everything is an opportunity” (FG1d).

Once the theme of fear surfaced with consistency during the focus groups, an analysis was completed to compare to the results of the focus groups back to the survey. It was at this time that it became more apparent that there were several correlations. Although the survey’s non-probabilistic quantitative results were mid-range, there were some qualitative survey responses that supported the outcomes of the focus groups. When survey respondents were asked how they can create an inspired workplace, themes emerged related to respect, trust, and fear. One survey respondent noted that to inspire excellence, the organization needed to “continue to build trust, be respectful, and be supportive. Demand accountability; ask for commitment and do not be afraid of conflict” (SR), which noted fear as part of conflict.

During the research, fear was also identified in several different environments. One participant identified it was prominent during change. A focus group participant demonstrated this in stating, “[The] organization is so fearful of change, perhaps because of communication not being good, people in roles for a very long times, etc., [however they] consciously try to support others to see change as an opportunity” (FG1d). One focus group participant said,

We need to make it safe for people to really say this is how things are; these are the problems we are having. There is a certain level of CYA (cover your assets), and as everyone is trying “cover your assets” at the City, people end up not moving things forward. (FG1b)

While another said that the “organization is driven, or not driven, by fear, and that is a very cultural thing within our world” (FG1d).
Finally, the category of fear and the themes related to being able to inspire in a culture of fear, or an environment where people choose not to engage in conflict or make decisions, was viewed as a hindrance to workplace excellence. Inspiration is letting “people know that there is no right or wrong, that failure is ok too. If this totally doesn’t work, we learned a lesson, and we move on to the next idea. Take away the fear” (FG1d) and “providing an environment where people feel they can do their best work. A place where they want to do their best work” (SR).

The six findings that resulted that were discussed in this section, which included categories related to communications, fear and modelling desired behaviours that were supporting and impeding frontline leaders. These findings have been considered fully, and in the following section the study conclusions have been presented.

**Study Conclusions**

In this section, I describe the conclusions drawn related to how frontline leaders can inspire excellence. These evolved from the findings resulting from the analysis of interview, survey, and focus group data. The conclusions included:

1. The definition of excellence at the City;
2. Excellence inspired in the workplace;
3. Current conditions, processes, and practices that support workplace excellence; and
4. Conditions, processes, and practices required to support workplace excellence

**Conclusion 1: The definition of excellence at the City.** As a result of Finding 1, it was determined that the language outlined in the Corporate Business Plan (City, 2014a) would be used as the definition of workplace excellence for the study. The definition of workplace excellence at the City, which was used during the survey and focus groups, was “the City
develops and sustains a dynamic, healthy, and safe workplace environment that consistently
attracts and retains top-quality people and enables them to perform at their best” (p. 7).

This definition captured how senior leaders defined excellence during the interviews and
echoed the general sense that excellence comes from being a dynamic organisation with the right
people in the right jobs at the right time. This definition did not encompass a framework for
excellence or TQM described by and Al-Tabbaa et al. (2013) and Ringrose (2013); however, it
did capture several key aspects of excellence frameworks that were described in the literature,
including sustainability (Al-Tabbaa et al., 2013; Ringrose, 2013). An interesting correlation to
the literature is the fact that Aras and Crowther (2010) believed that traditional excellence
frameworks are better suited to organizations where bottom-line results are not a driving factor
(p. 606), and as the City is not driven by profits, but rather by delivering high-quality service to
the residents and businesses of the community, it was concluded that this non-traditional
definition of excellence suited this study.

**Conclusion 2: Excellence inspired in the workplace.** Frontline leaders at the City can
inspire excellence in the workplace by sharing purpose and direction, modeling behaviours that
are aligned with excellence, using communication as an inspirational tool, and being empowered
and leading without fear. Each of the study findings touched upon how frontline leaders can
inspire excellence in the workplace; highlighted were the key areas of an inspirational leader and
how each of the conditions, processes, and practices described throughout the study enable
frontline leaders to inspire excellence.

Burg and Mann (2008) saw the importance of leaders in creating an inspirational
workplace. They believed that employees need to know their role within the organization and
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how their work connects to the goals of the organization (p. 10). The research analyzed in this
inquiry uncovered similar findings, and senior and frontline leaders described the importance of
the organization having a clear vision and leaders supporting their teams in working towards it
(IR1; IR3; IR4; SR; FG1; FG2).

The study findings found that leaders needed to lead by example. Through various
research methods, it was identified that how frontline leaders show up at work influences their
team and ultimately organizational results. For example, Kark and Van Dijk (2007) described
role modeling through a transformational leadership approach; they believed leaders who
presented desired behaviour to others resulted in the impacted individuals being motivated to
emulate them (p. 513). Therefore, excellence in the workplace is inspired by being a role model.

One survey respondent said it is important to remain committed, positive, engaged, and
supportive and to recognize that through their actions, frontline leaders have the expertise and
experience to develop and inspire others, who may be leaders one day (SR). Through the
literature review, several elements were identified where modeling the behaviour leaders would
like to see comes from the leaders themselves.

First, how leader behaviour influences change was identified. Gilley et al. (2009a) looked
at how the actions of leaders through their thoughts and skills will enhance or impede change
effectiveness (p. 40). It was also identified that leaders have the ability to influence their team’s
emotions and attitudes through their own emotions and attitudes (Seo et al., 2012, p. 156). The
literature identified how the concept of transformational leadership is deeply rooted in modeling
transformational behaviours: one of which is inspiration (Bass, 1995; Bottomley et al., 2014;
Kendrick, 2011; Sadeghi & Pihie, 2012). The conclusion drawn here is that excellence is
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inspired in the workplace by frontline leaders who represent themselves the way they want their team to be. During a focus group, one frontline leader noted, “If you model what you believe in and what you want your workforce to be, it does go a long way” (FG2c). This led to the conclusion that there is a connection between inspiring excellence and transformational leadership. Therefore, transformational leadership could be a framework used by frontline leaders to inspire excellence.

The theme of communication appeared at various stages in the research during this study. It was particularly apparent during the discussion of purpose and direction, but communication also emerged during the analysis of conditions and processes that existed at the City to enable frontline leaders to inspire excellence. It is, therefore, concluded that excellence is inspired by strong communication skills. This conclusion was further supported through the literature, both as skills required by leaders to inspire excellence and as an indicator that a leader has been successful at inspiring excellence (Anderson & Michaelson. 2011; Greer, 2011; Manley 2004; Pater, 2013; Ringrose 2013; Rockett, 2010).

Excellence in the workplace is inspired by people being empowered to do the jobs they have been hired to do, being empowered to lead their team, and having the confidence and wherewithal to lead without fear. The study findings demonstrated that it is important to understand what direction the organization is moving in—what is its purpose and direction—but it was also uncovered that frontline leaders need to feel supported. One frontline leader said, “Let people be part of the process without fear” (FG1d), while another noted the importance of the “ability to push the limits, within the lines, to come up with the ideal solutions” (SR).
The literature revealed that an indicator of a leader’s success to inspire excellence is a culture of empowerment. Manley (2004) spoke to cultural characteristics that enable leaders to inspire excellence, and one of these measures was developing leaders through empowerment (p. 2). This related further to study findings, when a survey respondent was asked about how to inspire excellence. The respondent said it is important to “allow [a] team to operate autonomously and to be accountable for results” (SR). Based on the conditions, processes, and practices identified by frontline leaders and the resulting themes of the research, it can be concluded that an environment where leaders are allowed to make decisions and are not afraid to take action will result in an excellence inspired workplace.

