

ADMN 598 Project

# Breathing Life into the Governance & Structure Branch Strategic Plan

Using Effective Implementation and Living Document  
Methods and Practices, and Culture Alignment

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For: Nicola Marotz, Executive Director  
Governance and Structure Branch  
Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development  
Province of British Columbia

Written by: Melissa Meyer  
Supervisors: Dr. Kim Speers and Dr. Bart Cunningham  
School of Public Administration  
University of Victoria



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Objectives

The objectives of this study were to understand the factors that influence the success of strategy implementation. Organizations often invest a great deal of time in planning and then fail to get results during implementation. In addition, common complaints about strategic plans are that they are irrelevant and are not used, and that they just gather dust on shelves. The purpose of this study was to identify implementation methods and practices to help the Governance and Structure Branch breathe life into its plan. The project reflects an underlying belief that strategic plans are brought to life through the implementation process, and are kept alive by aligning culture and strategy and incorporating living plan practices.

### Methodology

Three methods were used: a literature review, a revised version of Cameron and Quinn's (2011) Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI), and elite interviews. The purpose of the literature review was to understand the concept of a living document and identify practices for breathing life into strategic plans.

The OCAI was adapted by making minor changes to the wording of "market culture" statements to better reflect public sector realities and prevent any confusion amongst survey participants. Certain terms were replaced using other terms found in the Competing Values literature to preserve the proven reliability and validity of the OCAI. In addition, open-ended questions were added to the OCAI to triangulate the results and collect employee ideas for culture change. The survey was administered online using FluidSurveys to enable anonymous and convenient participation. The participation rate was 60 percent. The findings were presented to employees and the feedback received supported the validity of the findings.

Elite interviews were conducted in-person and over the phone. To ensure the relevance of findings to the Governance and Structure Branch, the selection criteria were: experience implementing strategic plans in the Canadian public sector; and, currently or previously employed in a branch leadership role, i.e. as an executive director or director. Fourteen interviews were conducted with eleven participants being current employees in the British Columbia public service and three being employed in local government departments in other jurisdictions. The interview topic guide was based on the factors included in the McKinsey 7-S Framework and on the concept of force fields (enhancing and inhibiting forces). Interviews were recorded and transcribed, and NVivo qualitative data analysis software was used to sort and code the data. Themes were then identified and three levels of importance were established: high, moderate and low.

The discussion was informed by the findings in the literature review, the employees' ideas for culture change, and the themes of high importance, i.e. those themes that were mentioned by more than 50 percent of interviewees. A living strategy cycle was created and discussed, and other considerations were presented.

### Conclusions

Implementation is a subject that is complex and in some ways poorly understood. Various organizations and leaders have found a number of different methods and practices to be effective, leading to various perspectives about how to enhance implementation success; however, as many

academics note, most managers know far more about developing plans than they do about implementing them, and often, what they do know is learnt in the school of hard knocks. What is clear from the research is that many factors influence the success of implementation and that when managers have an awareness of the key factors to consider, the likelihood of success increases. The interviews seem to confirm the validity of the McKinsey 7-S Framework and its factors: strategy; structure; leadership; culture; staff; systems and processes; and, resources.

Throughout the implementation process, changes in the system have the power to steer organizations and teams in new directions, in wrong directions, in the right direction... Having a clear picture of where you are headed and making constant adjustments is crucial. Recognizing strategy as an iterative and incremental cycle, rather than a linear process, helps managers to better understand how to move their teams in the right direction. Developing implementation or action plans in increments is suitable in complex systems, such as the government, to avoid spending time planning and then having to change the plan later. To avoid making changes, increments should be developed and implemented every two or three weeks to no more than 90 days.

Managers also need to understand how and when to make changes to the plan. When plans are inaccurate, incomplete or inconsistent with what actually happens in an organization, they are dead. The C<sup>3</sup> criteria – correct, complete and consistent – are useful for reviewing living plans. Breathing life into a strategic plan requires managers and employees to dedicate time and attention to both the plan and its implementation, and is a constant task not a one-time, quarterly or monthly event. Implementation evaluations are important for both organizational learning and reporting.

In the face of constant changes, employees need a sense of clarity and order. Simple and accessible implementation plans help ensure that employees know what is expected of them and when to do it by. Effective delegation and empowerment practices are critical and communicating unequivocal and consistent key messages about priorities is mandatory. In addition, employees need to be happy and satisfied in their work. To keep motivation and engagement high, managers need to understand what motivates their employees; they need to listen to their staff; and, they must ensure that their team has the resources, skills, competencies and knowledge they need to achieve the organization's goals. Failure to get employees what they need will surely result in an unimplemented plan.

Within the Governance and Structure Branch, employees are motivated by social gatherings, recognition of all contributing team members (not just the project lead), and learning and development opportunities. Resources required include: implementation plans; a reporting framework; and, a strategic projects manager. Having the right expertise is important for establishing credibility, and pooling, contracts and partnerships are useful strategies for organizations that do not have the required expertise in-house. To make the best use of existing resources, the Governance and Structure Branch should align existing resources with the strategic direction and move work that no longer fits off the Branch's plate, and should consider using either SharePoint or OneNote for managing implementation as these programs are both capable of handling dynamic complexity.

Culture cannot be ignored. Organizations that do not consider culture are unlikely to succeed in breathing life into their plan, because culture is the heart that keeps the plan alive. An

organization's systems and processes, the way work is accomplished, the types of people that get promoted, the accomplishments that get rewarded, and all the other facets of an organization's culture can either work with or against implementation efforts. Being sensitive to culture and the shadowside of change – fear and resistance – is a determining factor for success.

The Governance and Structure Branch is a mixture of the four culture types – clan, adhocracy, market and hierarchy – with clan culture being slightly more dominant. The preferred culture types are clan and adhocracy. In particular, respondents would like to increase adhocracy culture and maintain clan culture. Hierarchy culture is neither strongly valued nor desired within the Branch, and respondents indicated a preference to decrease the focus on hierarchy culture. The culture is reasonably congruent; however, the definitions and criteria for success are problematic and need to be examined. Ideas for culture change were numerous and included: mentoring, providing opportunities for learning and development; recognition; using the technological resources available; matrix management; and, building in time for creativity and innovation.

### Recommendations

The report provides five recommendations for the Governance and Structure Branch to consider. The first recommendation is to *review the plan*. To review the plan, the Branch may find it helpful to consider scheduling quarterly reviews, monitoring environmental trends, assessing the impact of new information and scope changes, and using the C<sup>3</sup> criteria – correct, complete, and consistent.

The second recommendation is to *use the plan to guide decision-making and operations*. To facilitate the use of the plan to guide operations, the Branch may benefit from determining the fit between strategic projects and priorities and the Branch's vision, taking steps to secure the Division and/or Ministry executive's support for the strategic vision, and using MyPerformance and a mentoring style to assist employees to identify objectives that tie into the Branch's strategic plan.

The third recommendation is to *build an iterative and incremental strategy process*. To incorporate incremental planning, the Branch may benefit from creating a standardized implementation plan template and adopting a planning range no longer than 90 days. To facilitate implementation evaluations, the Branch may find it helpful to reflect on the potential benefits of implementation evaluations – such as facilitating organizational learning, informing adjustments to implementation approaches, and recording and reporting impacts and achievements to clients and stakeholders – and to establish tiers of importance among strategic projects and priorities.

The fourth recommendation is to *take steps to enhance employee and client engagement*. To enhance employee and client engagement, the Governance and Structure Branch may benefit from connecting incentives that are valued by employees to implementation milestones and achievements; empowering employees; and, establishing an external advisory committee to routinely engage clients.

The fifth and final recommendation is to *work with the Branch culture*. Working with the Branch culture involves understanding what motivates employees and the types of behaviours and values that need to be cultivated within the Branch. To work with its culture, the Branch may find it helpful to promote the idea of prudent risk-taking, as well as new definitions of success. The

Branch may also benefit from re-evaluating the culture to determine whether implementation activities are enhancing the alignment between culture and strategy in the Branch.

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Identifying the Issue

Like many organizations around the world, the Governance and Structure Branch is currently experiencing change. Changes are taking place across the entire spectrum of the Branch's internal and external environments, creating pressure on the Branch's limited resources and the need to provide more proactive education and policy advice for local governments and to manage succession planning and knowledge transfer amongst other things (Governance and Structure Branch, 2013, p. 2). While the Branch has responded effectively to the challenges presented by change in the past, the interconnectedness of the world today means that changes occurring in any one given context have the potential to bring about changes elsewhere in the system (Bryson, 2011, p. 6), leading to a sense of never-ending change. Today, the success of the Branch depends on its ability to achieve its goals in the midst of change.

The results of a strategic planning survey in June 2012 and comments during subsequent group discussions at Governance and Structure Branch planning sessions indicate that some Branch employees are concerned that the time invested in planning may not translate to results. As one planning participant noted, "People are optimistic and give of themselves. If nothing comes of [the strategic plan], it can make people bitter and resentful." The Branch employees are not alone in their skepticism. The difficulties of linking planning and implementation – or thought and action – in order to achieve strategic goals, have also engendered skepticism among academics and managers about the value of strategic planning. Common complaints about the time invested in planning and the subsequent accomplishments are that the plans are "dead on arrival" or irrelevant, and that they achieve little more than to gather dust on shelves (Burby, 2003, p. 33).

The purpose of this report is to develop an understanding of the factors that influence the implementation of strategic plans in the Canadian public sector, and to identify some of the practices that public sector managers in Canada have found effective for increasing implementation success and keeping plans alive. The goal is to propose recommendations for effective implementation methods and practices and a framework for linking strategy formulation and strategy implementation.

The topic is based on a belief that organizations find value in strategic planning when good plans are effectively implemented and the desired results are achieved, and that linking planning and implementation using an agile and interactive strategy process is the key to ensuring that strategic plans come alive. These beliefs align with contemporary thinking about strategic management, which focuses on "ensuring that strategy is implemented effectively and [on] encouraging strategic learning, thinking, and acting on an ongoing basis" (Poister, 2010, p. 249).

### 1.2 The Governance and Structure Branch

The Governance and Structure Branch is one of four branches in the Local Government Division (LGD) in the Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development. The LGD is responsible for developing and enabling the local government system, considering public and provincial interests in the context of the local government system, and enhancing the capacity of local governments (Province of British Columbia, n.d., para. 2).

Governance and Structure Branch operations take place in two locations: Victoria and Vancouver. In the Victoria office, the Branch functions in four program areas: Advisory Services; Local Government Structure; Community Relations; and, Client Services. The Victoria office's role focuses primarily on influencing and problem solving – rather than directing or controlling – local governments and other clients (N. Marotz, personal communication, 2013). The Branch's functions are to prevent, manage and resolve complex local and regional governance and structure issues; support the work of the provincial government, especially in local government-First Nations relations and in exercising targeted provincial oversight; build the capacity of local governments directly and through local government partner organizations; and, provide information and advice about the local government system, its rules and practices. In addition, the Client Services unit shares some functions with the Assistant Deputy Minister's office, e.g. preparing for the annual Union of British Columbia Municipalities' (UBCM) Convention. In Vancouver, the Branch operates as the University Endowment Lands (UEL) Administration, providing cost-recovered, municipal-like services for the UEL area of the Point Grey Peninsula (Governance and Structure Branch, document, 2013). Due to the nature of its work, the Vancouver office functions quite independently of the Victoria office.

The Branch's clients and stakeholders include local governments, the provincial government, other ministries, and the public. There are currently 20 staff members working in the Victoria office and 15 in the Vancouver office (Governance and Structure Branch, document, 2013). In Victoria, the Branch is led by an executive director and three directors; whereas, the employee base comprises an administrative co-ordinator; two administrative assistants; and, 11 program analysts, planning analysts, advisory officers, and project advisors. Previous Branch leaders play an ongoing role as strategic advisors and consultants.

## 1.3 Background

### *1.3.1 The Challenge of Linking Planning and Implementation*

Strategic planning is a process to help organizations anticipate the environment in which they will be working in the future and make fundamental decisions about the appropriate actions to ensure organizational effectiveness and success in that environment (Kapucu, 2007). The process typically results in a formal strategic plan, which usually includes the following key components:

- A vision statement;
- A mission statement;
- Guiding principles;
- A S.W.O.T. (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis or environmental scan;
- Long-term goals, short-term priorities and initiatives, and performance indicators; and
- Strategies.

Once the strategic plan has been finalized, the idea is for the plan to serve as a management tool, providing a common framework for decision-making within the organization (Rigby, 2011, p. 57) and clear priorities to help manage the impact of changes in the internal and external environments.

Whereas formulating a strategic plan involves critical and systematic thinking to decide which actions are appropriate to achieve success, implementation is about taking action. However,

Henry Mintzberg, an acclaimed theorist and author on management, cautions against thinking about strategic planning and implementation as two distinct and separate activities:

Separating implementation from formulation may be convenient for the classroom (not to mention the consulting firm and planning office), but that violates the needs of practice. Strategy is an interactive process, not a two-step sequence; it requires continual feedback between thought and action (2005, p. 21).

According to Robert Kaplan and David Norton, “Companies generally fail at implementing a strategy or managing operations, because they lack an overarching management system to integrate and align these two vital processes” (2008, p. 1). While the task of integrating and aligning strategy formulation and strategy implementation sounds fairly simple, it is often considered to be one of the greatest management challenges.

In the public sector, the challenge of linking strategic planning and implementation is compounded by frequent changes in senior leadership. New priorities, new strategies and changes in emphasis are almost inevitable after an election, since “new governments are elected with a mandate from the voters” (Rose & Cray, 2010, p. 458). Consequently, decisions about *appropriate* strategic actions are often heavily influenced by what the government believes to be its mandate from voters, rather than considerations about how to be successful in the internal and external environments of the future. Other challenges – such as public perception, elected officials’ lack of substantive knowledge, competing stakeholder views, a need for stakeholder support, an inability to safely speculate and explore strategy options without fearing public disclosure, and difficulties measuring progress, evaluating success and defining clients – add to the complexity and sense of never-ending changes in strategy (Rose & Cray, 2010, pp. 458-460). As a result, public sector employees often have little appetite to implement new or revised strategies, creating a considerable barrier for public sector managers trying to manage the impact of the never-ending changes. The need to link strategy formulation and implementation in an agile and interactive fashion is perhaps more urgent than ever before.

### *1.3.2 Strategic Planning in the BC Public Service*

During the 1980s and 1990s, governments around the world began to reform traditional governance models by introducing and adopting private sector managerial practices and tools (Office of the Auditor General and Deputy Ministers' Council, 1995, pp. 51-56). The new approach to governance and management became known as *New Public Management* and represented a “radical shift in the interest of legislators and governments [from] inputs and process towards results and performance” (Lindquist, 1996, p. 12). Strategic planning is one of the private sector managerial practices that was introduced in the British Columbia (BC) public service during the 1990s.

The BC government issued its first strategic plan in 1994. The intention of the plan was to guide ministries’ actions, help public sector managers to manage for results, and provide an accountability framework against which the government’s achievements could be publicly and transparently measured and evaluated (Office of the Auditor General and Deputy Ministers' Council, 1995, p. 20). While some ministries, central agencies and Crown corporations were already using strategic planning, this plan marked the start of a government-wide, top-down effort to use strategic planning to directly and publicly link the government’s *thoughts* to the bureaucracy’s *actions*.

In response to issues surrounding the estimates and forecasting for *Budget '96* and increasing public interest, a review of the governance and management of the budgeting process was undertaken, first by the Auditor General of British Columbia, and then by an independent panel appointed by the legislature, known as the Enns Panel. The reviews resulted in the enactment of new legislation, the *Budget Transparency and Accountability Act* (the BTAA), which made annual service plans and service plan reports a legislative requirement for the provincial government, all ministries, and for other government organizations (*Budget Transparency and Accountability Act* [SBC 2000], s.12, 13). Critics of the service plan approach claim that the goals identified in service plans are inherently political and are too high-level to assist with managerial realities, and that the performance measures related to the goals and objectives are inevitably either those that are easy to measure or those where there is no fear of reporting on results (Anonymous, personal communication, 2012). The nature of the goals and the accountability issues has created challenges for public sector managers in demonstrating the link between the government's service plan and the implementation of important – yet somewhat unrelated – initiatives.

### *1.3.3 Strategic Planning in the Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development*

Strategic planning was first used in the then Ministry of Municipal Affairs<sup>1</sup> as early as 1982 (Province of British Columbia, 1982); however, due to incomplete records, little is known about the process or its purpose before 1992. In a February 1993 memorandum to all staff, Ken MacLeod, the Deputy Minister at the time, provides a review of the strategic planning process. Table 1 captures information contained in the memorandum about the ministry planning process.

**Table 1: Ministry Planning Process circa 1993 (K. MacLeod, personal communication, 1993)**

Activity	Purpose	Due Date	Result
Develop a corporate strategic plan for the entire ministry	To address the broader concerns of government To guide the development of department and branch work plans	1992	10 corporate goals
Develop individual department work plans, goals and objectives	To address the broader concerns of government, as well as specific issues arising from department activities To answer questions about the department, including why it exists, what the department believes in and the department's vision for the future; To focus attention on important issues	February, 1993	19 department goals and 100 objectives
Develop branch work plans	To build on corporate and department goals	April 30, 1993	Unknown

<sup>1</sup> Ministry names over the years include: Ministry of Municipal Affairs, Ministry of Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services, and the Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development.

The strategic planning process at that time was a top-down process that resulted in at least 19 goals and 100 objectives. The focus was on aligning the ministry's work with the broader goals of the government. Since that time, ministry branches have begun to understand more about the usefulness of strategic planning as a management tool and have also perhaps become more client-focused. These changes have led to an increasing number of branch-level plans that are developed to help branches achieve their own goals, in addition to corporate and government goals.

#### *1.3.4 Strategic Planning in the Governance and Structure Branch*

In 2002, the Local Government Division went through a significant reorganization that led to the creation of the Governance and Structure Branch. The Branch was created by joining Advisory Services, Local Government Structure, and Community Relations under one Executive Director, Gary Paget. At the time, the direction of the Branch was unclear, the work of each of the three units was substantively different, and there was no shared culture or history among the three units. In addition, the compulsory government-wide performance management system of Employee Performance and Development Plans (EPDP) was time and effort intensive (G. Paget, personal communication, 2012).

According to Gary Paget who served as the Branch's Executive Director between 2002 and 2011, the history of the Branch, the lack of integration between the work of the three units, and the resource-intensive EPDP program made it difficult for both managers and staff to set aside the time required for the critical and systematic thinking involved in strategic planning (Personal communication, 2012). Consequently, the 2013/14 Governance and Structure Branch plan is the first strategic plan that the Branch has ever developed and implemented.

While there has never been a formal strategic plan in place before, an analysis of the stream of decisions and management approaches since the Branch's creation in 2002 has led to the identification of some historical strategies:

- Build strong partnerships with non-governmental organizations (e.g. Union of British Columbia Municipalities, Local Government Management Association) by solving problems collaboratively and by recognizing organizational roles in the local government system;
- Empower local governments with more regulatory and decision-making authority through legislative change and modernization initiatives;
- Reposition Branch to respond to technical or complex issues, or matters of provincial or public interest;
- Develop an online repository of knowledge and resources by posting information and guides on the Branch website;
- Identify potential employees by offering co-operative education opportunities to students;
- Build internal capacity and increase retention by providing staff with educational or other opportunities for development;
- Maintain an awareness of environmental trends by networking with industry and local governments;
- Use insights from networking to identify and prepare for future needs; and,
- Emphasize teamwork and collaboration to build Branch capacity to manage change (G. Paget and D. Sutherland, personal communication, 2012).

At the end of 2011, the appointment of a new Assistant Deputy Minister at the Local Government Division – Julian Paine – resulted in renewed interest within the Division in using strategic plans as

management tools. Around the same time, changes in the Branch management team were taking place, and a new Executive Director – Nicola Marotz – was hired. The organizational changes created an opportunity to have a conversation within the Branch about the Branch’s strategic direction, values and priorities; however, the process of creating a strategic plan was slow, to allow an opportunity for the new Executive Director to learn about the Branch and its work. A participative planning process was started in June 2012 that included employee surveys, the creation of a representative steering committee, three facilitated half-day planning sessions, and progress reports throughout the planning process.

After the first employee survey and facilitated planning session, employee feedback and concerns identified a need to consider methods and practices for keeping the plan alive and for helping the Branch to achieve its goals. Research began to understand the experiences of other branches and the ways that other branches have succeeded in breathing life into their plans. The research and planning process were taking place simultaneously, and a foundational strategic plan was created and finalized on April 30, 2013. See *Appendix 10.1: Governance and Structure Branch Strategic Plan*. This report is intended to provide advice and recommendations to address employee feedback and concerns.

#### **1.4 Overview of the Report**

The report begins by reviewing the literature on living documents to get some guidance on how to apply the concept to enhance the strategy process and to understand some of the ways that the term is being defined. While many people speak of living documents, there is very little academic literature on the topic and the term has yet to be well defined in the strategic management literature.

Next, a conceptual framework for successful implementation is proposed and described to guide the research process. The research methods are identified and explained, followed by a presentation of the findings. The Branch Culture Survey findings are described and Branch Ideas for Culture Change are captured. The interview findings are presented and sorted according to levels of importance based on the number of interviewees that touched on aspects of particular themes.

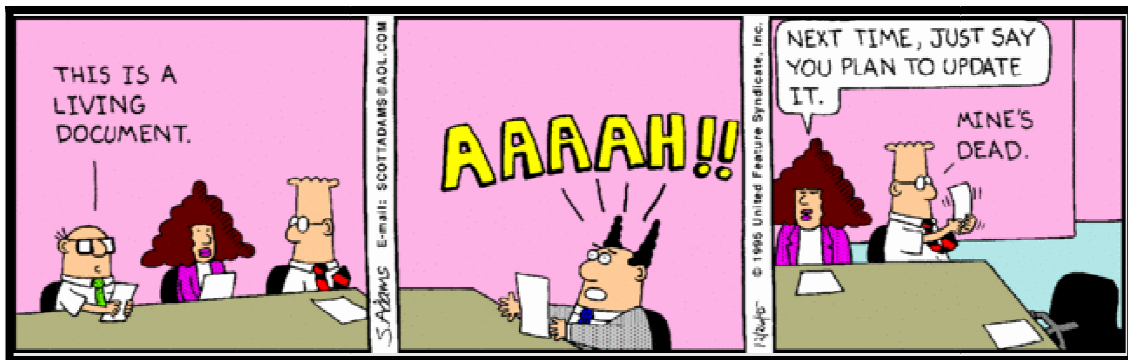
*Section 6.0 Discussion* brings together the literature, the Branch Ideas for Culture Change and the interview findings that were assessed as being of high importance for successful implementation and living plans. The applicability of various practices within the Governance and Structure Branch context is discussed to inform the report’s recommendations. The report concludes that breathing life into strategic plans requires an awareness of the key factors that affect implementation, knowledge of how to integrate change, effective leadership, and a sensitivity to the power of culture.

## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Living Documents

The idea that a strategic plan should be a living document is a notion that appears to be gaining traction within the Canadian public sector. A Google search for the term *living document* on Canadian government websites results in thousands of hits, and indicates that many public sector plans are now being described as living documents. While the term *living plan* has been in use for decades (K. Speers, personal communication, 2013), some writers have expressed frustration about misunderstandings about the true meaning of the term, as well as abuse of the concept (McGregor, 2006, p. 17). The Dilbert cartoon in Figure 1 illustrates that many people either misunderstand the meaning of the term or think that the term merely refers to a document that gets updated, but is there more to it than that?

Figure 1: Dilbert (Adams, 1995)



This literature review investigates the nuances of how the concept can be usefully applied to enhance the strategy process. Academic literature on the topic of living documents is limited. To augment the contributions from the academic literature, grey literature available on the internet was consulted and included in this review. The literature review produced no evidence to assess whether strategic plans that are described as living documents are any more or less meaningful or relevant to the organizations that use them, or whether strategic goals and objectives are implemented with a greater degree of success.

In the article, *Breathing Life into "Living Documents"*, John McGregor states that, "A multitude of sins can be hidden behind the phrase 'living document.' You can submit documents that are incomplete or inconsistent, as long as you promise to fix it later" (2006, p. 17). Mark McDonald adds that, "Living documents rarely live. . . . A document captures information in time. It forms the basis for agreement and decisions to move forward. Do things change? Of course they do. But, change requires new agreements, decisions and discussion" (2009, para. 5). Other criticisms are that living documents are infrequently updated or only updated when there is a problem, and that some people mistakenly believe that they are open to personal interpretation (para. 3). McGregor argues that, "Documents that are changed on a whim confuse project personnel and often get out of synch with other rapidly changing documents." (p. 20). McDonald adds that the misuse of the concept shapes "views and expectations that reduce trust, avoid tough choices and let budget or schedule pressure get ahead of understanding and agreement." (para. 6).

The review indicates that the term is defined in three different ways. Most of the sources reviewed agree that a living document is a dynamic document that is revised or updated according

to changes that affect its relevance or accuracy (Government of Alberta, 2013, para. 3; Manzer & Palumbo, 2013, p. 63), but other sources suggest that a living document is a document that is used to help guide operations and decision-making (Plant, *Holistic strategic planning: Integrating strategic and operational plans in the public sector*, 2007, p. 2). Whereas some sources propose that a living document is a process, not a document (McGregor, 2006, p. 18; Everything2 Media, 2003, para. 1). In some fields, such as information technology and education, products and knowledge are developed through iterative and incremental processes. Solutions to new and complex problems can be hard to identify or out of reach at the beginning of the implementation process (McDonald, 2009, para. 4), and experimentation, incremental gains and continuous improvement are used to move towards the desired outcome (Cambridge, 2008, p. 1236).

The various definitions of the term, *living document*, may provide some evidence to support McGregor's opinion that the term is not well understood; conversely, the existence of a variety of definitions may indicate that users of the term require some guidance on how to apply the concept to enhance the strategic planning process. The literature review identified the following insights that may serve as guidance.

### *2.1.1 Strategic Plans as Dynamic Documents*

Firstly, in order for a strategic plan to stay alive as a dynamic document, the plan must "be marked by usually continuous and productive activity or change" (Merriam-Webster, 2013). In other words, the plan needs to be reviewed and changed. However, changing the plan requires leaders who are willing to respond constructively to criticisms about the process or plan (Wheeland, 1993, p. 71). To do so, leaders need an understanding of when it is productive to review the plan. The literature review identified the following factors that can help prompt a review of the plan:

- The passage of time (Government of Alberta, 2013, para. 3; USLegal, Inc., n.d., para. 1; Brown, 1996, p. 114);
- Environmental or contextual changes (Alliance for Children and Youth of Waterloo Region, 2011, p. 2; McGregor, 2006, p. 17; Government of Alberta, 2013, para. 3; Spinelli, 2011, p. 32);
- New information (West Coast Aquatic, 2013, p. 1; City of Havelock, 2013, para. 3; Beaulieu, 2003, p. 16); and
- Scope changes (Manzer & Palumbo, 2013, p. 63).

To ensure that the plan changes with the passage of time, organizations should aim to review their plan more often than yearly, and may benefit from setting up definite times to review the plan (Hart, 2011, para. 3; McPhee, 2013, para. 12). The review dates should be set in accordance with the rhythm of projects and their natural evolutionary cycles, which will require the organization to anticipate the evolutionary trajectory of products and projects (McGregor, 2006, p. 19). Some of the sources reviewed, suggest that the document needs to be continually critiqued and updated (Hart, 2011, para. 4; Everything2 Media, 2003, para. 2; Brown, 1996, p. 120); however, in practice, continual and constant updates may make it difficult for staff to keep track of the latest information (McGregor, 2006, p. 19). To ensure that adjustments to the plan are consistent with the original plan, organizations may benefit from keeping the vision in mind (Wheeland, 1993, p. 71).

To keep abreast of environmental or contextual changes, trends need to be monitored and recorded. Since the world today changes rapidly, current conditions and the record of trends should be reviewed and analyzed on an annual basis to help the organization identify the

strategies that will be effective for achieving its goals and objectives in the current conditions (Brown C. M., 1996, p. 120). Preparing a change management plan may help organizations to effectively handle significant events that cause the plan to become obsolete (McGregor, 2006, p. 20).

Organizations may also want to consider using collaborative writing to easily incorporate new information. Online wikis, office whiteboards, and conventions and ethics can help create a document that is freely editable (Government of Alberta, 2013; Open Politics, n.d., para. 2). In order to effectively manage edits, one idea is to create a change control board with responsibility for weighing up the benefits and costs associated with proposed changes (McGregor, 2006, p. 20). The change control board should be representative of the spectrum of interests and functions within the organization (McGregor, 2006, p. 20) and should keep records regarding document changes to assure there is an ability “to go back and retrace steps” (Everything2 Media, 2003, para. 3). Bryson suggests using web tools, such as GoogleDocs or Microsoft SharePoint, to create an archive that contains previous draft and final versions of the plan and is accessible to all interested stakeholders (2011, p. 448).

Scope changes may potentially be managed by writing the plan in broad and flexible terms that enable evolving interpretations (USLegal, Inc., n.d., para. 2); however, some changes to an organization or project’s scope may require new discussions, agreements and decisions (McDonald, 2009, para. 5). Ensuring that the aforementioned change management plan outlines how to handle significant scope changes may help provide a framework to guide new discussions.