**Conclusion 3: Current conditions, processes, and practices that support workplace excellence.** The conditions, processes, and practices that exist within the City that enabled frontline leaders to inspire workplace excellence were diverse. The research revealed that there were much more prominent conditions and practices that existed across the City than processes. Particularly, there was a focus on conditions that could be controlled by the leader and practices that are internal to the leader. For example, frontline leaders who participated in the survey noted that taking ownership, pride, and communicating with employees were current conditions that enabled them to inspire excellence, and the data analysis derived that these were internally controllable factors. Similarly, frontline leaders believed that making themselves available to their team and building relationships were practices that currently exist to inspire excellence, both internal factors as well. As such, it was concluded that frontline leaders placed significant weight on factors that they had the most control over.
When looking at this conclusion in comparison to the literature, the following correlations were found. A high level of emotional intelligence and the ability to influence were key aspects of the knowledge, skills, abilities, and attributes leaders require to create workplace excellence (Anderson & Michaelson, 2011; Rockett, 2010). It is a leader’s emotional intelligence, which is an internal and discerning ability, that enables them to create excellence in the workplace. This, combined with the view that leaders must be “excellent communicators” (Greer 2012; Pater 2013; Ringrose 2013) and transformational leaders must “create drive, foster intrinsic motivation and loyalty” (Bottomley et al., 2014, p. 7; McCleskey, 2014, p. 120), supported the conclusion that a frontline leader’s span of control related to conditions, practices, and processes influences their view of its ability to enable them.

When frontline leaders were asked about processes and their ability to enable them to inspire excellence, there was generally less than a 50% response rate for all factors identified. There were only two factors with a high rating, which included: (a) performance development (52%), and (b) creating a safe environment (50%). Therefore, it was concluded that current processes are not deemed to support leaders to inspire excellence. There was a correlation to the individual realm of control here as well because the processes were corporate-driven initiatives, such as policies and procedures to which leaders would have had little influence. Further research into processes and why they do not enable frontline leaders to inspire excellence would be required to determine the specific cause of this outcome, but during the focus group, it was revealed that involvement and fear may be factors affecting the view towards processes. As one participant said, “Let people be part of the process without fear” (FG1d).
Conclusion 4: Conditions, processes, and practices required to support workplace excellence. Based on the findings, clear purpose and direction, a safe environment, and support from their leaders to inspire excellence in the workplace are required to inspire excellence. The research showed that senior leadership involvement was essential for creating workplace excellence. This role was comprised of establishing and communicating organizational direction, aligning systems, involving people, and giving employees the opportunity to develop (Ringrose, 2013, p. 445). The concept of transformational leadership further supported this conclusion, as it looked at how transformational leaders can provide vision, change systems, and look beyond self to inspire others.

Excellence in the workplace can be inspired by frontline leaders who feel safe to make decisions and act. Similar to the foundations of transformational leadership, which is rooted in the ability of a leader to model behaviours of fairness, integrity, inspiration, and high standards of ethics (Kendrick, 2011, p. 14), frontline leaders require a safe environment where they do not feel fearful to act in order to achieve organizational deliverables.

Concepts related to conditions, processes, and practices were heard throughout all of the research methods. Focus group participants focused on how the “direction the organization is moving needs to be top of mind in every decision and therefore excellence in the workplace is inspired by frontline leaders who have direction, support and faith from their senior leaders” (FG2d). One participant stated, “There needs to be consistency and a framework that moves us forward” (FG1d). This was echoed through the survey, with a respondent who said she/he inspires excellence by setting achievable goals, supporting staff to be their best, leveraging collective strengths, recognizing efforts and successes, learning from experience, striving for
continuous improvement, and going the extra mile to make improvements (SR). This links back to the concept of modeling behaviours. Frontline leaders believed it is essential from them to model the behaviours they want from their staff, but they also looked to their senior leaders to model from above.

Descriptions of the conclusions drawn through this study were provided in this section. In the next section, consideration is paid to the factors that may have impacted the outcomes and may have limited the study findings and subsequent conclusions.

**Scope and Limitations of the Inquiry**

Several factors limited the scope and application of this inquiry. The first factor is that although every best effort was made to capture the diversity of the City, it is unclear if the survey was successful in achieving this goal. Due to the anonymous nature of the survey, there was no way to know if frontline leaders from every department responded to the survey. The focus groups lacked representation from one department, which limited the generalization of the study to the entire City. Although requests to participate were sent to all 185 potential frontline leaders for both the survey and focus groups, the survey only yielded a response rate of 35%, and 10 individual frontline leaders were involved in the focus groups. It cannot be said that the survey captured a wide enough view of the organizational make-up, which could impact the finding for the organization as a whole.

The second limitation to the study is the time of year that the survey was conducted. The survey was conducted throughout August and over 60 “out of offices” were received when the initial invitation to participate was sent to frontline leaders. This may have resulted in a limited participation rate, as frontline leaders were not available to complete the survey.
The third limitation was that the research did not consider the needs of the employees who report to the frontline leaders. Although the research considered the conditions, processes, and practices available to enable frontline leaders and the research took into consideration the perspectives of senior leaders, there was no method to elicit the needs of employees. An employee data collection method may have broadened the scope of the study, thus allowing the research to be triangulated to what employees need from their leaders.

In addition to the limitations, there was one irregularity that became evident during the study that may have impacted the outcomes. After the data of all three research methods were collected, the list of participants was reviewed, and it became evident that several individuals retired during the time the study was being conducted. In mid-September, this number was 10 participants; however, it is unclear how many of the overall participants retired during August. This may have impacted the study, as some frontline leaders may have participated in the survey, but were retired prior to the focus groups. This may also have impacted the study, as frontline leaders may have not participated because they were retiring. In addition, the number of retirements would have impacted the participant pool selected for this study.

Chapter Summary

The outcomes of the data collection and analysis conducted as part of this study were described in detail in this chapter. The outcome of the research resulted in six findings, which included (a) defining inspiring excellence at the City; (b) key conditions, processes, and practices that enable excellence; (c) the role of clear organizational purpose and direction; (d) themes of safety and fear; (e) the role modeling desired behaviours for desired outcomes; and (f) the ability to lead without fear or fear of reprisal.
The study found that correlations existed between data retrieved from senior leaders during the interviews and the data collected from frontline leaders during the survey and focus groups. As a result, alignment was drawn between the two groups of leaders in some areas, but frontline leaders also explored barriers to inspiring excellence due to an environment of fear. The conclusions explored in this chapter addressed the gaps that were revealed as a result of the findings and were supported by the literature. Recommendations resulting from this study are presented in the following chapter.
CHAPTER FIVE: INQUIRY IMPLICATIONS

Recommendations related to how frontline leaders at the City can inspire excellence in the workplace are explored in this chapter. The presented recommendations are derived from the findings and conclusions outlined in chapter four. They also address the outcomes of the inquiry subquestions: (a) What is the definition of excellence at the City, (b) What conditions, processes, and practices currently support excellence at the City, and (c) What conditions, processes, and practices could be developed or augmented to enable frontline leaders to inspire excellence in the workplace? In addition to the recommendations, I address leadership implications related to the change goal and opportunities for future research cycles.

Study Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions drawn in chapter four, the following describes the recommendations related to inspiring excellence in the workplace at the City. The recommendations have been presented in short-term and long-term timeframes. This was done to support the overall implementation of the recommendations and create a phased implementation approach. The goal of grouping the recommendations in immediate to 2-year (short-term) and 3- to 5-year (long-term) timeframes was to allow the City time to implement some simple yet impactful recommendations upon presentation of the inquiry outcomes and then build to the more robust recommendations.

The short-term recommendations are:

1. Increase the awareness of inspiring excellence.
2. Develop a frontline leaders’ excellence retreat.
**Recommendation 1: Increase the awareness of inspiring excellence.** The first short-term recommendation is to augment current conditions, processes, and practices with a lens on inspiring excellence in the workplace. This would include embedding excellence into hiring and retention strategies, building out the role of inspiring excellence in the existing leadership development program, and adopting an “inspire excellence” framework for management and leadership training programs (outside of the leadership development program). All of these elements are related to the City’s (2014a) definition of inspiring excellence by supporting the ability to attract and retain top-quality talent and being dynamic with existing programs that support leaders to perform at their best and inspire excellence (p. 7).

In order to strengthen inspiring excellence from hiring through to retention, it is suggested that steps be taken to embed the knowledge, skills, abilities, and attributes of excellence into the requirements of frontline leader positions. Ringrose (2013) described the importance of human resources planning when working towards excellence. She stated that “undertaking human resource planning that supports organizational plans, recruiting, selecting, training, and developing employees” (p. 446) are management best practices for excellence. Augmenting hiring and retention at the City would include updating job descriptions with excellence expectations and developing interview questions and criteria that would elicit individual capacity for excellence. Once a frontline leader is hired into the City, it is suggested that excellence be communicated in order to establish expectations and ultimately hold the leader accountable for excellence. This information could be communicated to new frontline leaders through the new manager supervisor orientation and in the performance development program planning process. By clearly establishing excellence expectations and goals, leaders could
subsequently be evaluated and held accountable for them. The new manager supervisor orientation and the performance development program could be updated to best reflect the changes and augment the role of excellence at the City. It is suggested that performance development criteria related to excellence be expanded and incorporated into all aspects of the process. This would build on the current program, which currently evaluates leaders on a single competency of excellence.

Building upon the current leadership development program at the City, the role of excellences could be augmented throughout. To support frontline leaders to inspire excellence, it is suggested that a key foundation of the program would be excellence. This could be done by incorporating excellence in to the individual and team leadership plans through the needs assessments, pre- and post-program evaluations, and throughout program workshops. By increasing the alignment between excellence and leadership, the City, as Ringrose (2013) described, would give leaders the opportunity to develop to their full potential (p. 445). It is also recommended that emotional intelligence be incorporated into the leadership development program. As the program will be undergoing an update, this is a timely opportunity to ensure that the knowledge, skills, abilities, and attributes of inspiring excellence are included. This recommendation is based on literature that described a leader’s ability to harness emotional intelligence is a key ability to achieve excellence in the workplace (Anderson & Michaelson, 2011; Rockett, 2010).

By developing and applying an inspire excellence framework for management and leadership training programs, the City could communicate and elevate the importance of excellence for all leaders, including those who are not part of the current leadership development
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program. The recommended inspire excellence framework is two pronged. The first prong is to ensure that all current training programs incorporate excellence and the ability of leaders to inspire excellence in their learning objectives and learning outcomes. This would include a review of current programs and recommendations for new or updated programs that would develop the ability of an individual to inspire excellence. As the literature described, leaders who inspire excellence must be big picture thinkers, focused on improvement, and have keen influencing skills, high emotional intelligence, and sound change management understanding. They must also have courage, optimism, listening skills, business intelligence, time management skills, and negotiating skills, and they must be collaborative (Anderson & Michaelson, 2011; Greer, 2011; Pater, 2013; Rockett, 2010). As part of developing the inspire excellence framework, each of these elements must be weaved through all leader training courses offered at the City where appropriate. A clear link between the knowledge, skills, abilities, and attributes and how they enable leaders to inspire excellence would reinforce the desired outcomes at the City.

The second prong is that the learning department map all applicable courses to excellence. By doing this, leaders would have a clear path to support their development as leaders who inspire excellence. This would augment the current leader training pathways by adding the element of excellence to the structure. The new or updated learning pathway, which is aligned to excellence, would support new and emerging frontline leaders by providing a designated resource to support their learning and enable them to inspire excellence.

**Recommendation 2: Develop a frontline leaders’ excellence retreat.** The leaders’ retreat could be comprised of frontline and senior leaders and would be a forum for leaders to
exchange ideas, address concerns, and discuss current and emerging leadership challenges. It is recommended that the retreat be held bi-annually to support the change and to maintain the importance of excellence for the organization. The goal of the retreat would be to look at embodying a culture of excellence and finding ways to develop excellence in the workplace that would support the achievement of corporate governance goal number four. Through the lens of transformational leadership, Bottomley et al. (2014) described how transformational leaders are vision builders, standard-bearers, integrators, and developers (p. 5). The frontline leaders’ excellence retreat would be an opportunity for leaders to draw on these skills and work with senior leaders across organizational disciplines to address challenges and develop strategies to achieve excellence in the workplace (p. 8).

The short-term recommendations have been evaluated to consider potential barriers for implementation. Several barriers that were identified included buy-in from frontline leaders, competing priorities of day-to-day operations, and support from the Corporate Management Team. Many of these barriers are addressed in the section, Organizational Implications; however, in general, the short-term recommendations have been deemed low risk and low cost. The short-term recommendations could be led through the human resources department at the City in conjunction with the key organizational leaders. An indicator of implementation success would be the intentional and consistent application of these new conditions, processes, and practices. As described, it is suggested that inspiring excellence move from a subset of the current conditions, processes, and practices to a key element of the conditions, processes, and practices that enable excellence. Once the short-term recommendations are implemented, the City can shift focus to the long-term.
The long-term recommendations related to how frontline leaders could inspire excellence include the following:

3. Develop a vision of inspiring excellence
4. Create a leadership framework for excellence
5. Develop a decision making framework
6. Create an organizational culture of excellence

**Recommendation 3: Develop a vision of inspiring excellence.** As inspiring excellence is a governance goal and excellence is included as a City value, it is recommended that the City strengthen the relationship between excellence and organizational purpose by developing a vision statement for excellence. “At its simplest level, a shared vision is the answer to the question, ‘what do we want to create?’” (Senge, 2006, p. 192). It is suggested that this purpose statement incorporate excellence in an easy-to-remember, recallable statement that is inspiring. It should be aligned with transformational leadership practices by encouraging leaders to “behave in a way that will inspire their followers to act accordingly” (Bottomley et al., 2014, p. 8).

In order to implement this recommendation, it is recommended that the corporate management team be “committed and actively involved in establishing and communicating direction” (Ringrose, 2013, p. 445) through the creating of a vision. However, it is also recommended that a cross-organizational approach be taken in its development. As uncovered during the research, there was a correlation between leader influence and the degree to which leaders believed the conditions, processes, or practices at the City enabled them to inspire excellence. For this reason, it is suggested that the vision statement further enable frontline
leaders to inspire excellence through the use of collaboration—a key skill identified to achieve excellence (Anderson & Michaelson, 2011; Greer, 2011; Pater, 2013; Rockett, 2010).

An excellence vision statement would lay the groundwork for further recommendations. It would be used to develop the leadership framework for excellence, support the decision-making framework, and act as the foundation for creating a culture of excellence. As Gilley et al. (2009a) described, a vision sets organizational direction, and frontline leaders use that vision to achieve organizational goals (p. 39).

**Recommendation 4: Create a leadership framework for excellence.** This recommendation builds upon the recommendation of creating an inspire excellence framework for management and leadership training, which was described in the short-term recommendations. The leadership framework for excellence, using the vision statement and excellence value as its foundation, would frame all formal, informal, self-directed, and experiential learning and development opportunities for leaders through the lens of excellence. This framework would enable leaders to link development activities to excellence goals and vice versa. As Ringrose (2013) described, “Understanding the organization is a system of interrelated and interconnected work processes and all activities need to be aligned with the established direction” (p. 445) is a principle that must be applied for the City to create an excellence framework. Linkages between excellence and personal development would be explicit and leaders would be able to use this framework to identify personal leadership excellence gaps or map their performance goals related to excellence against resources and information that would support their success.
This recommendation would involve identifying all of the tools and resources, new or existing, available to inspire excellence and incorporating them into the conditions, processes, and practices that influence or support leaders. Although this recommendation has been developed from the data collected and analyzed in this inquiry, it could be expanded to all levels of leadership based on the study findings that modeling desired behaviours is a driving factor for the success of frontline leaders. These leaders look to their direct leader for behaviours they should model, and if the excellence framework is expanded at all levels, expectations for excellence would be consistent. Kark and Van Dijk (2007) described role modeling as a process by which “followers mold their beliefs, feelings, and behavior according to those of the leader” (p. 512). A standard of excellence framework would support the ability to model desired behaviours, as it would outline roles and responsibilities and the knowledge, skills, abilities, and attributes leaders require to inspire excellence. Ultimately, this would enable frontline leaders to understand, adopt, and expand their behaviours related to excellence.

**Recommendation 5: Develop a decision making framework.** As the findings and conclusions showed, leaders experienced or witnessed issues related to fear. Decision making without fear of reprisal was one theme of fear analysed. While more research needs to be done, one possible approach to address this area is that a decision making framework be created for the City by the Corporate Management team and rolled out to all level of decision makers at the City. The goal of this recommendation is to reduce fear and support decision making by addressing areas of risk, reputation, impact (internal or external), and costs. The framework would define elements of decision making for leaders, including where, when, and who should
be involved in a decision. The goal here is, as Short (1998) described, to create a structure that supports leaders meet goals, solve problems, and make decisions (p. 60).