### *2.1.2 Strategic Plans as Guides for Decision-Making and Operations*

Secondly, in order for a strategic plan to come alive as a guide for decision-making and operations, the plan must:

- Be linked to the organization’s budgets and strategic goals, with funding allocated for implementation (Plant, 2009, p. 26)
- Provide principles for both long-term and short-term decisions (Plant, 2007, p. 2; Hart, 2011, para. 11); and,
- Serve as a blueprint for operations (Hart, 2011, p. 7; Brown C. M., 1996, pp. 114, 115, 122).

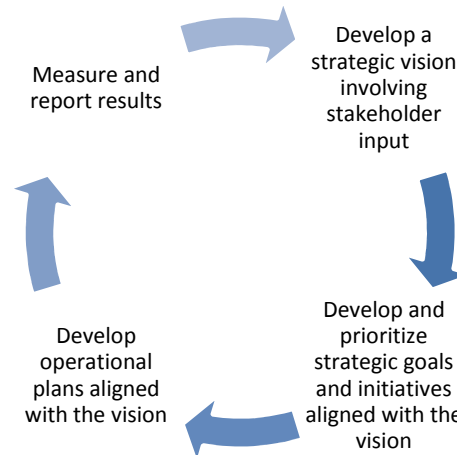
However, developing and integrating a plan capable of guiding decision-making and operations requires a superior planning process, according to Patrick Below, contributing author of the well known handbook *An Executive’s Guide to Strategic Planning* (Tomlinson, n.d., p. 2). Superior planning processes enrich both organizational leaders’ and employees’ appreciation of the intangible aspects of organizational realities, such as “stakeholders and stakeholder relationships, how to work together productively, effective approaches to conflict management, organizational culture, uncertainties surrounding the process and the organization, and requirements for perceived rationality and legitimacy” (Bryson, 2011, p. 101) and identify who will be responsible for coordinating implementation efforts and revising the plan (Wheeland, 1993, p. 71).

Thomas Plant, a leading author on strategic planning for local governments, calls this type of approach *holistic* strategic planning (see Figure 2) and suggests the following process for using a strategic vision to guide decision-making and operations:

1. Develop a strategic vision using input from all relevant stakeholders in order to achieve buy-in.

2. Align the organization's goals and initiatives – or key projects – with the vision, and establish priorities among the goals and projects.
3. Develop operational business plans or some other mechanism to guide action.
4. Measure and report on results in order to be able to evaluate success in achieving the goals and furthering the vision. (p. 3)

**Figure 2: Holistic strategic planning model (Plant, 2007, p.3)**



Aside from soliciting input from all the relevant stakeholders, organizations may also achieve buy-in by creating tangible products to help planning and implementation participants visualize the vision of the future, e.g. infographics, charts or physical models (Wheeland, 1993, p. 68). Once the future is clear and priorities have been established, both leaders and employees may benefit from referring to the vision and priorities when making day-to-day decisions about where to focus efforts and resources (Bryson, 2011, p. 285). Developing an operational plan that reflects the vision and priorities can further help guide the organization activities by serving as a blueprint.

Finally, Plant suggests that organizations need to measure and report on progress, in order to keep the plan alive. However, measuring progress does not necessarily require formal processes. Alden and Hughes suggest incorporating three types of meetings into managerial processes: informal conversations with staff and teams about progress; progress updates at staff meetings; and, regular one-on-one meetings between managers and staff every few months (Alden & Hughes, 2005, para. 22). The information gathered during these meetings can help managers and employees to learn and to make better decisions over time by providing the feedback necessary for them to reflect on the effectiveness of actions taken. In addition, the data can be used to report back to stakeholders and achieve ongoing buy-in throughout implementation (Plant, 2009, p. 26).

### *2.1.3 Strategic Planning as an Iterative and Incremental Process*

Lastly, in order for strategic plans to come alive and be successfully implemented, the strategy process must be an iterative cycle, and strategies to address new or complex problems should be developed in increments. Plant's holistic strategic planning process is one example of an iterative cycle. The process is represented as a cycle in Figure 2. In the book, *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations*, John Bryson introduces another example of an iterative strategic planning process, which he calls the strategy change cycle (2011, pp. 41-80). Bryson identifies ten steps in the strategy change cycle, which can be grouped into four major phases:

1. Planning to plan
2. Strategy formulation
3. Strategy implementation
4. Implementation evaluation

These four phases are represented as an iterative cycle in Figure 3. During the planning to plan phase, Bryson suggests that the organization initiates and agrees on a strategic planning process; identifies and clarifies its mandates, mission, and values; assesses the external and internal environments; identifies strategic issues; and, develops a vision statement (2011, pp. 43-47). This phase need not be a major part of each cycle, depending on how regularly implementation efforts are evaluated and strategies refined.

**Figure 3: The four major phases of Bryson's strategy change cycle**



After the groundwork has been laid, the organization moves on to the strategy formulation phase where the focus is on identifying goals and strategies to manage the issues; assessing the implementation barriers associated with the various goals and strategies, and then deciding on goals and strategies; drafting the plan; and, getting formal approval for the plan (if necessary.) In addition, Bryson recommends creating a six-month to one-year implementation plan (Bryson, 2011), while McGregor suggests that organizations must anticipate change and reduce project risks by shortening the time from planning to execution (2006, p. 19).

An incremental approach is most appropriate for projects or initiatives where the rate of change is fast or the nature of change is transformative (Competing Values, 2009, pp. 3-4), or where the issue is complex or occurs in a complex system (McGregor, 2006, p. 19). Most public policy issues involve a high degree of complexity, suggesting that incremental planning may be a helpful practice to adopt in the public sector. Incremental planning can also help organizations be agile and avoid the need to make sweeping changes to implementation plans in the event of major environmental or contextual changes, key new information, or significant scope changes. For example: public reaction to a perceived crisis, new insights based on implementation evaluations, new funding related to a government grant program. When using an incremental approach, the plan increments should be developed in tandem with the tactical rhythms of projects, which can often be as short as two or three weeks (McGregor, 2006, p. 19)

In the next phase, the organization executes its implementation plan. Aside from completing the work associated with various strategic projects and initiatives, managers and employees should also be focused on collecting the data and feedback they will need to evaluate their accomplishments and the success of initiatives, and refine the organization's strategies and implementation approach (Everything2 Media, 2003, para. 2). There are many different ways to collect feedback. The literature review uncovered several practices that public sector organizations may find useful, namely: inviting clients to communicate feedback and share data or ideas for improvement (City of Havelock, 2013, para. 3; West Coast Aquatic, 2013, para. 2); engaging in continuous and open dialogue with stakeholders (Government of Alberta, 2013, para. 3); and, collecting quantitative data and documentation (West Coast Aquatic, 2013, para. 2).

The final phase is the evaluation phase, where accomplishments and the feedback, data and documentation collected during implementation are reviewed and analyzed. Bryson states that, "Much of the work of this phase may occur as part of the ongoing implementation process" (2011, p. 66); however, in practice, organizations may find it more efficient to co-ordinate the timing of implementation evaluations and plan reviews (see *Section 2.1.1 Strategic Plans as Dynamic Documents*). In order to assess both the organization's accomplishments, as well as the need for adjustments to the plan, the implementation evaluation must include both formative and summative aspects.

The aim of the formative aspects of the evaluation is to "help implementers identify obstacles and steer over, around, under, or through them to achieve — or if necessary, modify — policy goals during the early stages of implementation. A good formative evaluation will also provide useful information for new rounds of strategizing" (Bryson, 2011, p. 289). To help identify the path to success, organizations should focus on understanding and learning from what works – and what doesn't – and then use the information to inform adjustments during implementation (Beaulieu, 2003, p. 16). Organizations may also benefit from cultivating openness to "revisiting and revising designs, plans, and schedules" (McGregor, 2006, p. 17) and treating "previous work as 'living' artifacts subject to modification" (p. 18). Openness will help bring the plan to life by supporting adjustments and the process of modifying and improving upon existing initiatives and products based on the new information.

On the other hand, the aim of the summative aspects of the implementation evaluation is to demonstrate the creation of public value and determine whether the organization achieved its goals (Bryson, 2011, pp. 289, 290). As Michael Quinn Patton notes, "Summative evaluations seldom rely entirely, or even primarily, on qualitative data. . . Qualitative data in summative evaluations typically add depth, detail and nuance to quantitative findings" (2002, pp. 219-220). Because of the nature of some public sector goals, some strategies may never actually be fully implemented. Organizations may simply make incremental progress towards the end-goals and vision by achieving certain objectives. In the information technology field, living documents are frequently used as part of a quality assurance documentation process (Everything2 Media, 2003, para. 3). To demonstrate the creation of public value and progress towards achieving end-goals, Bryson recommends documenting outputs and outcomes, and explains their difference in the following way:

Outputs are the actual actions, behaviors, products, services, or other direct consequences produced by the policy changes. Outcomes are the benefits of the outputs for stakeholders and the larger meanings attached to those outputs (2011, p. 289).

Documenting achievements contributes to keeping the plan alive by increasing:

- Political capital and support for the organization, its leaders and its plan;
- Individual motivation and engagement through the realization of personal and professional benefits for those involved in the successful implementation; and
- Organizational capacity to make sound decisions about where to focus future efforts and resources (Bryson, 2011, pp. 290-291)

Once the evaluation is complete, the new information and insights and list of achievements must be prepared for inclusion back into the strategic plan and suite of related documents (Everything2 Media, 2003, para. 2). This step may potentially form part of the change control board's responsibilities. McGregor advises using the *C<sup>3</sup> criteria* – correct, complete and consistent – to check the accuracy and cohesion within the strategic plan and among related documents (2006, p. 20).

## **2.2 Incorporating Living Document Theory into Implementation Methods and Practices**

The literature review identified that breathing life into strategic plans requires an understanding of when to make changes to documents, as well as the methods and practices for keeping documents alive. Four criteria for document changes were identified: the passage of time; environmental or contextual changes; new information; and, scope changes.

To breathe life into strategic plans, organizations need to use the plan as a guide for decision-making and operation. Doing so requires the identification of strategic priorities and the development of operational or implementation plans to guide activities. In addition, keeping plans alive requires an iterative and incremental strategy process. In particular, evaluating the effectiveness of implementation actions and making adjustments to implementation plans are important practices. Another important practice is reporting on achievements, as this helps demonstrate the creation of public value. These practices require the collection of data and feedback. Developing implementation plans using an incremental approach helps ensure that plans are accurate and enables the organization to be agile. *Section 3.0 Conceptual Framework* proposes a framework for breathing life into strategic plans using effective implementation and living document methods and practices, and culture alignment.



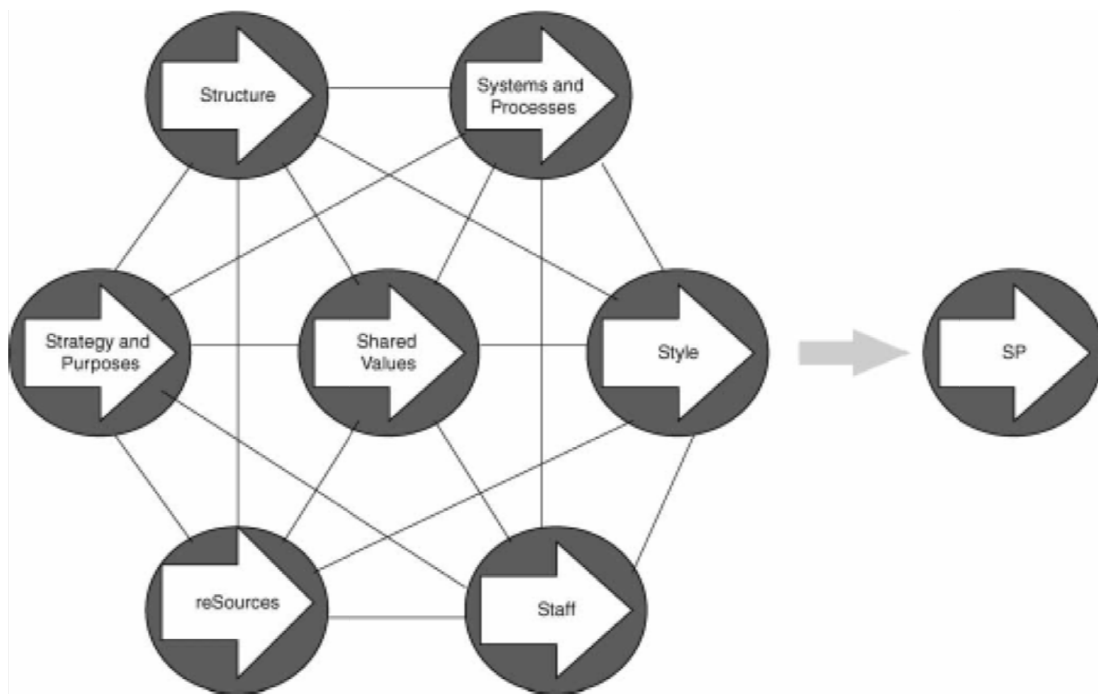
### 3.0 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

#### 3.1 Revisions to the McKinsey 7-S Framework

The conceptual framework was developed by combining the living document practices with a revised version of the well known heuristic, the McKinsey 7-S Framework (See Appendix 10.2). The McKinsey 7-S Framework suggests that the alignment or fit between seven factors is a key for successful change and implementation.

In 2005, James M. Higgins proposed three changes to the McKinsey 7-S Framework: the replacement of *skills* with *reSources*, the addition of *strategic performance*, and updates to the names and definitions of the remaining 'S's. Higgins called the new framework, the 8 'S's Model, and proposed that successful strategy execution relies on the alignment of eight elements: strategy and purposes, structure, systems and processes, style, staff, reSources, shared values, and strategic performance.