The decision-making framework, although it could be used at all levels of the organization, would align frontline leaders to act with confidence and focus their energy to inspiring excellence rather than focusing on fear, which in turn would support the overall organization climate. This was supported by Senge (2006), who noted that aligned teams do not waste unnecessary energy and focus their efforts on achieving shared goals (p. 217). The decision-making framework would support the organization to focus on outcomes, increase autonomy, and enable leaders to act with confidence.

**Recommendation 6: Create an organizational culture of excellence.** Finally, it is recommended that the City nurtures all of the excellence recommendations and continue the momentum built through the implementation into a workplace culture of excellence. A “culture of excellence” means an environment where people understand, on a very immediate and practical level, what value, productivity, and true worth really mean” (Burg & Mann, 2008, p. 20). Both Burg and Mann (2008) and Manley (2004) believed that culture is a measurement for achieving excellence, and as such, fostering an excellence culture would strengthen the City’s outcomes.

In addition, the benefits of creating a culture of excellence are that it enables frontline leaders to “walk the walk” of excellence in all aspects of their leadership role. A culture of excellence allows leaders to focus on people, make transparent decisions, focus on service, and develop leaders who are empowered, innovative, and committed to improvement (Manley, 2004, p. 2), which would translate directly to frontline leaders and how they can inspire excellence.
Developing a culture of excellence at the City would be dependent on the implementation of the preceding recommendations. Each recommendation would act as a catalyst for the culture change by reinforcing the importance of excellence across the organization. A commitment to creating a culture of excellence requires communication and accountability and the removal of barriers for organizational effectiveness (Greer, 2011; Pater, 2013; Ringrose, 2013). As such, in addition to developing and implementing the recommendations related to excellence, the organization would need to communicate the desired outcomes for excellence and eliminate contradictory conditions, processes, and practices. This would result in a transformational change for the organization (Gilley et al., 2009b, p. 76) that would address elements of fear that were identified by the frontline leaders. This would also be an opportunity to shift the focus to organizational successes and excellence and move away from what has been done wrong, which would elevate levels of trust and increase commitment (Kiefer, 2005, p. 890).

Each of the recommendations were created and supported by the literature in order to address the organization’s desired change goal: enabling frontline leaders at the City to inspire excellence in the workplace. They vary in depth, time, and complexity, which would support the change efforts required for implementation by creating a tiered implementation approach. In the next section, organizational implications, change considerations, implications for not implementing the recommendations, and overall leadership implications for desired outcomes are discussed.

**Organizational Implications**

In order to successfully implement the proposed recommendations commitment, planning, action, and accountability would need to be taken in conjunctions with an overall
change management approach. As seen in the literature, it is a commitment to transformational change, culture, and strategy that keeps an organization competitive (Gilley et al., 2009b, p. 79). As such, elements of transformational leadership—fairness, integrity, inspiration, accountability, support, and recognition (Kendrick, 2011, p. 14)—combined with a methodical collaborative implementation strategy should be taken. By applying these behaviours and skills along with an understanding of the City, its values, frameworks, conditions, processes and practices, change can take place (Gilley et al., 2009a, p. 40). In addition, this implementation strategy could support the desired change goal, which could result in the shifts required to create an organizational culture of excellence. Burke, Lake, Waymire and Pain (2009) believed that:

> It is very rare that a single event will change a system. These events are most effective as part of a process of change within an organization. The implementation issue is how decisions get fully carried out, how changes in behaviours, values, and structures become embedded in the organization. (p. 680)

There are three key implications for the organization from this literature. They are the role of commitment, follow-through, and belief. Leaders at the City will play a role in the change, they should be held accountable for it, and they must believe that each recommendation is aligned and intended to support the ultimate goal of achieving workplace excellence. The cumulative nature of the recommendations is intentional and intended to support the organization through the change. Every aspect of the recommendations are intended to impact current behaviours, reinforce direction, and augment current conditions, processes, and practices in order to achieve positive outcomes. Just as the senior leaders and frontline leaders partook in the process that led to the recommendations, it is suggested that leaders across the organization be involved in the implementation in order to achieve success. For example Burke et al. (2009)
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noted one way to initiate individuals in a change is by engaging a steering committee (p. 680) for information sharing, stakeholder engagement, and implementation involvement. The role of leaders in this change must also include communications. These will include communications at all level; however, communication from senior leaders would play a key role for organizational commitment and achieving desired outcomes. Senior leaders would play an active role in demonstrating visible and ongoing support for the change goal. This can be realized by sharing symbolic messages and/or ensuring opportunities for change goal take place. All of these activities would support frontline leaders to recommit and share information related to achieving the excellence goal (p. 681).

The ability to communicate the change goal, and communicate it well and often, will be essential for the success of the implementation of the recommendations. Burke et al. (2009) posited that:

Change leaders tell the story time and again, because people need to be reminded of what it is that they are doing—and why. In addition to this reminding, it is critical for success—that the change leader tell the story to followers in person, face-to-face, not over the web, in a video, [or] on a written document. . . . Dialogue with followers is essential. Questions need to be answered, or at least responded to, and nuances may need elaboration. (p. 754)

Sousa-Lima, Michel, and Caetano (2013) also believed that communication was an essential element and stated that “providing timely information and adequate explanations about important events and issues sends a message that the organization values employees as meaningful organizational members” (p. 420). A key link between the writing of these authors and the implementation of the proposed recommendations is that both are suggesting the use of transformational leadership principles and excellence. The resulting implication is that by
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employing transformational leader traits related to excellence, the overall change approach
would reinforce the desired outcomes along the City’s change journey. Longenecker and Rieman
(2007) believed that reinforcement was essential to success and described that the role of leader
when trying to achieve change is to “reinforce appropriate individual and work group
performance [and/or] behaviour on an ongoing basis until desired practices become habits”
(p. 7).

When exploring how accountability is essential for the desired change, consideration
must be paid to the ability to follow through. During the review of organizational context for this
study, it was uncovered that there was a high degree of change taking place. The volume and
scope of change initiatives taking place across the City was unprecedented. Change is a constant,
and these recommendations add another layer of complexity. Stanleigh (2013) said,

No sooner do we manage an organizational or departmental change, there is another one;
even though we may have just gotten over the impact of the last change. Our challenge as
change leaders is to be adaptive and also to help employees become more adaptive. (p. 39)

This rings particularly true, as the recommendations are comprised of six instances of change in
total and range in complexity. As a result, “maintaining the change momentum is critical because
the natural movement toward equilibrium has to be countered. Finding new ways to recognize
and reward change champions in the organization and celebrating achievements clearly helps to
maintain momentum” (Burke et al., 2009, p. 757), which needs to established prior to initiating
the implementation phase.

As the outcome of the last recommendation is to achieve a culture of excellence, it is
suggested that steps be taken to reinforce the desired culture change throughout the
implementation. Each recommendation is an event with interdependencies, such as day-to-day
operations, new change initiatives, and change to Council Priorities, which all may result in change fatigue. As Burke et al. (2009) described, “After most large system intervention events, people are energized and committed to change, but they are also tired. As they go back to their demanding work settings, it is easy for plans to move slowly or erode” (p. 680). The recommendations have been made for long-term success. The 5-year time frame was presented to support the desired change and enable the organization to avoid change pitfalls while seizing every opportunity to engage leaders. The long-term approach would reinforce the goal and avoid slipping back into old patterns.