**Figure 4: The 8 'S's Model (Higgins, 2005, p.6)**



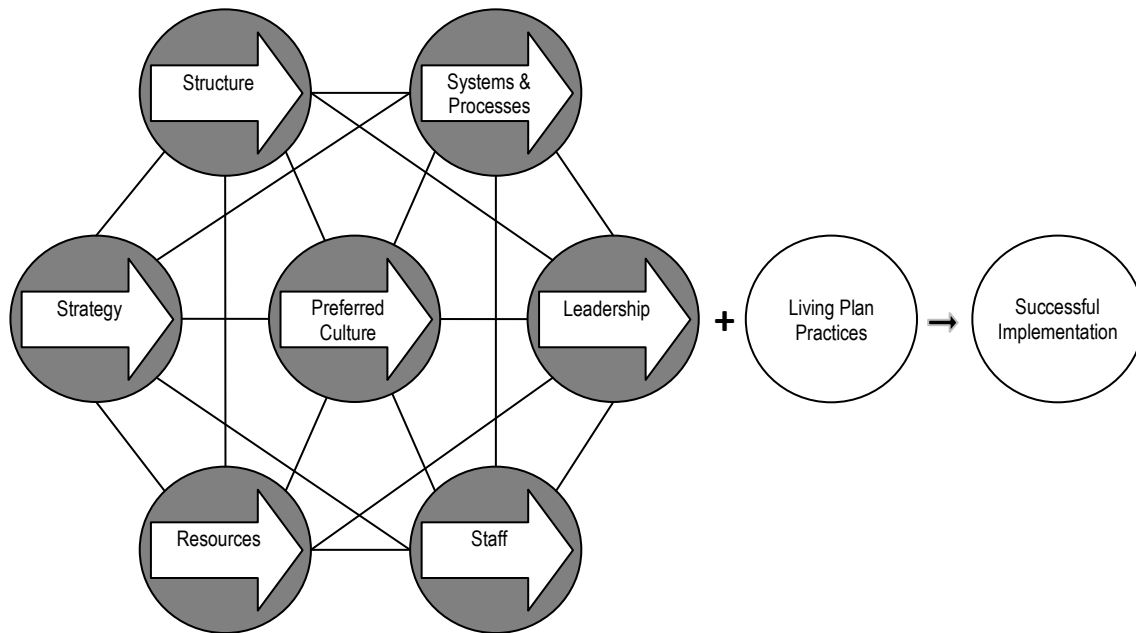
For this project, the 8 'S's Model has been further adapted:

- Waterman, Peters and Phillips' 'S'-alliteration has been done away with to ensure that the meaning of terms is clear and consistent throughout this report;
- Higgins's terms *strategy and purposes* and *strategic performance* have been replaced with the terms *strategy* and *successful implementation* respectively;
- The idea of aligning with the organization's *superordinate goals* or *shared values* (which were terms referring to organizational culture) has been replaced with Cameron and Quinn's concept of *preferred culture* (2011); and,
- A ninth element – *living plan practices* – has been added to the framework.

### 3.2 The Living Plan Framework

The conceptual framework reflects an underlying belief that strategic plans (thought) are brought to life through the implementation process (action), and are kept alive through the alignment of culture and strategy and through the incorporation of living plan practices.

**Figure 5: The Living Plan Framework**



#### 3.2.1 Definitions

**Strategy:** Strategies are those actions and decisions intended to help an organization fulfil its mandate or achieve its purpose (Higgins, 2005, p. 5). Mintzberg, Ahlstrand and Lampel identify three types of strategy: deliberate strategy; unrealized strategy; and, emergent strategy (1998, pp. 9-12). Deliberate strategies are reflected in an organization’s strategic plan; unrealized strategies are those strategies which are not implemented at all; and, emergent strategies are “actions . . . taken, one-by-one, which converged over time to some sort of consistency or pattern” (p. 11). To breathe life into an organization’s strategic plan, emergent strategies must align with the organization’s deliberate strategy and preferred culture.

**Structure:** The conceptual framework uses Higgins’ definition of structure:

An organization’s structure consists of five parts: jobs; the authority to do those jobs; the grouping of jobs in a logical fashion, for example, into departments or divisions; the manager’s span of control; and mechanisms of coordination. The first four are normally shown in an organization chart. The last is usually described in the [organization’s] operating policies and procedures. (p. 5)

**Leadership:** Schein states that, “When we are influential in shaping the behaviour and values of others, we think of that as ‘leadership’” (2010, p. 3). The ways that a leader consistently influences the behaviour and values of employees is known as that person’s leadership style. To line up with Cameron and Quinn’s organizational culture assessment instrument, the living plan framework is concerned with both the characteristics of leaders, as well as their leadership style (2011, p. 28).

**Preferred Culture:** Cameron and Quinn identify six fundamental aspects of organizational culture: dominant characteristics; organizational leadership; management of employees; organizational glue; strategic emphases; and, criteria of success (p. 28). An organization's preferred culture captures both employee preferences and the environmental or contextual requirements, since employee preferences alone may not always fit with the environmental requirements for organizational effectiveness and success. For example, employees may prefer only face-to-face interactions with their manager, but the environment may require employees and managers to interact over great distances and use technology to facilitate their interactions. The preferred culture would therefore need to support transformation and the use of technology. The definitions for each of the six fundamental aspects of organizational culture differ according to the culture type and can be found in *Table 4: Average scores for statements within each aspect of culture*.

**Staff:** Higgins states that staff refers to the number and type of employees and their individual and group competencies (p.5); however, staff behaviours and values are also included in the living plan framework, since staff behaviours and values are an important dimension of organizational culture.

**Systems and Processes:** The term refers to the systems and processes that enable day-to-day or year-to-year operations to take place.

**Resources:** Resources are the tools, technology, funds, software and other requirements that employees have to do their job. Higgins' states that the "major concern [with resources] is the extent to which the organization leverages its resources" (p.5).

**Living Plan Practices:** Living plan practices are those practices that help embed a strategic plan within an organization's operations, mandate or purpose. Living plan practices ensure that the strategic plan is relevant and an accurate guide for decision-making, and help prevent situations where plans are not referred to or are only looked at to fulfil expectations or requirements.



## 4.0 METHODOLOGY

### 4.1 The Branch Culture Survey

#### 4.1.1 Method

The Branch Culture Survey is a mixed methods survey comprised of nine questions that was developed by combining an adapted version of Kim Cameron and Robert Quinn's Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI) (2011) with three open-ended questions. The survey was administered online using the FluidSurveys' software, which enabled anonymous participation.

The purpose of the survey was to:

- Determine the Branch culture type and its strength;
- Identify any discrepancies between the existing and preferred future culture;
- Assess the congruence between various aspects of the culture; and,
- Collect ideas for strategic action to foster the desired changes.

#### *Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument Questionnaire*

The OCAI is a reliable and valid questionnaire for examining organizational culture that is based on the Competing Values Framework (see Appendix x for more information about the Competing Values Framework). The questionnaire is reliable in that it assesses the culture types consistently (Cameron & Quinn, 2011, pp. 176-178), and valid in that:

- It measures what it claims to measure for each of the 24 statements in the OCAI, the six aspects of culture, and the four culture types (Cameron & Quinn, 2011, p. 181);
- There is a proven relationship between cultural strength and performance and cultural congruence and performance: organizations with strong cultures have been found to be more effective than those with weak or mixed cultures, and organizations with congruent cultures have been proven to perform better than those with incongruent cultures (Cameron & Quinn, 2011, p. 179); and,
- There is strong evidence of linkages between the values and the characteristics described within each culture type, i.e. the culture types and their respective groupings of values and cultural characteristics exist (e.g. open communication, team decision making) (Cameron & Quinn, 2011, p. 180).

For more information regarding the statistical analyses proving the OCAI's reliability and validity, please see Appendix A of *Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture* (Cameron & Quinn, 2011, pp. 175-183).

Cameron and Quinn's original questionnaire was adapted by making a few minor changes to the wording. The reason for the changes was that, as a public sector entity, the Governance and Structure Branch does not operate in the same market conditions as the majority of organizations. Terms found in the original questionnaire, such as "competition", "winning", "targets", and "the marketplace", manifest in significantly different ways in the public sector than in the private sector. The questionnaire was adapted by replacing such terms with ones that better reflect public sector realities and that were found within the competing values literature. Cameron and Quinn's own words were used as much as possible to preserve the proven reliability and validity of the research instrument.

Research participants were asked to rate six aspects of the Governance and Structure Branch culture:

1. Dominant Characteristics
2. Organizational Leadership
3. Management of Employees
4. Organization Glue (or Values)
5. Strategic Emphases
6. Criteria for Success

For each element of the culture, participants were presented with four statements and were asked to read each statement and divide 100 points among the four statements, giving a higher number of points to statements that they deemed to be the most accurate descriptions of the Governance and Structure Branch culture. Since, the OCAI has a dual focus, participants were not only asked to assess the current culture but also to indicate their preferences for the future.

### *Open-Ended Questions*

Three open-ended questions were added to the adapted OCAI to triangulate the OCAI results, to provide deeper insights into the specific characteristics of the Branch culture that research participants value (or prefer), and to collect some preliminary ideas for actions. The questions followed on from the OCAI in the Branch Culture Survey (see *Section 10.3 Branch Culture Survey*) and were:

7. What are the attributes or qualities of the Branch culture that you are most proud of?
8. What are the attributes or qualities of the Branch culture that you are least proud of?
9. What ideas do you have for ways that the Branch could build on those attributes or qualities that you are most proud of, in order to achieve its highest aspirations?

### *Survey Triangulation*

The findings were presented to the Governance and Structure Branch employees at a meeting. The purpose of the presentation was to report back to survey participants and to provide a second form of triangulation (in addition to the open-ended questions). At the end of the presentation, the Branch employees were invited to ask questions and to share their opinions about the accuracy of the findings. Employees were also given the options of discussing the findings with their director, and providing anonymous comments and feedback using a form that is permanently hosted on FluidSurveys for that purpose.

#### *4.1.2 Participant Selection*

An email was sent out to all Governance and Structure Branch employees in the Victoria office to invite them to participate in the research by completing the Branch Culture Survey. Vancouver-based employees were not included since the Vancouver office functions independently. Since only those individuals who are part of a cultural group have the knowledge and understanding required to rate and comment on the culture, the Branch employees were the only individuals with the knowledge necessary to assess the culture. The survey was administered online using FluidSurveys' software and invitees were given two weeks to complete the survey. Two additional emails were sent during the two week period to try to maximize the participation rate.

#### *4.1.3 Participation Rate*

Fourteen survey responses were received, resulting in a response rate of sixty percent; however, one response was excluded from the analysis due to incorrect completion of the OCAI Questionnaire. Thus, the participation rate was fifty-six percent of the total Branch census. The reminder emails increased the response rate by approximately forty percent. The average time taken to complete the survey was twelve minutes.

#### 4.1.4 Survey Analysis

The OCAI questionnaire was analyzed using the guidance provided in Cameron and Quinn's book, *Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture* (2011, chap. 4). The culture type was determined by identifying the type with the highest average score in the now column. The culture strength was assessed by comparing the number of overall points awarded to each culture type out of the 600 available points. In a perfectly balanced culture, each culture type would be awarded around a quarter of the points available ( $\pm 150$  points). While anecdotal at best, it was decided that the existence of a strong culture would be evidenced by a culture type that was awarded a third of the points or more (200+ points).

The need and desire for culture change was identified by identifying differences in the average scores for each culture type in the now and preferred columns. In the book, *Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture*, Cameron and Quinn state that differences of "between five and ten points usually indicate the need for substantial culture change" and advise the practitioner to "be especially sensitive to differences of more than ten points" (2011, pp. 82-83). Accordingly, differences of less than 5 points were deemed to be negligible; differences of between 5 and 9 points were deemed to be significant; and, differences of 10 points or more were deemed to be critical. The discrepancies are also easily identified by comparing the shapes in Figure 7. The data was further used to create a Branch culture profile and six additional profiles for each of the individual aspects of the OCAI (see *Appendix 10.3 Branch Culture Survey*).

The congruence was assessed by comparing the preferred Branch culture type to the culture types that were awarded the highest and second highest number of points for each of the six aspects of culture. Cultures that are congruent emphasize the same culture type in each aspect of culture. In other words, if an organization has a congruent clan culture, then clan culture would be awarded the highest number of points for organizational leadership, strategic emphases, etc. Whereas a clan culture that is not congruent may emphasize clan culture within the organizational leadership, but not at the strategic level.

For the open-ended responses, deductive coding was used to categorize themes according to the Competing Values Framework. Amalgams of quotes were generated to communicate the essence of respondents' viewpoints and ideas, and the quotes were then used to enrich the understanding of the discrepancies between the current and preferred cultures (see *Section 5.1.2 Discrepancies between Current and Preferred Cultures*). Verbatim phrases were used to compile *Section 5.1.4 Branch Ideas for Culture Change*.

#### 4.1.5 Limitations

Culture is complex and is not limited to the six aspects assessed by the OCAI. Therefore, the findings simply provide insight into the Governance and Structure Branch culture.

## 4.2 Elite Interviews

### 4.2.1 Method

The purpose of the interviews was to collect data on methods and practices that have helped strategic planning practitioners keep branch-level strategic plans alive and successfully implement them. The one-hour interviews were conducted in person and over the telephone using a topic guide and a semi-structured approach. The topic guide was shared with the interviewees in advance to enable interviewees to reflect on the topics. In addition, a list of potential questions

was developed for each of the interview topics to help ensure that areas of interest were addressed during the one-hour interview.

The list of potential questions was piloted during the first four interviews, and then revised to be less specific and more open-ended, as the elite interviewees tended to be very comfortable discussing the various topics and required little prompting. Instead of asking interviewees to comment on specific areas of interest, interviewees were simply asked to identify practices that have either enhanced or inhibited implementation. Handwritten notes were taken during the interview to enable the interviewer to ask relevant follow-up and probe questions, which were used to understand how specific practices mentioned by the interviewees have been applied in a government branch context. The semi-structured approach was also changed to be more conversational to encourage the interviewees to feel free to address topics that may have been overlooked in developing the topic guide. The interviews were recorded using a digital audio recorder.

#### *4.2.2 Participant Selection*

Purposeful sampling was used to identify potential interviewees with personal experience implementing branch-level strategic plans within the Canadian public sector. The criteria for participant selection were:

- Experience implementing one or more strategic plans in a public sector context (preferably a provincial government branch); and,
- Currently or previously employed in a branch leadership role, for example as an executive director or director.

Potential interviewees in the BC government were identified by first identifying branches that have strategic plans. Next, the branch executive director was identified using the BC Government Directory. Potential interviewees in local government branches in other provincial governments were identified using a list of the members of the Provincial-Territorial Officials Committee (PTOC) for Local Government. Interviewees were contacted by email and telephone to inform them about the research project and invite their participation.

#### *4.2.3 Participation Rate*

An overwhelming majority of the individuals who were contacted were willing and able to participate in the research. Approximately sixteen potential interviewees were contacted, of whom fourteen agreed to be interviewed. In one case, an interviewee invited a co-worker to join the interview, resulting in a total of fifteen interviewees and fourteen interviews. The rate of participation was thus approximately eighty-eight percent (88%).

Eleven interviews were conducted in person, and three were conducted over the telephone. Seventy-nine percent of the interviews involved BC government employees; the remaining twenty-one percent of interviews involved individuals from the governments of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Ontario. Twenty-nine percent involved individuals leading local government divisions or branches; thirty-six percent involved organizational development branch leaders; and, twenty-five percent involved branch leaders in a variety of branches.

#### *4.2.4 Interview Analysis*

NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software program, was used to facilitate the analysis. The data was sorted into categories matching the conceptual framework and the topic guide (e.g. strategy, structure, living plan), and was then further sorted into enhancing and inhibiting forces. Next, the

data was coded using content analysis techniques and in vivo coding. The aim of the coding was to identify specific practices and factors that enhance and inhibit implementation and a living plan. Once all the data had been coded, the practices and factors were grouped into overarching themes (e.g. establishing an implementation structure), resulting in a list of enhancing and inhibiting forces for each of the categories in the conceptual framework.

Themes that enhanced implementation and a living plan were used to generate tables. The level of importance of each theme was assessed according to the number of interviewees that mentioned practices and factors related to each theme. Three levels of importance were established – high, moderate, and low – and the tables were colour-coded to facilitate easy reference (see Figure 6).

**Figure 6: Levels of Importance**



Themes that were mentioned by eight or more interviewees were classified as being of high importance for successful implementation and a living plan; themes that were mentioned by between four and seven interviewees were classified as being of moderate importance; and, themes that were mentioned by between one and three interviewees were classified as being of low importance.

To estimate the reliability of the findings, an inter-rater reliability test was devised to check the coding. A volunteer with no knowledge or experience with implementation was identified and asked to participate in an inter-rater reliability test. Two interviews were selected and a one-page excerpt from each interview transcript was randomly selected to use for the coding check. Two copies of each excerpt were printed. One copy of each excerpt was set aside to enable the volunteer to read the excerpts in their entirety. The other copy was cut into strips based on the researcher's coding. A list of the fourteen codes assigned within the two excerpts was created and printed, and then cut into strips. The volunteer was provided with the two excerpts and asked to read the two pages. The volunteer was then instructed to match each strip of coded data with the code that seemed to best capture the essence of the string of text. The volunteer's coding was then compared to the researcher's coding to assess the inter-rater reliability. The level of agreement between the researcher and the volunteer was one-hundred percent, which suggests that the interview findings are highly reliable.

#### *4.2.5 Limitations*

Purposeful sampling was used and participants were selected according to certain criteria. Due to the scope of the study and time limitations, the number of interviews was limited to fourteen rather than all those cases who met the criteria. The sampling strategy means that findings cannot be generalized; however, as Patton notes, "Studying information-rich cases yields insights and in-depth understanding rather than empirical generalizations" (2002, p. 230).

### 4.3 Data Mixing

The data from the Branch Culture Survey and the elite interviews were collected concurrently and analyzed separately; however, priority was given to the interview data, since the aim of the interviews was to identify methods and practices for successful implementation and breathing life into branch-level strategic plans. The findings from the Branch Culture Survey are secondary and were used to interpret the applicability of methods and practices and filter out those ideas that are unlikely to be embraced by Branch employees. The data from the two research methods were mixed during the *Section 6.0 Discussion*, where the methods and practices that were ranked as highly important are interpreted and discussed. The theory behind the research design is that strategic plans are brought to life through the implementation process, and are kept alive by aligning culture and strategy and incorporating living plan practices.

## 5.0 FINDINGS

### 5.1 Branch Culture Survey Findings

The findings are presented in four sections – culture type and strength; discrepancies between current and preferred culture; cultural congruence; and Branch ideas for culture change – and represent the opinions and preferences of thirteen employees (or fifty six (56) percent of the Governance and Structure Branch census at the time of the survey). Previous studies have proven the reliability of the findings with as few as nine responses (Cameron & Quinn, 2011, p. 176) and the validity with as little as twelve responses per organization (Cameron & Quinn, 2011, p. 178). The analysis of the open-ended questions combined with the feedback at the Branch meeting supported the validity of the OCAI analysis.

The analysis of the Branch Culture Survey has identified some important findings:

1. *The current culture is a fairly balanced mixture* of the four types, with clan culture being slightly more dominant than the other culture types.
2. Respondents indicated a need and desire for culture change where the emphasis on:
  - a. *Adhocracy culture is increased* by embracing continuous improvement, committing to using the technological resources available, and building strong strategic leadership with skills in systems analysis, change management, consultation and facilitation
  - b. *Hierarchy culture is decreased* by avoiding silo tendencies and focusing less on rules, process improvement and small issues
  - c. *Clan culture is maintained* by supporting learning and development, enabling mentoring, getting together to recognize and celebrate events and successes, and embracing information sharing and open communication.
3. The current culture is reasonably congruent, since clan culture is emphasized within five out of the six aspects of culture. To address this minor inconsistency, the Branch's definitions of success should be re-examined and the Branch should start rewarding and celebrating teamwork, commitment, empowerment and a concern for people. In addition to the ideas for culture change noted under 2.a., it will also important to embrace new values, strategic emphases and definitions of success related to adhocracy culture, in order to ensure that the culture remains congruent if a culture change initiative is started.

#### 5.1.1 Culture Type and Strength

The dominant culture is the type that has the highest average score on the OCAI in the *now* column, out of a theoretical total score of 100. In this case, clan culture emerged as the dominant culture type with a score of 31. See Table 2. Clan cultures are exemplified by workplaces that are warm and friendly, where colleagues are like family members. As one survey respondent noted, "I am most proud of the cohesion of the team. There is a positive and supportive atmosphere in the Branch, and a sense of enthusiasm, loyalty, fun and humour, which really helps us to build relationships with each other and to work together to provide excellent service to our clients." The second most dominant culture is hierarchy culture (27); third is market culture (24); and, fourth is adhocracy culture (18).

The strength of the culture is determined by examining the total number of points awarded to each culture type. The total number of points available within the OCAI questionnaire is 600. Clan culture received the highest number of points (186). See Table 3. Hierarchy culture received 160;

**Table 2: Average scores for each culture type**

Culture Type	Now	Preferred	Change
Total	100	100	
A. Clan Culture	31	34	+3
B. Adhocracy Culture	18	27	+9
C. Market Culture	24	22	-2
D. Hierarchy Culture	27	17	-10

**Table 3: Total number of points awarded to each culture type**

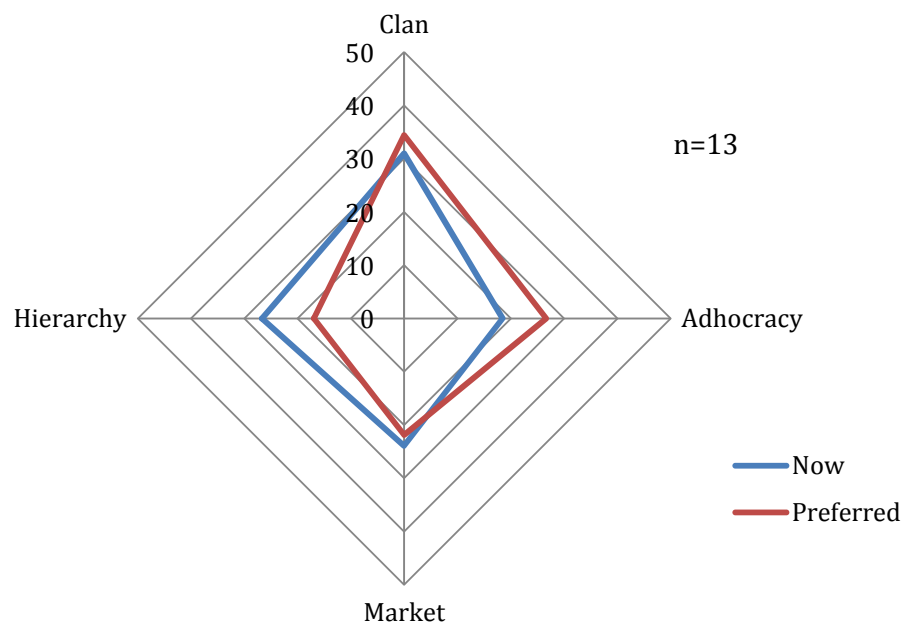
Culture Type	Points
A. Clan Culture	186
B. Adhocracy Culture	111
C. Market Culture	143
D. Hierarchy Culture	160

market culture 143; and, adhocracy culture 111. Since the points are fairly evenly distributed, the organizational culture is not strong. Cameron and Quinn state that, “The extent to which [an] organization needs a strong dominant culture as opposed to a balanced or eclectic culture is a matter of individual circumstance and environment” (2011, p. 84). In environments where adaptability and flexibility is key, a moderate culture may be most appropriate.

### 5.1.2 Discrepancies between Current and Preferred Cultures

Discrepancies between the current and preferred culture types are identified by creating an organizational culture profile (see Figure 7) and by calculating the average scores for each culture type. See Table 2. The shapes of the now and preferred graphs and the differences between the averages scores in the now and preferred columns were examined to identify discrepancies between the existing culture and the preferred future culture. To view the discrepancies within each of the six aspects, see Table 4.

**Figure 7: Governance and Structure Branch Culture Profile**



**Table 4: Average scores for statements within each aspect of culture**

<b>Aspects of Culture</b>	<b>Now</b>	<b>Preferred</b>	<b>Change</b>
<b>Dominant Characteristics</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	
A. The Branch is a very personal place. It is like an extended family. People seem to share a lot of themselves.	28	29	+1
B. The Branch is a dynamic, highly responsive and adaptable place. People are willing to stick their necks out to deliver cutting-edge services.	23	35	+12
C. The Branch is very results oriented. A major concern is with getting the job done. People are competitive, decisive and achievement oriented.	19	25	+6
D. The Branch is a very controlled and structured place. Formal procedures, reviews and reports generally govern what people do.	30	11	-19
<b>Organizational Leadership</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	
A. The leadership in the Branch is generally considered to exemplify mentoring, facilitating, or nurturing. Leaders have a deep understanding of and concern for others, as well as themselves.	33	32	-1
B. The leadership in the Branch is generally considered to be visionary, innovative, or pioneering. Leaders are committed to facilitating adaptation and change.	18	23	+5
C. The leadership in the Branch is generally considered to exemplify a strong work ethic and have a results-oriented focus. Leaders have a strong personal drive and are highly motivated.	27	27	0
D. The leadership in the Branch is generally considered to excel at coordinating and organizing projects to enable smooth-running efficiency. Leaders are recognized for their extensive understanding of the most minute details of the Local Government Division.	22	18	-4
<b>Management of Employees</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	
A. The management style in the Branch is characterized by team decision-making and effective communication. Consensus and participation are encouraged.	30	36	+6
B. The management style in the Branch is characterized by negotiating win-win solutions. Innovation, freedom, and uniqueness are supported and promoted.	22	26	+4
C. The management style in the Branch is characterized by setting goals, high demands, and achievement. Decisions are made by assessing their alignment with the overall direction of the Branch.	26	22	-4
D. The management style in the Branch is characterized by decisions that promote conformity and stability. Secure employment is valued across the Branch.	22	16	-6
<b>Organization Glue</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	
A. The glue that holds the Branch together is loyalty and mutual trust. Commitment to this Branch runs high.	35	39	+4
B. The glue that holds the Branch together is commitment to innovation and development. There is an emphasis on being on the cutting edge.	14	23	+9
C. The glue that holds the Branch together is the emphasis on achievement and goal accomplishment.	27	21	-6
D. The glue that holds the Branch together is formal rules and policies. Maintaining a smooth-running Branch is important.	24	17	-7
<b>Strategic Emphases</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	
A. The Branch emphasizes employee learning and development. High trust, openness, and participation persist.	32	37	+5
B. The Branch emphasizes acquiring new resources and creating new challenges. Trying new things and prospecting for opportunities are valued.	18	26	+8
C. The Branch emphasizes accomplishing its goals. Stretching capabilities and capacity to provide higher levels of service is a focus.	25	20	-5
D. The Branch emphasizes continuity, stability and efficiency. Finding ways to increase compliance and support smooth operations are important.	25	17	-8
<b>Criteria of Success</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	
A. The Branch defines success on the basis of empowering human resources, teamwork, employee commitment, and concern for people.	27	33	+6
B. The Branch defines success on the basis of providing cutting-edge services and creative solutions to problems. It is a leader and innovator.	16	26	+10
C. The Branch defines success on the basis of being the best. Demonstrating productivity, accountability and good value for money is key.	20	18	-2
D. The Branch defines success on the basis of efficiency and timeliness. Dependable service delivery, smooth operations, and eliminating waste and redundancy are critical.	37	23	-14

The greatest discrepancy between the scores for the current and preferred culture is within the hierarchy culture quadrant, where the difference is -10 points. The second largest discrepancy is within adhocracy culture, with a difference of +9 points. In the CVF, hierarchy culture and adhocracy culture are diametrically opposed to one another, meaning that they differ on both the internal-external dimension and the flexibility-stability dimension. In other words, the values, behaviours, and rules of the social order associated with each of the two culture types are competing. As a result, building adhocracy culture means that some attributes of hierarchy culture must inevitably be reduced or abandoned. The similarity in point differences (-10 and +9) is also an indication of the competition between the two culture types.

The discrepancies between the current and preferred scores within clan culture (+3) and the market culture (-2) are not significant. These point differences indicate that the values, beliefs and behaviours related to clan culture and market culture that exist within the Branch should be maintained.

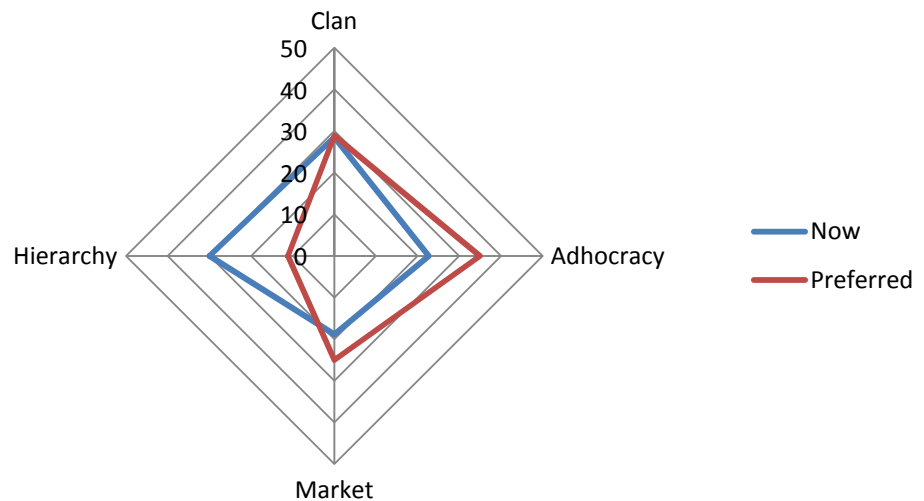
The results of the discrepancy analysis indicate that there is a need and a desire for culture change within the Governance and Structure Branch, with respondents preferring less emphasis on processes and incremental change, and more emphasis on innovation and transformation. The following quotes help to provide an introductory understanding regarding the type of change that is desired within the Governance and Structure Branch:

I am most proud of the way we are looking forward in many aspects of our work. Strong strategic leadership, combined with an emphasis on continuous learning and a commitment to using the technological resources available is helping us to find new ways to do our work.