Finally, it is important to address the role of the direct leader to the City’s frontline leaders. The direct relationship between frontline and their leaders is an important element. As the study findings showed, frontline leaders do not feel supported by the organization to inspire excellence, but rather received support or placed emphasis on the role of their direct leader in their ability to inspire an excellent workplace. This elevates the importance of the essential role of the direct leader in the effectiveness of implanting change. Kouzes and Posner (2012) described encouraging the heart as:

Exemplary leaders [elicit] high performance because they strongly believe in the abilities of their constituents to achieve even the most challenging goals. That’s because positive expectations profoundly influence not only your constituents’ aspirations but also, often unconsciously, how you behave toward them. (p. 276)

The leaders of the City’s frontline leaders must encourage these leaders’ hearts to achieve outcomes. They must employ the knowledge, skills, abilities, and attributes described for change and inspiring excellence. They must model the behaviours they want to see echoed throughout the implementation process and beyond, as frontline leaders look to them for direction.
One final implication for consideration is the internal perception of not implementing the proposed recommendations. There are the larger issues related to the City maintaining its status quo or potentially increasing barriers to enable leaders, but there are also implications related to pessimism, suspicion and cynicism of study participants who do not see any follow-through or follow-up on the topics they shared during the research collection. The challenge of this implication is the relationship between the possible perceptions of the participants and organizational trust. The frontline leaders who participated in this study shared their beliefs related to excellence at the City. If no further action is taken, there is a risk of creating distrust or giving them the impression that their opinions are not valued. As Caldwell et al. (2012) demonstrated, trust is a key element in the pursuit of organizational excellence, which can produce long-term sustainability (p. 177).

In this section, I have considered the organizational implications to implement the recommendation and successfully transition to a culture of excellence. I also outlined the role of various leaders throughout implementation in order to achieve success. As a result, several inquiry questions have emerged for future inquiry, including the benefits of exploring them through research.

**Implications for Future Inquiry**

As a result of this inquiry, several opportunities for further inquiry were uncovered. These included opportunities to expand the current research and complete complementary inquiries. Inquiry expansion could include (a) further investigation into the theme of fear, (b) an inquiry to determine if frontline leaders who inspire excellence have higher levels of engagement, and (c) a look at whether leaders who inspire excellence create workplaces with
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higher levels of employee engagement. In addition, a complementary inquiry would be to investigate how various levels of leaders can inspire excellence and what conditions, processes, and practices enable them. Each of these potential inquiries are outlined in this section as well as consideration to the organizational value of exploring these research topics further.

The role of fear at the City would be valuable to consider further in order to better understand the impact it has on organizational outcomes. Some factors to explore would include the impetus of fear and the degree of control by which the fear can be mitigated by the City, direct leader, or individual person experiencing it. The benefits of this expansion will support the organization to answer the questions (a) What are the root causes of the fear, (b) What impact is fear having on the ability of leaders to inspire excellence, and (c) How can the City reduce organizational fear?

Considering fear and whether courage and optimism, two attributes of excellence (Anderson & Michaelson, 2011; Greer, 2011; Pater, 2013; Rockett, 2010), can affect a leader’s ability to lead without fear may be used to enhance leadership development programs at the City in the future. However, exploring fear through further research might also uncover that fear is a systemic organizational issue, which would need to be investigated even further.

Expanding this inquiry to study the link between excellence and engagement could provide further support for implementing this study’s recommendations. This would explicitly determine if excellence can be linked to other organization goals. This was highlighted through the work of Burg and Mann (2008) who looked at the relationships between employees, goal alignment, direction, and excellence (p. 10).
Finally, an inquiry as to how leaders at all levels of the organization can inspire excellence would augment the leaders’ excellence framework by empirically identifying the needs of various levels of leaders. As a result of this inquiry, questions arose related to whether other levels of leaders (a) would identify similar conditions, process, and practices exist to enable them to inspire excellence; (b) believe that their direct leader can support them to inspire excellence; (c) see elements related to fear and fear-based decision making in the workplace; and/or (d) identify purpose, direction, and behaviour modeling as elements to inspire excellence.

Each of these potential future inquiries may uncover additional findings, conclusions, and recommendation that could be considered fully as part of action research cycles. Action research was the methodology employed for this study and, therefore, was cyclical and collaborative. In the next section, taking into account the recommendations, considerations for implementation, and future research, I summarize this research study and look forward by considering the organizational intentions and next steps.

**Report Summary**

Six recommendations that intended to enable frontline leaders to inspire excellence in the workplace were outlined in this chapter. The recommendations are sequential and build upon each other over a 5-year period, with the ultimate recommendation to create a culture of excellence at the City. Each recommendation builds in complexity and engages leaders at all levels of the organization in their implementation. An integrative model of leadership was used to develop the approach for implementing the recommendations. The decision to employ this approach was based on the work of Gill (2003) who believed that successful change needs to explain effective leadership practice, including vision, values, strategy, empowerment, and
motivation and inspiration. Gill said, “Effective emotional and behavioural leadership without valid vision and strategic thinking can be misguided, even dangerous” (p. 312). Therefore, significant consideration was given to how leaders at the City are the essential ingredient in successfully achieving the desired change.

The roles of leaders are diverse and vary from change agents to advocates and targets. One key element that contributed to the diversity in roles the leaders will play in this process resulted from the findings that senior leaders must provide direction by establishing it and modeling the behaviours they want to see from their frontline leaders and the relationship between frontline leaders and their direct leaders. In addition to these aspects, leaders will employ various knowledge, skills, abilities, and attributes to model desired behaviour and support the change initiative.

I also considered where the research could go next. Considering the theme of fear further, looking at other layers of leaders, and exploring the relationship between excellence and engagement were described. These future cycles of action research were described, with the goal of empirically exploring further context for organizational effectiveness and broadening the value of excellence in achieving other organizational goals.

Working with the organizational sponsor throughout this inquiry has provided insights into the possible application of this research. When exploring the concept of creating a culture of excellence, discussions were related to creating an unwavering City-wide understanding that excellence is the approach to leading others, achieving goals, serving the community, and conducting daily business (Manager of Talent Strategy, personal communication, November 24, 2014). As such, the proposed recommendations, supported by the research findings and
conclusions, are intended to be the catalyst for this change, particularly, enabling frontline leaders to inspire excellence to the thousands of employees who look to them daily for direction and purpose.

The next steps will be to present an executive summary of findings and recommendations to the Human Resources Senior Leadership Team. Every year, new objectives and priorities are set and, at the beginning of each year, is an excellent time to propose new opportunities for City development. Once the information has been presented to the senior leadership team, including the General Manager of Human Resources, direction will be sought on opportunities to share the findings with the Corporate Management Team. In addition to these main target groups to share the information of this study, senior and frontline leaders who participated in the inquiry have expressed a keen interest in learning more and exploring the role of excellence at the City further.

In closing, continuous evaluation of any implemented recommendations is required. There is no certainty to the proposed recommendations related to how frontline leaders can inspire excellence in the workplace. Ongoing evaluation will allow the organization to measure progress and re-evaluate as the organizational climate continues to evolve and change.
REFERENCES


Hay Group (2010). *City of XX employee engagement survey*. Toronto, ON, Canada: Author.


## APPENDIX A: CITY’S CORPORATE GOVERNANCE GOALS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Long-Term Strategic Goals</th>
<th>Governance Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. <strong>The City Provides Excellent Service:</strong> The City integrates a service focus into all dealings with citizens and customers, ensures they are appropriately informed and included in municipal decision-making, and maintains the corporate knowledge, data and information in a robust and accessible network of systems, to ensure the right information gets to the right people to inform decision-making.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. <strong>The City is Financially Healthy and Administratively Effective:</strong> The City sustains long-term fiscal health and administrative effectiveness through responsible financial stewardship and robust internal administrative structures and processes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. <strong>The City Leads the Way on Green Issues:</strong> The City develops and maintains the internal corporate systems, policies, practices and asset-management plans that emphasize reducing carbon dependency, enhancing energy resilience, conserving energy and resources, reducing waste, creating a green corporate culture and protecting and enhancing the health of the ecosystem.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. <strong>The City Inspires Excellence in the Workplace and in Its Employees:</strong> The City develops and sustains a dynamic, healthy and safe workplace environment that consistently attracts and retains top-quality people and enables them to perform at their best.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. <strong>The City Optimizes Strategic Partnerships and Collaborations:</strong> The City cultivates strong intergovernmental relationships and seeks opportunities to leverage benefits from strategic partnerships and collaborations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## APPENDIX B: INSPIRING EXCELLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE STAKEHOLDER IDENTIFICATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sponsor(s)</th>
<th>Change Agents</th>
<th>Targets</th>
<th>Advocates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manager of Talent Strategy</td>
<td>Leadership Practitioner</td>
<td>Frontline Exempt Leaders</td>
<td>Director of Organizational Development &amp; Strategic Initiatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager of Organizational</td>
<td>Change Consultants</td>
<td></td>
<td>General Manager of Human Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>Branch Managers</td>
<td></td>
<td>City Directors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Corporate Management Team</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Stringer (2007): Stakeholders through the Stringer Lens
APPENDIX C: CITY’S ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