The silo tendencies and the amount of attention paid to rules, process and small issues seems to translate into people not being interested in challenging themselves. At times, it seems that even leaders are powerless to do anything.

Before undertaking any culture change initiatives, consideration should be given to what culture change will and won't mean (see *The Four Major Culture Types*). Accordingly, an examination of each aspect of culture follows to understand the need and desire for culture change within each aspect.

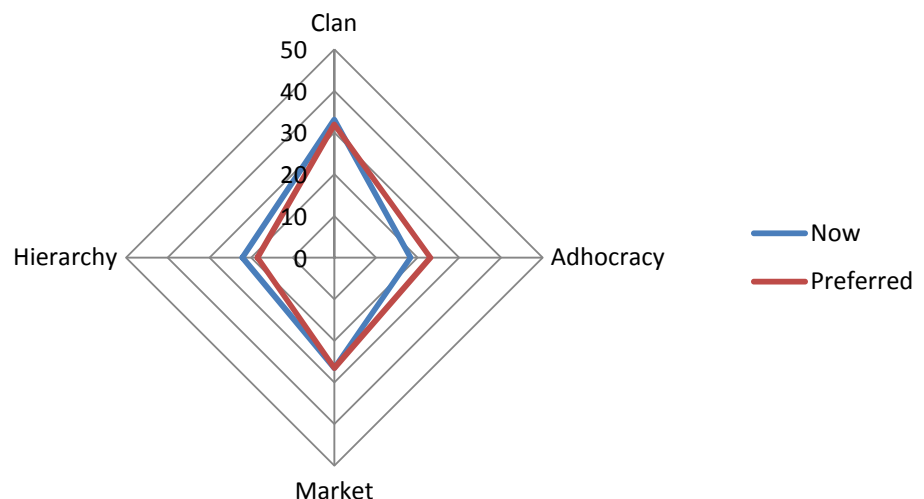
### Dominant Characteristics



For this aspect of the culture, hierarchy culture received the highest score: 30 points. Respondents indicated that the dominant characteristics of the Branch are control and structure, where formal procedures, reviews and reports generally govern what people do. Clan culture is also emphasized with a score of 28 points, indicating that, at the same time as being a structured environment, the Branch is also a very personal place, where people share a lot of themselves. Adhocracy culture scored 23 and market culture scored 19.

The point differences between the current and preferred scores are dramatic in hierarchy culture (-19) and adhocracy culture (+12), mirroring the discrepancies noted within the overall culture profile. In seeking to promote a general move away from hierarchy culture towards adhocracy culture, one respondent cautioned that, “Risk aversion and stretching capacity can have negative effects on creativity and innovation. If left unaddressed, these factors could also affect team building.” Respondents had a number of ideas for strategic actions that would support a general move away from hierarchy culture towards adhocracy culture, which are captured on page xx (see *Branch Ideas for Culture Change*).

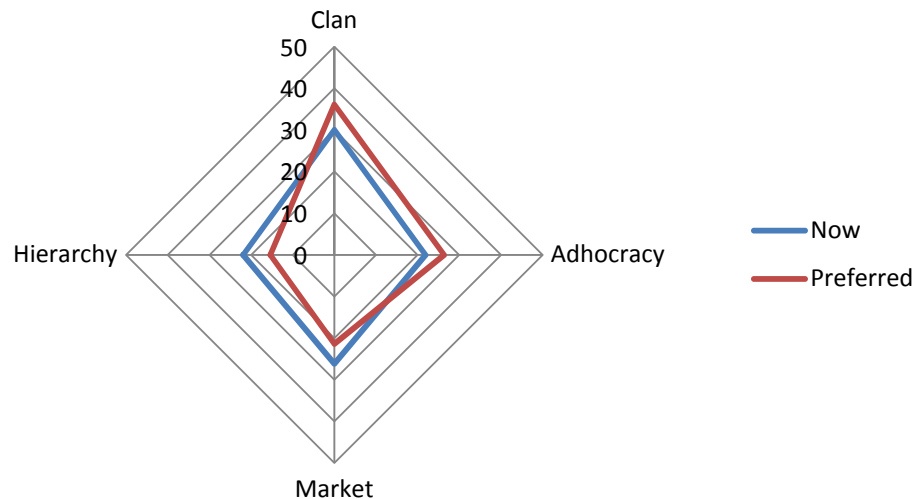
### Organizational Leadership



For this aspect of the culture, clan culture scored the highest: 33 points. The leaders are considered to exemplify mentoring and facilitating, and have a deep understanding and concern for each person on the team. Market culture scored 27; hierarchy culture 22; and, adhocracy culture 18.

An important discrepancy between the current and preferred leadership approach relates to adhocracy culture (+5), indicating that respondents would like to see the Branch leadership team showing a greater commitment to innovation and change. One respondent suggested designating a time once a month for staff to get together and work on creative solutions to a problem the Branch has identified, such as knowledge sharing or managing stress.

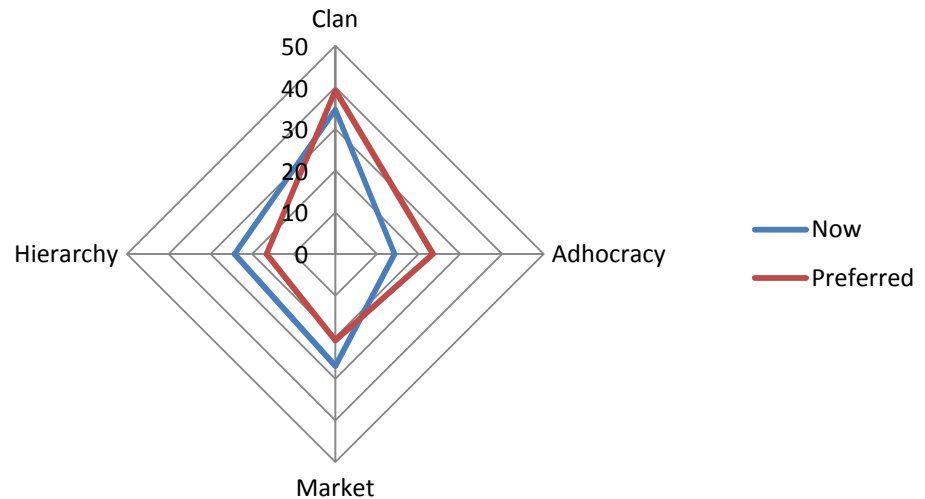
### *Management of Employees*



The culture that received the highest score for this aspect of the culture is clan culture: 30 points. This score indicates that the management style in the Branch is characterized by team decision-making and effective communication. Consensus and participation are encouraged. Market culture scored 26, and hierarchy culture and adhocracy culture each scored 22.

Within this aspect of the culture there were two significant discrepancies between the current and preferred culture. Respondents would like to see more open communication and information sharing within the Branch (clan culture: +6). One respondent suggested, “Encourage those in management/leadership positions to communicate openly and keep the team in the loop about issues.” In addition, respondents would like to see less of a focus on stability and conformity (hierarchy culture: -6). One idea to reduce conformity was to “tap into the diversity of people and approaches,” and identify the variety of ways that individuals in the Branch are doing work and delivering services.

## Organization Glue

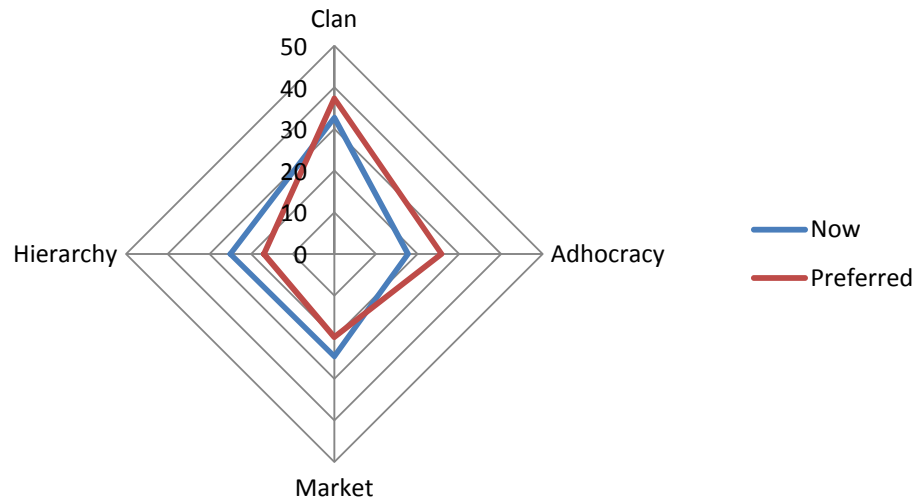


For organization glue, the culture with the highest score is clan culture once again: 35 points. This score indicates that loyalty, mutual trust and commitment to the Branch are important values within the Branch culture. Market culture scored 27; hierarchy culture 24; and, adhocracy culture 14.

The point differences between the current and preferred scores are noteworthy for each of the culture types and there is a general preference is to move away from values associated with the bottom two quadrants, i.e. control and stability (difference: -14) towards values related to the top two quadrants, i.e. flexibility, discretion and dynamism (difference: +14). In particular, respondents would like to see more value placed on innovation and transformation (adhocracy culture: +9), and on developing the human resources within the Branch (clan culture: +5), and less emphasis and value placed on rules, policies and achievements (hierarchy culture: -8; market culture: -6).

One respondent shared that, “Many of the managers that I have encountered are good at providing a variety of opportunities and ways for the staff to learn and develop, but it would be good to get everyone on board.” A number of other values related to adhocracy culture and clan culture were mentioned, such as team recognition (compared to individual recognition), finding creative solutions and adopting a matrix management approach. These values and related ideas are presented in *Section 5.1.4 Branch Ideas for Culture Change* on page 30.

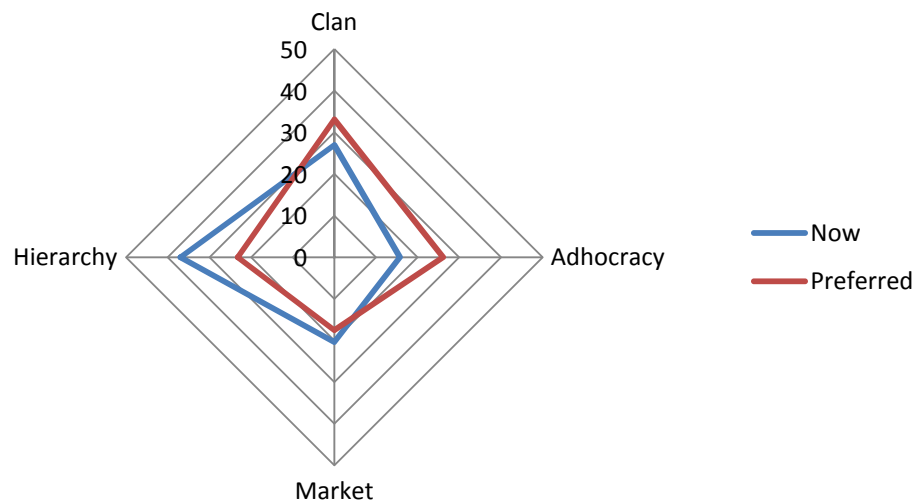
### Strategic Emphases



The culture that received the highest score for this aspect of the culture is clan culture: 33 points. This score indicates that the strategic direction of the Branch is characterized by a focus on employee learning and development. Market culture and hierarchy culture both scored 25, and adhocracy culture scored 18.

Within this aspect of the culture there were a number of significant discrepancies between the current and preferred culture. Respondents indicated a preference to embrace strategies focused on innovation, human resource development and cross-branch/cross-unit collaboration (adhocracy culture: +8; clan culture: +5) and to reduce the focus on strategies that relate to increasing efficiency, sharpening processes and stretching capacity (hierarchy culture: -8; market culture: -5).

### Criteria of Success



For this aspect of culture, the type with the highest score is hierarchy culture: 37 points. Performance is evaluated using criteria related to efficiency and timeliness. Dependable service delivery, smooth operations and reducing waste and redundancy are key indicators of success. Clan culture scored 27; market culture 20; and, adhocracy culture 16.

An important discrepancy between the current and preferred culture relates to a desire to move away from definitions of success and rewards or celebrations based on incremental change, efficiency and dependability (hierarchy culture: -14) towards a definition where transformation, agility and innovative outputs are indicators of success and where activities and products that exemplify innovation and transformative change are rewarded and celebrated (adhocracy culture: +10).

In addition, respondents indicated a desire to see the criteria of success and rewards/celebrations include a greater emphasis on efforts to empower employees and embrace teamwork (clan culture: +6).

I love the impromptu get-togethers for birthdays, new staff, staff leaving et cetera, and the celebrations and recognition of personal and work-related milestones and accomplishments. We are also consistently complimented by the senior executive, including ministers, for the outstanding work we do.

There is a cautious approach to working with others and a focus on teamwork at the unit level rather than the Branch level. We have historically done a poor job of overcoming the barriers between individuals working in different areas where the nature of the work is fundamentally different. People also tend to hold information a bit too closely.

Individual aggrandizement and gossiping about colleagues are destructive and harmful practices. I would like to see more team wins and people stepping up themselves to deal with concerns they may have about their colleagues.

### *5.1.3 Cultural Congruence*

Organizational cultures are congruent when the various aspects of culture are aligned, e.g. strategy, leadership style, reward system. What this means is that the same set of values is emphasized for each aspect of the culture (Cameron & Quinn, 2011, p. 84). Cultural congruence is important for successful implementation, because “having all aspects of the organization clear about and focused on the same values and sharing the same assumptions simply eliminates many of the complications, disconnects, and obstacles that can get in the way of effective performance” (Cameron & Quinn, 2011, p. 85). On the other hand, cultural incongruence often leads to confusion about priorities and approaches, and is sometimes perceived as hypocrisy when the “organizational behaviours seem to be incompatible with what [employees] perceive to be the espoused values” (2011, p. 85).

As has already been noted, the two culture types that are valued within the Governance and Structure Branch are clan culture and adhocracy culture. In the event that a culture change initiative is started, it will be important that the new culture is congruent. While clan culture is already emphasized in most aspects of the culture, it does not feature as strongly in the Branch’s definitions of success. As such, the Branch’s criteria of success should be re-evaluated. In addition, adhocracy culture lags behind hierarchy culture and/or market culture in each of the six aspects of culture. To ensure that adhocracy culture is emphasized equally, greater focus should be devoted to developing adhocracy culture in the following aspects: organization glue; strategic emphases; and, criteria of success. It will also be important for the Branch leadership to exhibit visible commitment to embracing innovation and transformation.