[Diagram of the City's Organizational Chart]

THE COMMUNITY

MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

LIBRARY
Chief Librarian

POLICE
Chief Constable

BOARD OF PARKS AND RECREATION

OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

CITY MANAGER

DEPUTY CITY MANAGER

CHIEF HOUSING OFFICER

ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER

SERVICE GROUPS

COMMUNITY SERVICES
General Manager

ENGINEERING SERVICES
General Manager

FIRE & RESCUE SERVICES
Fire Chief and General Manager

HUMAN RESOURCE SERVICES
General Manager

FINANCIAL SERVICES GROUP/COO
General Manager

REAL ESTATE AND FACILITIES MANAGEMENT
General Manager

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES
General Manager

CITY CLERK'S DEPARTMENT
CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND PROTOCOL
INTERNAL AUDIT
LEGAL SERVICES
SUSTAINABILITY
## APPENDIX D: INQUIRY TEAM MEMBER LIST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Reason Selected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christine Nikiforuk</td>
<td>Sponsor, Data Analysis, Question creation (language)</td>
<td>Ability to enact change and role of managing large scale corporate projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christina Medland</td>
<td>Data Analysis, Question creation (language)</td>
<td>Director of Strategic Initiatives and able to influence change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loretta Cella</td>
<td>Facilitator, Data Analysis, Question creation (language)</td>
<td>Current MAL student with excellent facilitation skills. She has excellent insight to my project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheryl Williams</td>
<td>Facilitator, Data Analysis, Question creation (language)</td>
<td>MAL graduate. She is a change consultant at the City and will be able to bring change perspective to the project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gayle Gardner</td>
<td>Facilitator, Data Analysis, Question creation (language)</td>
<td>MAL graduate. She works in data analysis and will bring excellent understanding and perspective to the analysis of the collected data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jen Lund</td>
<td>Data Analysis, Question creation (language)</td>
<td>Manager of Leadership and Change. Has great organization wide insight to provide direction on questions and collected data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kristine Francis</td>
<td>Facilitator, Data Analysis</td>
<td>Works in Organizational Development and has great skills in task completion and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question creation (language)</td>
<td>organization.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX E: INQUIRY TEAM MEMBER LETTER OF AGREEMENT

In partial fulfillment of the requirement for a Master of Arts in Leadership Degree at Royal Roads University, Sarah Siddall (the Student) will be conducting an inquiry research study at the City to study how frontline managers can inspire excellence in the workplace. My credentials with RRU can be established with Dr. Brigitte Harris, Director, School of Leadership Studies: [email address] or [phone #].

Inquiry Team Member Role Description:

As a volunteer Inquiry Team Member assisting the Student with this project, your role may include one or more of the following: providing advice on the relevance and wording of questions and letters of invitation, supporting the logistics of the data-gathering methods, including observing, assisting, or facilitating an interview or focus group, taking notes, transcribing, translating, or analyzing data, to assist the Student and City’s change process. In the course of this activity, you may be privy to confidential inquiry data.

Confidentiality of Inquiry Data:

In compliance with the Royal Roads University Research Ethics Policy, under which this inquiry project is being conducted, all personal identifiers and any other confidential information generated or accessed by the inquiry team advisor will only be used in the performance of the functions of this project, and must not be disclosed to anyone other than persons authorized to receive it, both during the inquiry period and beyond it. Recorded information in all formats is covered by this agreement. Personal identifiers include participant names, contact information, personally identifying turns of phrase or comments, and any other personally identifying information.

Personal information will be collected, recorded, corrected, accessed, altered, used, disclosed, retained, secured and destroyed as directed by the Student, under direction of the Royal Roads Academic Supervisor.

Inquiry Team Members who are uncertain whether any information they may wish to share about the project they are working on is personal or confidential will verify this with Sarah Siddall.

Statement of Informed Consent:

I have read and understand this agreement.

_______________________________________________ ____________
Name         Date
APPENDIX F: QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEW

Interview outline:

- Introductions and description of the project
- Remind participant that they can withdrawal at any time (ask them to sign the consent form)
- Walk through process, recording and how information will be used and securely maintained.

1. Describe your role with the City?

2. What was your role in developing the City’s corporate governance goals, in particular corporate governance goal #4: The City inspires excellence in the workplace and in its employees?

3. How do you incorporate this goal into your daily operations?
   a. Describe a time when this was effective in helping you achieve your objectives?

4. How do you describe excellence for the City?

5. Describe a time when you experienced this level of excellence taking place at the City?

6. When you have been part of or witnessed excellence how would you describe the level of leadership that took place?
   a. What were the leadership strengths that you experienced or observed that made this moment of excellence standout?

7. How do you believe frontline leaders can inspire excellence?

8. As part of creating a definition of inspiring excellence in the workplace for the City:
   a. What do you believe are frontline leaders require in order to inspire excellence?
   b. What would the ideal situation of excellence look like?
APPENDIX G: QUESTIONS FOR SURVEY

Based on the City’s definition of excellence in the workplace (result of interviews):

<<insert definition>>

1. What conditions (conditions = the circumstances affecting the way in which people work) currently exist to enable you to inspire excellence in the workplace? (please check all that apply)

   o I take ownership
   o I am proud of the work we do
   o I communicate task information with my team
   o I understand how my business fits in organization
   o I communicate corporate information with my team
   o There is trust amongst the team
   o I have support from my manager
   o I am motivated
   o I lead a high performing team
   o I am resilient
   o I understand the vision of the City
   o There are clear direction and priorities for my department/work-group
   o I am able to drive results
   o Every member of my team has the knowledge, skills and abilities to meet the demands of the work
   o There is a high level of motivation amongst my team
   o I can make decisions without fear of reprisal
   o The environment is professional
   o I am humble
   o I feel valued
   o My team is driven to see the organization succeed
   o There are clear direction and priorities for the branch
   o I have the right tools to be effective at my job
   o Teams are rewarded for their successes
   o Team members are rewarding the successes
   o Other <<text>>

2. What conditions could be developed to enable you to further inspire excellence in the workplace?

<<open ended>>
3. What processes (processes = series of actions or steps) currently exist to enable you to inspire excellence in the workplace?

- Performance development
- Creating a safe environment (physical and psychological)
- Opportunities to participate in the process development
- Having the right person in the right job
- Corporate policies
- Department policies
- Invested in the processes
- Effective recruitment process
- Collective agreements
- Recognition process
- None

4. What processes could be developed to enable you to further inspire excellence in the workplace?

<<open ended>>

5. What practices (practices = actual application or use of an idea, belief, or method as opposed to theories) currently exist to enable you to inspire excellence in the workplace?

- I make myself available to my team
- Relationship building
- Communication style
- Coaching
- Achieving results
- Willingness to go above and beyond
- Ad hoc recognition
- Transparency
- Continuous improvement
- Quality Service
- Mentoring
- Engagement
- Engaging with team in non-work related way
- Clear decision making
- Breakdown of silos
- Clear established direction
- Business Credibility
- Measuring goal outcomes
6. What practices could be developed to enable you to further inspire excellence in the workplace?

<<open ended>>

7. Describe a time when you felt you inspired excellence in the workplace?

<<open ended>>

a. What made it inspirational:
   - Communication open and transparent
   - The team was confident in work that had to be completed
   - I provided the right tools and resources at the right time
   - I acknowledged the successes of the team
   - I clearly aligned the objectives to the corporate goals
   - We saw measurable success
   - Other: <<text box>>

8. What does inspiring excellence in the workplace mean to you?

<<open ended>>

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

9. What can you do to ensure you are inspiring continued excellence in the workplace?

<<open ended>>

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Thanks for participating!
APPENDIX H: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Focus Group Process:

- Welcome and introductions
- Description of project
- Review of confidentiality and consent – get consent forms signed
- Reminder that anyone can withdrawal at any time
- Overview of process and flow

Focus Group Questions:

1. What enables you to inspire excellence in the workplace?

2. When you have inspired excellence in the workplace how did you know that it was inspirational behaviour?

3. What do you believe are essential leadership skills to inspire excellence?

4. When you have inspired excellence in the workplace what leadership skills did you employ?

5. How does the organization support you to inspire excellence?

6. What do you do to ensure you are consistent in inspiring excellence in the workplace?

7. What resources do you need to inspire excellence in the workplace?

8. What would an inspired workplace look like to you?
APPENDIX I: LETTER OF INVITATION FOR INTERVIEWS

Dear <<Participant>>,

I would like to invite you to be part of a research project that I am conducting. This project is part of the partial requirement for my Master’s Degree in Leadership studies, at Royal Roads University. My credentials with RRU can be established with Dr. Brigitte Harris, Director, School of Leadership Studies: [email address] or [phone #].

The objective of my research project is to study how frontline leaders at the City can inspire excellence in the workplace. This is directly related to corporate governance goal number four in the City’s Corporate Business Plan.

Your name was chosen as a prospective participant in the interview phase of the research because of your work in establishing the corporate governance goals and your ability to share information on the intention behind inspiring excellence in the workplace. The interview will take approximately 45 minutes. Interviews do not allow for complete anonymity. Please note that there will not be any identifiers used in the data collection, analysis, or the final report. Therefore, at no time will any specific comments be attributed to any individual unless your specific agreement has been obtained beforehand. All documentation will be kept strictly confidential. Subsequent to the thesis being published, the data will be destroyed.

The interview will be scheduled with you at your convenience between June 12, 2014 through to June 18, 2014.

The attached document contains further information about the study conduct and will enable you to make a fully informed decision on whether or not you wish to participate. Please review this information before responding.

You are not required to participate in this research project. If you do choose to participate, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice. Should you withdraw after data has been collected your collected data will be removed from the study and destroyed. I will provide you with a copy of the transcribed interview for your review. You will be able to remove your data up until the data review is complete. If you do not wish to participate, simply do not reply to this request. Your decision not to participate will be maintained in confidence. Your choice will not affect our relationship in any way.

By replying directly to the e-mail request for participation you indicate that you have read and understand the information above and give your free and informed consent to participate in this project.

Please feel free to contact me at any time should you have additional questions regarding the project and its outcomes.

Sarah Siddall
Personal cell: [phone #]

Please keep a copy of this information for your records.
APPENDIX J: EMAIL LETTER OF INVITATION FOR FOCUS GROUP

Dear [Prospective Participant],

I would like to invite you to be part of a research project that I am conducting. This project is part of the partial requirement for my Master’s Degree in Leadership studies, at Royal Roads University. My credentials with RRU can be established with Dr. Brigitte Harris, Director, School of Leadership Studies: [email address] or [phone #].

The objective of my research project is to study how frontline leaders at the City can inspire excellence in the workplace. This is directly related to corporate governance goal number four in the City’s Corporate Business Plan.

Your name was chosen as a prospective participant in the focus group phase of the research because of your role as a frontline leader at the City. Please note that there are a limited number of spots available for participant in this section of the research. Selection will be made on a first come first serve basis, however it is my goal to have at least two participants from each department and therefore will be selecting some participants, also on a first come basis depending on department.

I will notify you by email if you have been included in the study or if the study is full.

The focus group will last approximately one hour and 30 minutes. The date and time will be September 29 from 1 pm – 2:30 pm (snacks and coffee to be provided). The location is: Creekside Community Centre room MP4 (second floor).

The attached document contains further information about the study conduct and will enable you to make a fully informed decision on whether or not you wish to participate. Please review this information before responding.

You are not required to participate in this research project. If you do choose to participate, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice. If you withdraw during the world café any information you provided will not be able to be removed. If you do not wish to participate, simply do not reply to this request. Your choice will not affect our relationship in any way.

By replying directly to the e-mail request for participation you indicate that you have read and understand the information above and give your free and informed consent to participate in this project.

Please feel free to contact me at any time should you have additional questions regarding the project and its outcomes.

Sarah Siddall
[phone #]

Please keep a copy of this information letter for your records.
APPENDIX K: INFORMED CONSENT INTERVIEW

RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

How Frontline Leaders can Inspire Excellence in the Workplace

This document constitutes an agreement to participate in the Interview phase of my research project, the objective of which is to study how frontline managers at the City can inspire excellence in the workplace. The interview is predicted to last 45 minutes.

In addition to submitting my thesis to Royal Roads University in partial fulfillment for a MAL, I will also be sharing my research findings with the City, a copy of the final report will be published and archived in the RRU Library, as well as in the Thesis Canada Portal of Library and Archives Canada, and ProQuest/UMI. Upon conclusion of the final report, I will conduct a debriefing session for all interested research participants.

A copy of the final report will be published and archived in the RRU Library, as well as in the Thesis Canada Portal of Library and Archives Canada, and ProQuest/UMI.

Information will be voice-recorded and transcribed and, where appropriate, summarized, in anonymous format, in the body of the final report. At no time will any specific comments be attributed to any individual unless specific agreement has been obtained beforehand.

All documentation will be kept strictly confidential. Subsequent to the thesis being published, the data will be destroyed. Data/information will not be retained pertaining to an individual who has withdrawn at any time.

☐ I consent to the audio recording of the interview
☐ I commit to respect the confidential nature of the interview by not sharing identifying information about the other participants

You are not compelled to participate in this focus group. If you do choose to participate, you are free to withdraw without prejudice, up until commencement of data collection. If you have any questions about this research, please contact me at [phone #].

By signing this form, you agree that you are over the age of 19 and have read the information letter for this study. Your signature states that you are giving your voluntary and informed consent to participate in this project.

Name: (Please Print): __________________________________________________

Signed: _____________________________________________________________
APPENDIX L: INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR FOCUS GROUP

RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

How Frontline Leaders can Inspire Excellence in the Workplace

This document constitutes an agreement to participate in the Interview phase of my research project, the objective of which is to study how frontline managers at the City can inspire excellence in the workplace. The focus group is predicted to last one hour and 30 minutes.

In addition to submitting my thesis to Royal Roads University in partial fulfillment for a MAL, I will also be sharing my research findings with the City, a copy of the final report will be published and archived in the RRU Library, as well as in the Thesis Canada Portal of Library and Archives Canada, and ProQuest/UMI. Upon conclusion of the final report, I will conduct a debriefing session for all interested research participants.

A copy of the final report will be published and archived in the RRU Library, as well as in the Thesis Canada Portal of Library and Archives Canada, and ProQuest/UMI.

All documentation will be kept strictly confidential. Subsequent to the thesis being published, the data will be destroyed. Data/information will not be retained pertaining to an individual who has withdrawn at any time.

☐ I commit to respect the confidential nature of the focus group by not sharing identifying information about the other participants

☐ I consent to the audio recording of the interview

You are not compelled to participate in this focus group. If you do choose to participate, you are free to withdraw without prejudice, up until commencement of data collection. If you have any questions about this research, please contact me at [phone #].

By signing this form, you agree that you are over the age of 19 and have read the information letter for this study. Your signature states that you are giving your voluntary and informed consent to participate in this project.

Name: (Please Print): __________________________________________________

Signed: _____________________________________________________________

Date: ______________________________
Hello!

You have been invited to be part of an action research project that I am conducting. This research is a requirement, as part of my thesis, for a Master’s Degree in Leadership (MAL), at Royal Roads University (RRU) that I am working towards achieving. My credentials with RRU can be established with Dr. Brigitte Harris, Director, School of Leadership Studies: [email address] or [phone #].

The objective of my research project is to study how frontline leaders at the City can inspire excellence in the workplace. This is directly related to corporate governance goal number four in the City’s Corporate Business Plan.

Your name was chosen as a prospective participant in the survey phase of the research because you are a frontline exempt leader at the City.

The survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Please note that this survey is completely confidential. There are no identifiers used in the data collection, analysis, or the final report. Therefore, at no time will any specific comments be attributed to any individual. Subsequent to the thesis being published, the data will be destroyed.

The survey will be open for completion between August 6, 2014 to August 20, 2014 for your convenience.