5.1.4 Branch Ideas for Culture Change

<p style="text-align: center;"><u><i>Clan Culture</i></u></p> <p><b>What should we do MORE of?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage and support teambuilding</li> <li>• Organize social gatherings for birthdays, new staff, staff leaving etc.</li> <li>• Celebrate and recognize personal and work-related milestones</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for learning and development</li> <li>• Encourage and support information sharing and open communication</li> <li>• Bring a sense of fun to everything</li> </ul> <p><b>What should we START?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentoring</li> <li>• Identify and support opportunities for staff to take on new challenges</li> <li>• Recognize all contributing members of a team</li> <li>• Deal with concerns about colleagues directly</li> </ul> <p><b>What should we REDUCE or STOP?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual aggrandizement</li> <li>• Recognition of team lead only</li> <li>• Gossiping</li> <li>• Holding information too closely</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u><i>Adhocracy Culture</i></u></p> <p><b>What should we do MORE of?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look forward and anticipate the future</li> <li>• Engage in continuous learning</li> <li>• Use technological resources available</li> <li>• Encourage and support cross-Branch projects and collaboration</li> </ul> <p><b>What should we START?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adopt a matrix management approach for complex tasks</li> <li>• Provide support to employees who would like to innovate or develop new processes</li> <li>• Build in time to work on creative and innovative solutions to identified problems, e.g. knowledge sharing, managing stress</li> <li>• Identify and communicate how changes and new technologies will assist employees in their work</li> <li>• Link work to a compelling, over-arching vision</li> </ul> <p><b>What should we REDUCE or STOP?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risk aversion</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u><i>Hierarchy Culture</i></u></p> <p><b>What should we do MORE of?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Address the fundamental problems that serve as anchors, such as workload, resourcing, classification</li> </ul> <p><b>What should we START?</b></p> <p><b>What should we REDUCE or STOP?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus less on rules, process and small issues</li> <li>• Recognize and avoid silo tendencies</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u><i>Market Culture</i></u></p> <p><b>What should we do MORE of?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on service to internal and external clients</li> <li>• Share information with clients</li> <li>• Planning for the future</li> </ul> <p><b>What should we START?</b></p> <p><b>What should we REDUCE or STOP?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stretching capacity and expecting the same or higher levels of service</li> </ul>

## 5.2 Interview Findings

Fourteen strategic planning practitioners were interviewed and asked to share their thoughts and opinions about practices that lead to successful implementation in eight areas: strategy; organizational structure; leadership; staff; organizational culture; systems and processes; resources; and, living plans.

### 5.2.1 Strategy

Four themes emerged during the analysis: the strategic planning process; the strategic plan characteristics; post-planning phase; and, pre-planning considerations. Of these themes, the process and the characteristics of the plan were rated as *high* importance to enable successful implementation. Post-planning activities and pre-planning considerations were rated as *moderate* importance. Table 5 captures the themes and the number of interviewees who discussed each theme.

**Table 5: Frequency of themes related to strategy**

Themes	#
<b>Strategic Planning Process</b>	<b>11</b>
Ensure there is a high degree of employee engagement by creating opportunities for staff to get involved and finding ways to involve those who are unable to attend planning sessions	6
Ensure planning participants are representative of the full spectrum of the organization	4
Consult with clients to understand what they want and what they think they need	4
Collaborate with key clients and stakeholders to develop the plan	2
Work through differences of opinion about values, priorities and desired outcomes to create a foundational document and gain a sense of shared purpose	2
Ensure whoever is responsible for the development of the plan has a corporate perspective and deeply believes in the plan	2
Vet developments through the executive on a regular basis during the development of the plan to ensure executive level buy-in	1
Find the right mechanisms to engage front line staff who may have a more narrow perspective	1
<b>Strategic Plan Characteristics</b>	<b>10</b>
Plan links to government strategy	3
Vision, strategies and performance indicators are clear	2
Content reflect current projects and key priorities	2
Themes show continuity from year-to-year	2
Goals are achievable	1
Goals resonate with staff and reflect their values	1
The level of detail provides a clear road map for implementation	1
<b>Post-Planning Activities</b>	<b>6</b>
Use the plan to redefine the branch's scope and mandate, and to communicate about the branch's work	3
Create a sense of urgency	1
Develop ideas for how to implement strategies and a partner plan to show how priorities will be achieved	1
Demonstrate movement on commitments to key clients and stakeholders to maintain a high level of trust	1
<b>Pre-Planning Considerations and Activities</b>	<b>5</b>
The purpose of the plan, the ways it will be used, and its audience	2
The different groups whose involvement or support is required during planning and implementation and appropriate ways to engage them	1
The benefits and drawbacks of hiring a planning consultant	1
The current state of the organization	1
Signing a memorandum of understanding with stakeholders to enable confidential policy discussions	1
Holding a debriefing session to evaluate the success of previous implementations	1

### *Strategic Planning Process*

When asked about the aspects of strategy that enhance implementation, eleven interviewees discussed the importance of getting the strategic planning process right. Organizations looking to

succeed during implementation need a high degree of employee and client engagement during the planning process to ensure buy-in when the time comes to begin implementing the plan.

Interviewees tended to agree that a participative and representative planning process increases employee engagement. As such, creating opportunities for staff to get involved, finding ways to involve those who are unable to attend planning sessions and using appropriate mechanisms to engage front line staff were suggested as being important practices during the planning phase. Leaders should also focus on helping employees to work through differences of opinion about organizational purpose, priorities, values, and desired outcomes and on vetting developments and decisions through the executive on a regular basis. Both of these practices can lead to the creation of a foundational document and help groups achieve a sense of shared purpose. In addition, these practices help to build consensus among employees and a sense of ownership at the executive level, which both enhance the chances of successful implementation.

Client engagement is also a key factor during the planning stage. Asking clients what they want and need to be successful and matching the plan to client needs are practices to increase client engagement. In addition, implementation success may be enhanced by collaborating with key stakeholders during the development of the plan and by working co-operatively and developing consensus.

### *Strategic Plan Characteristics*

As one interviewee noted, “You cannot successfully implement a bad plan, because basically, you don’t know what you are trying to do.” Interviewees identified several characteristics of good plans, with the most commonly mentioned characteristic being that the plan links to government strategy. Interviewees suggested that the classic approach of cascading strategy from the government plan, through the ministry plan and down to the branch level is effective and helps employees to see how their work fits into the bigger picture.

Clarity was also noted as a characteristic of good plan. In particular, interviewees suggested that the vision, strategies and performance indicator need to be clear, and that goals should be achievable. The content and themes in the plan should reflect continuity from year to year, to avoid creating plans that capture “the flavour of the month”; however, it was also noted as being important that the plan reflects key priorities and current projects. One interviewee felt that the level of detail was very important and suggested that plans are often either too high level or contain too much detail to be truly strategic. To achieve the right level of detail, the following advice was suggested:

We worked very hard, moving back and forth over that line and asking ourselves, “Are we too high level? Have we gone too far into the detail?” There’s a *sweet spot*, if you will, and it depends on the nature of your program. . . .The plan needs to contain the right kind of actions that provide a clear road map for implementation.

### *Post-Planning Phase*

Some interviewees suggested practices that seemed not to fit neatly into the planning phase, since they relied on having a finalized plan in hand. These practices were grouped together as part of the post-planning phase that occurs before formal implementation gets underway. Once the plan has been developed, using the plan is an important step to keep it alive. Some of the ways that interviewees suggested to use the plan during the post-planning phase are:

- To identify any existing activities that are out-of-scope and create a case for stopping those activities; and
- To define the scope of the branch more clearly and update the branch’s mandate; and,
- To show the kind of work the branch does and the links to government’s goals.

Three other activities were suggested: creating a sense of urgency; developing a partner plan; and, demonstrating movement on commitments made to stakeholders. Creating a sense of urgency helps to build the momentum needed to help employees change; however, interviewees admitted that, “In government, it’s really hard to argue the burning platform for change, so it’s difficult to create any urgency – because really, in government, things move so slowly.” The time required to develop ideas for how to implement strategies and a partner plan to show how the priorities in the plan are being operationalized may help to argue for some urgency, because it is important to avoid spending so much time planning that the environmental conditions around the branch change. Developing a concrete implementation plan can also help branches maintain a high level of trust with key stakeholders by demonstrating movement on commitments made during planning.

### *Pre-Planning Considerations*

At the most fundamental level, discussing and deciding on the purpose of the plan, the ways it will be used, and its audience were all noted as important considerations prior to beginning any formal planning process. Plans created for the purpose of fulfilling obligations or for the sake of planning, or plans that are intended to be used as communications documents for briefing ministers or other stakeholders, may have little or nothing to do with implementation.

In addition, the different groups whose involvement or support is required during planning and implementation should be identified and appropriate ways to engage them considered. To enable confidential policy discussions without fear of repercussions, one interviewee suggested signing a memorandum of understanding with stakeholder representatives. The potential benefits and drawbacks of hiring a consultant to facilitate planning should also be evaluated.

Another important pre-planning consideration is carefully evaluating the current state of the organization and getting consensus on what the issues are:

When I first rejoined the organization, I spent a lot of time during my first year back just talking to people, kind of gathering intelligence and looking at the organization with a fresh set of eyes. I was really trying to understand what people thought was broken, what wasn’t working very well, what we did well, and assessing different parts of the organization. That culminated in a discussion paper, which laid out what I heard, and we used that as the foundation to start the whole planning process.

For organizations that have already integrated strategic planning into their business practices, including a debrief session to evaluate the success of prior implementation initiatives may also be valuable.

### *5.2.2 Structure*

Three themes emerged during the analysis of practitioners’ experiences of how organizational structure affects the implementation process: establishing an implementation structure; matching governance arrangements with the implementation structure; and, co-ordinating groups. Of these themes, establishing an implementation structure was rated as *high* importance, while matching

**Table 6: Frequency of themes related to structure**

Themes	#
<b>Establishing an Implementation Structure</b>	<b>12</b>
Create implementation project teams and ensure that the right people are on the teams	7
Determine responsibilities for the implementation steering committee	6
Establish a requirement for executives to partner with implementation teams as an executive sponsor or champion	3
Form an implementation steering committee	2
Assign project leadership on a case-by-case basis to people who are passionate about the projects	2
Figure out how managers can help project teams	2
<b>Matching Governance Arrangements with the Implementation Structure</b>	<b>7</b>
Ensure there is synergy amongst all the plans in the organization	2
Reorganize structure to match governance arrangements required by desired end result	1
Get executive approval for the strategic plan	1
Assign priorities to individuals and ensure personal accountabilities are well known by others	1
Create a mechanism to show how accountabilities map out in a clear way	1
Have one clear lead person with sole accountability for cross-organizational projects	1
<b>Co-ordinating Groups</b>	<b>5</b>
Adopt a common mandate to create a sense of team and a collaborative working style	1
Set up weekly meetings and check-ins to facilitate communication, and ensure there is a responsibility to attend and to report back to others	1
Bridge the knowledge gap to help organizational groups perceive the similarities among them	1
Build a collaborative culture	1
Identify other groups touching the same stakeholders and identify a timeline that works for all groups	1
Work with corporate and central groups to manage initiatives that are cross-divisional	1
Bring people together in one location	1

governance arrangements with the implementation structure and co-ordinating groups were rated as *moderate* importance. Table 6 captures the themes and the number of interviewees who discussed each theme.

### **Implementation Structure**

Having a good structure in place is important to enable organizations to effectively implement their plans, as well as to facilitate the transition from planning to implementation. Interviewees suggested two approaches to forming an implementation steering committee: repurposing the planning team, and creating “parallel track” steering committees (external advisory committee comprised of stakeholders and an internal secretariat comprised of staff members).

As noted in Table 6, interviewees noted the importance of determining the tasks and responsibilities of the implementation steering committee. Some of the suggested tasks and responsibilities include:

- Creating implementation sub-teams;
- Developing an implementation plan;
- Guiding the implementation process;
- Getting feedback in and information out;
- Developing simple tools to assist individuals to collaborate;
- Identifying ways to build a team culture and strong communication practices; and,
- Engaging external contacts in implementation activities, measurement and reporting out.

Getting implementation work done involves creating teams and ensuring that the “right” people are on the teams. The right people were identified as being either work unit experts with the required aptitudes, or those employees for whom the project would provide a development opportunity. To create implementation teams, interviewees suggested using existing task teams

or working groups where possible. One interviewee found it beneficial to establish a requirement for executives to partner with implementation teams as an executive sponsor. To ensure a good match between the implementation team and executive sponsor, the interviewee suggested matching executives with teams based on their strengths, weaknesses and interests.

Several interviewees identified passion as an important characteristic of implementation team leaders. To ensure that team leaders are passionate about the projects, it was suggested to assign project leadership on a case-by-case basis, rather than according to the hierarchy. Case-by-case selection may also provide an opportunity to develop branch members' leadership skills and competencies. When using this approach to project leadership, managers can help project team leaders by driving implementation activities; serving as champions; and, eliminating roadblocks.

### *Matching Governance Arrangements with the Implementation Structure*

Governance arrangements, authority and accountability are important considerations when organizations establish implementation steering committees and task groups. Some of the governance arrangements that should be considered are: the existence of layers of approval that might prevent implementation teams from being agile; rules that are in place that do not need to be there; and, out-of-date collective agreements that are based on practices and culture that do not match future organizational needs.

In addition, a lack of clarity about authority and accountability can also inhibit the implementation process and create unnecessary complexity. One interviewee suggested that processes can be undermined in the absence of a direct reporting relationship between implementation team leaders and team members:

I think that structure is important. I probably used to believe more in the flexible matrix environment than I do now. Now, I look at it and I think that if it is important enough, then you should create that priority of reporting structure, and then it's clear what the priorities are and the accountabilities are clear. It's not that we're that hierarchical in how we work, but the initiatives just seem to get undermined if we don't have some clarity in terms of the structure.

In cases where executives are part of the implementation structure, it is important to be cognisant of the governance arrangements and ensure that authority is transferred to the appropriate person when executives step away from direct involvement:

I had a project that I was working on that included our ADM and executive director in the organizational structure to begin with, but they didn't see themselves as ongoing members of the committee. However, by starting that way, the expectation of the stakeholders who were involved was that they would be. What happened is that it made it much more difficult for me as the manager of the project to actually have traction with the stakeholders and do the work. Some of the more vocal stakeholders who had developed relationships with the executive director and the ADM would use those relationships and leverage to bypass the process, if they didn't like what I was doing.

Several practices were suggested for matching the governance arrangements with the implementation structure, and these practices have been captured in Table 6.