The attached document here contains further information about the study conduct and will enable you to make a fully informed decision on whether or not you wish to participate. Please review this information before responding. (If the link does not open please copy and paste the following into your Chrome browser: << RESEARCH INFORMATION LETTER>>)

You are not required to participate in this research project. If you do choose to participate, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice until you have submitted the online survey. Once you have submitted the survey you will not be able to withdrawal your response as there are no identifiers to be able to remove the data. If you do not wish to participate, simply do not complete the survey. Your choice will not affect our relationship in any way.

Please feel free to contact me at any time should you have additional questions regarding the project and its outcomes.
APENDIX N: RESEARCH INFORMATION LETTER

Study title: How can frontline leaders inspire excellence in the workplace

I would like to invite you to be part of an action research project that I am conducting. This research is a requirement, as part of my thesis, for a Master’s Degree in Leadership (MAL), at Royal Roads University (RRU) that I am working towards achieving. My credentials with RRU can be established with Dr. Brigitte Harris, Director, School of Leadership Studies: [email address] or [phone #].

Purpose of the study and sponsoring organization

The objective of my research is to study how frontline leaders at the City can inspire excellence in the workplace. This is directly related to corporate governance goal number four in the City of City’s Corporate Business Plan.

Your participation and how information will be collected

My research project will consist of interviews, surveys, and a world café. You have been selected to participate in the collection method outlined in your invitation letter. Your participation in the study is confidential and will only be used for the purposes of the study outlined above. Under no circumstances will the information be used for any other purpose unless explicitly agreed upon in advance.

Benefits and risks to participation

The benefits of this study is to support the organization in identifying how leaders can achieve corporate goals and inspire excellence in the workplace. It will provide a foundation to address future program and provide context for leadership development initiatives at the City. It will also provide a corporate definition for excellence in the workplace limiting ambiguity as to what the expectation of leaders is at the City.

There is limited risk of participating in this study. Your insight will be used to establish a baseline for frontline leaders with respect to excellence. There is no financial impact to the organization with this study and as the approach of the study is appreciative perceived risks are mitigated.

Research team

This study is using a research team comprised of internal and external members. Each member has signed a confidentiality agreement. They will support the research in the areas of data collection and data analysis.
## Research Inquiry Team

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name and Title</th>
<th>Role in Inquiry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sarah Siddall – Human Resources and Leadership</td>
<td>Researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christine Nikiforuk – Manager of Talent Strategy</td>
<td>Sponsor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question creation (language)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christina Medland – Director of Organization</td>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development and Strategic Initiatives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Update: Change Management Consultant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loretta Cella – Director of The Passion Foundation</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and MAL Student</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Update: Change Management Consultant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheryl Williams – Change Management Consultant</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gayle Gardner – Human Resources Consultant</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jen Lund – Manager of Organizational Development</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kristine Francis – Human Resources Coordinator</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Real or Perceived Conflict of Interest

It has been determined that there is minimal real or perceived conflict of interest. In particular, as the researcher, I am not in a position of power over any participant in the study, nor are any members of the research team. In addition, the research is broad based considering excellence across the organization; therefore no single department will be identified in this study.

Note that no information collected will be shared directly with any individuals’ manager. In the survey and world café all data collected is anonymous with no identifiers and as such it would not be possible to share specific individual response with anyone. The interviews that are conducted in this study will be summarized and shared with participants and all identifiers will be removed from the collected data.

All data collected will be summarized for the final report and no individual identifiers will be included.

Confidentiality, security of data, and retention period

I will work to protect your privacy throughout this study. All information I collect will be maintained in confidence with hard copies (e.g., consent forms) stored in a locked filing cabinet in my home office. Electronic data (such as transcripts or audio files) will be stored on my password protected home computer. Information that is recorded in hand-written format may be summarized in anonymous format in the body of the final report. At no time will any specific comments be attributed to any individual unless specific agreement has been obtained beforehand. All documentation will be kept strictly confidential and will only be retained for duration of the study. All collected data will be destroyed upon completion of the thesis review.

Sharing results

In addition to submitting my thesis to Royal Roads University in partial fulfillment for a MAL a copy of the final report will be published and archived in the RRU Library, as well as in the Thesis Canada Portal of Library and Archives Canada, and ProQuest/UMI.

Upon conclusion of the final report, I will also be sharing my research findings with the City and will conduct a debriefing session for all interested research participants. To request a debriefing session participants should email me to schedule a time to meet.

Procedure for withdrawing from the study

You are not compelled to participate in this research project. If you do choose to participate, you are free to withdraw without prejudice, up until commencement of data collection. Similarly, if you choose not to participate in this research project, this information will be maintained in confidence. To withdraw please following the information outlined in your invitation letter.

By replying directly to the e-mail request for participation or completing the electronic survey you indicate that you have read and understand the information above and give your free and informed consent to participate in this project.
Please keep a copy of this information letter for your records.
## APPENDIX O: CONDITIONS FOR FRONTLINE LEADERS TO INSPIRE EXCELLENCE

### Conditions for Frontline Leaders to Inspire Excellence: Correlation between Senior Leaders and Frontline Leaders

Survey Question: What conditions currently exist to enable you to inspire excellence in the workplace? (conditions = the circumstances affecting the way in which people work)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conditions</th>
<th>Identified by Senior Leaders</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 I take ownership</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>90.48%</td>
<td>Personal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 I am proud of the work we do</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>84.13%</td>
<td>Personal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 I communicate task information with my team</td>
<td></td>
<td>52</td>
<td>82.54%</td>
<td>Personal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 I understand how my business fits in organization</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>74.60%</td>
<td>Business knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 I communicate corporate information with my team</td>
<td></td>
<td>46</td>
<td>73.02%</td>
<td>Personal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 There is trust amongst the team</td>
<td></td>
<td>45</td>
<td>71.43%</td>
<td>Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 I have support from my manager</td>
<td></td>
<td>44</td>
<td>69.84%</td>
<td>Personal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 I am motivated</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>69.84%</td>
<td>Personal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 I lead a high performing team</td>
<td></td>
<td>43</td>
<td>68.25%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 I am resilient</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>65.08%</td>
<td>Personal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 I understand the vision of the City</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>60.32%</td>
<td>Business knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 There are clear direction and priorities for my department/work-</td>
<td></td>
<td>36</td>
<td>57.14%</td>
<td>Business knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>group</td>
<td>Conditions</td>
<td>Identified by Senior Leaders</td>
<td>Responses</td>
<td>Response Rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>I am able to drive results</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>53.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Every member of my team has the knowledge, skills and abilities to meet the demands of the work</td>
<td></td>
<td>33</td>
<td>52.38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>There is a high level of motivation amongst my team</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>52.38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>I can make decisions without fear of reprisal</td>
<td></td>
<td>32</td>
<td>50.79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>The environment is professional</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>49.21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>I am humble</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>47.62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>I feel valued</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>44.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>My team is driven to see the organization succeed</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>41.27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>There are clear direction and priorities for the branch</td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>39.68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>I have the right tools to be effective at my job</td>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Teams are rewarded for their successes</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Team members are rewarding the successes</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19.05%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## APPENDIX P: PROCESSES FOR FRONTLINE LEADERS TO INSPIRE EXCELLENCE

### Processes for Frontline Leaders to Inspire Excellence: Correlation between Senior Leaders and Frontline Leaders

What processes currently exist to enable you to inspire excellence in the workplace? (processes = series of actions or steps)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conditions</th>
<th>Identified by Senior Leaders</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Performance development</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>52.38%</td>
<td>Engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Creating a safe environment (physical and psychological)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>50.79%</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Opportunities to participate in the process development</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>47.62%</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Having the right person in the right job</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>38.10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Corporate policies</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>36.51%</td>
<td>Governance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Department policies</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>34.92%</td>
<td>Governance</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Invested in the processes</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>30.16%</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Effective recruitment process</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>26.98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Collective agreements</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25.40%</td>
<td>Governance</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Recognition process</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19.05%</td>
<td>Engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
<td>Commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
<td>NA</td>
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APPENDIX Q: PRACTICES FOR FRONTLINE LEADERS TO INSPIRE EXCELLENCE

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Practices for Frontline Leaders to Inspire Excellence: Correlation between Senior Leaders and Frontline Leaders</th>
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<td><strong>Conditions</strong></td>
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