### *Co-ordinating Groups*

The existence of silos within government can create significant co-ordination challenges for branches and teams needing to co-ordinate activities with other parts of the organization. As one

interviewee noted, “The smaller the structure and the smaller the implementation is, the more focused it is. That’s easier. It’s where you begin to go into other branches and other divisions and other ministries, that’s where the challenges are.”

Co-ordination challenges noted include: silos within groups that have a narrow focus with respect to jobs and programs; insufficient co-ordination among groups consulting with the same stakeholders; and, forced collaboration where there is no common subject matter. To deal with silos, interviewees suggested adopting a common mandate to create a sense of team and a collaborative working style. In addition, facilitating communication by setting up weekly meetings, helping groups to perceive the similarities among themselves by bridging the knowledge gap, and bringing people together in one location are some of the practices that interviewees have found to be helpful for co-ordinating groups. To help improve co-ordination among groups touching the same stakeholders, one interviewee found it helpful to identify a timeline that works for all groups to enable groups to work together and reduce duplication of efforts. As several interviewees noted, forced collaboration rarely – if ever – works to improve co-ordination. Instead, organizations should focus on building a collaborative culture within the organization.

### *5.2.3 Leadership*

Five themes emerged during the analysis of discussions about leadership and management style. Practitioners tended to agree about some of the characteristics of effective leaders, such as leaders whose management style is best described as being either transformational or inclusive, being passionate and committed, and having an intuitive ability to know when to negotiate and when to make a decision. In addition, a leader’s communication style was commented on and considered to be moderately important both in general and for managing and leading change. Two specific leadership responsibilities were rated as high importance – motivating and engaging employees, and empowering people – and one was rated as moderate – managing and leading change. See Table 7.

#### *Characteristics of Effective Leaders*

Interviewees agreed on some specific characteristics and traits that help individuals to successfully lead the implementation process. Seven interviewees believed that leaders who use either a transformational or inclusive approach to leadership are more likely to be successful than those who are directive or who work in isolation from staff. One interviewee felt that the most important factor is for leaders to be authentic and sincere in their approach.

Effective leaders were also described as being passionate about the plan and as setting the direction of all aspects of the organization by serving as “the north, the centrepin, and the constant in terms of how you are aligning”. Leaders who are “one of the people” and who have “street cred” were also thought to be more effective at leading implementation processes. Another quality that was noted as important to be effective as a leader was intuitively knowing what to be firm about and when to make a decision. While being flexible was suggested as enhancing implementation, limits to flexibility were noted as being important to enable next steps in the process.

#### *Motivating and Engaging Individuals*

Motivating and engaging individuals was noted as being an important leadership task. The key to motivating employees is helping them to connect the “nitty-gritty” of implementation with the longer-term vision. To do so, interviewees suggested that it is helpful to communicate the

**Table 7: Frequency of themes related to leadership**

Themes	#
<b>Characteristics of Effective Leaders</b>	<b>11</b>
Management style is best described as being either transformational or inclusive	7
Passionate and committed to the plan and believes in planning	4
Intuitive ability to know when to negotiate and when to make a decision; establishes limits to flexibility	3
Perceived to be one of the people and knowledgeable about the subject matter	2
Sets the direction of all aspects of the organization	2
Desires to see staff happy, productive and engaged	1
<b>Motivating and Engaging Employees</b>	<b>11</b>
Relating implementation work to the vision, the bigger picture and the impact on the public	4
Asking staff for ideas on how to implement strategies	4
Working directly with staff on implementation initiatives	3
Getting agreement on how to implement strategies	3
Connecting implementation work with employee performance plans	2
Recognizing milestones and accomplishments	1
<b>Empowering People</b>	<b>8</b>
Getting staff the resources, information, skills and training they need to implement the plan	6
Trusting staff and helping them understand their own accountability and ability to lead	2
Giving staff the authority they need to do what they need to without checking in every step of the way	2
<b>Managing and Leading Change</b>	<b>7</b>
Ensure communication is honest, open and transparent; direct to avoid interpretation issues; and, ongoing throughout the implementation process	4
Break down cultural barriers and get staff past history	4
Prepare a change plan	3
Get change training and develop change skills	2
Evaluate success of changes and make appropriate adjustments	2
<b>Communication Style</b>	<b>4</b>
Being transparent and sharing how staff input is used	2
Telling stories to connect the pieces for people in a way that they can relate to and understand	1
Discussing plans and getting agreement	1
Relentless communication to staff, senior and lower management about what you are trying to achieve	1

linkages to the bigger picture, to relate work to the impact on the broader public, and to revisit the vision from time-to-time. These practices can help organizations to avoid losing focus on the vision when the emergencies of the day come along. In addition, staff may also be more motivated when leaders work directly with staff and when there are opportunities for exposure in front of the executive. One interviewee suggested forming a young professionals group, while another recommended spending time with early adopters and people who support initiatives to win others over. In addition, recognizing accomplishments and milestones may help to keep people motivated.

Interviewees also noted that maintaining a high degree of employee engagement is vital. To maintain the engagement earned during a participatory planning process, interviewees suggested that asking staff for ideas on how to implement strategies is a helpful practice; however, once staff have provided their ideas, follow-up and action is key:

The key is that when we ask staff for their input, we can't ignore it. Our commitment is that we'll try to implement at least one of their ideas to show them that we're actually paying attention and that we think they have something to offer. There's not a commitment that it's going to change the world – it's simply a commitment that we're going to try it and see what happens.

Another important aspect of engagement is getting agreement on how to implement strategies. To do so, one interviewee recommended engaging the “naysayers” to understand the resistance:

I have a person like that on my implementation team, and initially I had said that I didn't want him on the team, but my boss said, “No, you want him there, because he will give you the most valuable information.” And he has, because he is echoing the voice of the resistance that you need to build your implementation strategy to. He is the one that is saying, “Well, what about this?” and “What about that?” and “That's not going to work because of this.” They are giving you all the cues that you need to address. If you are all sitting in a room saying, “Yeah, yeah, yeah, that's great”, you don't get that diversity in terms of voice on your implementation team. You need diversity of perspective, so that you can address the issues before they become issues.

Another practice suggested by interviewees for maintaining employee engagement is to connect implementation work to performance plans. Translating strategic goals into performance goals helps make the strategic plan real and can also be helpful for monitoring and tracking implementation progress.

### *Empowerment*

Besides executive or managerial leadership, cultivating leadership and a sense of ownership within the branch was also noted as important leadership task. Empowerment involves getting staff the resources, information, skills and training they need to implement the plan. Supporting and promoting information sharing, mentoring, coaching, and providing training and development opportunities are vital practices. When empowering employees, managers should focus on resolving the practical issues of implementation and on eliminating roadblocks for staff to ensure they have the means they need to implement strategies.

In order for employees to take ownership, they also need to be empowered with the trust and authority to make decisions without checking in every step of the way; however, it is also important that they understand their own ambit of control and what they have the authority to make decisions about. In addition, when staff are empowered with authority, there is also an important responsibility for them to know when to communicate challenges and issues. Staff who only communicate issues at the eleventh hour can seriously inhibit the implementation process when it becomes too late to apply the changes needed to ensure project success.

### *Managing and Leading Change*

Cynicism about recurring issues, employee resistance to change, and political decisions were identified as barriers to change in the public service. To help organizations embrace the changes associated with implementation and work through shifts in focus, interviewees suggested using change management and change leadership practices. One interviewee's comments illustrate the value in change management:

I think a lot of strategic plans or initiatives fail because they don't factor in how much value there is in change management. It is not as simple as just engaging people in planning. If you want people to do something different, there is a series of steps that you have to take to get them to do it differently and to help them with the change.

Good communication practices were identified as being the heart of change management, with interviewees noting the importance of being honest, open and transparent; avoiding interpretation issues by ensuring direct communication between senior leaders and frontline staff;

and, paying attention to the need for ongoing communication throughout the implementation process.

Preparing a change plan was suggested as being extremely helpful, with one interviewee commenting that, “You cannot underestimate the importance of a change strategy.” When developing a change plan, leaders need to understand the challenges that people have with change and how to get employees do things differently. The Transition Model created by change consultant, William Bridges, was identified as being a helpful resource. In addition, interviewees noted that leaders may benefit from receiving change training and developing their change management skills; allowing employees to influence the change plan; and, utilizing top-down support and bottom-up champions are also helpful practices. Once changes have been implemented, evaluating the success of the change and making any necessary adjustments will ensure successful implementation.

### *Communication Style*

Communication style refers to the way that leaders communicate with employees and stakeholders, and reflects the underlying values within an organization’s culture. Interviewees tended to agree that telling people what to do, communicating contradictory or unclear messages, and conveying cynicism are aspects of a communication style that works against implementation. Instead of telling people what to do, interviewees stated that it is important to listen to staff get agreement on issues. Assimilating input and reporting back how it was used is also vital, and two interviewees agreed that it is important to be transparent with staff; however, as one interviewee noted, “Transparency is an easy word to throw around. You have to share as much as you can without causing undue anxiety.”

To ensure that employees and stakeholders understand messages, one interviewee suggested using storytelling to connect the pieces for people in a way that is easy to understand. In addition to telling stories, a sense of relentlessly communicating the same message about what the branch is trying to achieve can help ensure that communications are clear and consistent.

### *5.2.4 Organizational Culture*

Organizational culture was discussed by twelve interviewees. Knowing the organization’s culture and the strategies and approaches that will work in that particular culture was identified as being an important first step:

Organizational culture is not something you can observe from outside. You have to be inside to observe how the executive functions and access ‘the word on the street’. Every culture is very different and it is not until you are in it that you will understand what is going to work and what is not. You always work with what you have.

Four themes were identified: effective approaches to work; management style; communication; and, strategic emphases. Of these, effective approaches to work was ranked as highly important for successful implementation, while management style was ranked as moderately important, and communication and strategic emphases were ranked as low importance.

### *Effective Approaches to Work*

Approaches to work that were noted as effective during implementation are: collaborating; information sharing; taking an interest in new approaches; continuous improvement; negotiating and agreeing on positions before taking action; putting activities into the context of the plan;

**Table 8: Frequency of themes related to organizational culture**

Themes	#
<b>Effective Approaches to Work</b>	<b>9</b>
Collaborating	3
Taking an interest in new approaches	3
Sharing information	2
Getting feedback on ideas from clients and stakeholders	1
Negotiating and agreeing on approaches before taking action	1
Building strong personal relationships	1
Promoting a high level of trust within the organization	1
Establishing and participating in communities of practices	1
Integrating continuous improvement	1
Putting ideas into the context of the plan	1
<b>Management Style</b>	<b>7</b>
Models commitment and persistence	3
Embraces empowerment and engagement practices	2
Believes in strategic planning and aligns resources and structure with the plan	2
Takes risks and facilitates creativity with new approaches	1
Promotes accountability	1
<b>Communication</b>	<b>3</b>
Spend time considering language and key messages, in order to build a common language and ensure consistent messaging	3
Ensure all communications resonate with the values and approaches in the plan	2
<b>Strategic Emphases</b>	<b>3</b>
Ensure priorities are reflected in the plan, in communications and in cultural artefacts (e.g. posters)	2
Recognize the relationship between the professional backgrounds of staff and strategic emphases	1
Repeat activities until they are embedded in the culture	1
Link learning and development opportunities to strategic activities	1

team-based approaches; getting feedback on ideas from stakeholders; being open and flexible and recognizing the range of talents in the organization; communities of practice; and, personal relationships. When working on projects with other ministries or stakeholders, one interviewee noted that a significant amount of time is required to resolve contradictory interests and approaches to work. Interestingly, interviewees did not identify any practices related to hierarchy culture that enhance implementation, but did note that risk aversion inhibits implementation success.

### *Management Style*

The management style of leaders can significantly impact organizational culture and affect the success of change initiatives. Several interviewees commented on the power of the deputy minister and other key leaders to influence culture and the success of the entire strategy process, with one interviewee sharing the following story:

We were trying to roll out a program for the new MyPerformance tool, and we had done three years of really good work getting people comfortable with EPDPs and knowing that it wasn't the greatest tool but it's about the dialogue, and we had one person in the executive say, "These things are stupid," in a very public forum, and the program was done! Done. Those folks have a lot of influence.

Conversely, leaders who love planning and who promote values such as commitment, persistence and accountability can help their organizations to achieve their goals and objectives during implementation. Aligning resources and structure with the strategy was suggested as a leadership approach that can help integrate aspects of culture and support implementation. One interviewee

suggested that taking some risks and allowing creativity with new approaches are also effective culture change practices.

On the other hand, leaders who enable a parent-child relationship between managers and staff or who use authority to get compliance are more likely to struggle during the implementation process. Trust was also noted as critical to ensure successful implementation:

If you don't have trust and a culture where there is trust between the leadership and staff, plans will be viewed with skepticism and the leaders will be viewed in a negative way, like "Oh, you want to have a plan so that you can critique my performance for the next time there is a workforce adjustment within the ministry."

### *Communications*

Communications were also noted as powerful with respect to supporting the existing culture or building a new culture. Spending time developing key messages was identified as a helpful practice. Key messages assist in developing a common language within branches and ensure consistent messaging from various leaders when talking about the plan. One interviewee noted that it is important that all communications resonate with the values and priorities in the plan. In addition, simply talking about the plan was identified as an effective practice for embedding it within the culture.

### *Strategic Emphases*

A poor fit between the existing culture and the strategic direction in the plan was identified as a barrier to implementation. Specific cultural norms and beliefs that were noted as inhibiting implementation are: risk aversion and an abundance of caution; a reluctance to investigate ideas or make commitments that you cannot 100% guarantee; a belief that government has the right to do as it pleases; the existence of change fatigue; and, outdated collective agreements and the inability to promote. In addition, provincial interests that contradict the intended strategy and changes brought about by the political cycle have the potential to impact strategic emphases.

To support initiatives, interviewees suggested making strategic emphases visible through posters and online communications and doing activities over and over again until they are embedded in the culture. In addition, linking learning and development opportunities to strategic activities helps promote successful implementation. One interviewee also stated that it is important to recognize the relationship between the professional backgrounds of employees and strategic emphases, since they may or may not align with the organization's needs.

#### *5.2.5 Staff*

Three themes were identified during the analysis: skills, competencies and knowledge; activities; and, personal attributes. Skills, competencies and knowledge was ranked as highly important for successful implementation. Activities and personal attributes were ranked as moderately important.

#### *Skills, Competencies and Knowledge*

The interviews led to the identification of some skills, competencies and knowledge that are displayed by employees that enhance implementation success. See Table 9. Interviewees tended to agree that the most important knowledge for employees is a clear understanding of the objectives, deliverables and sequence of steps. Understanding what to do and the reasons for the activities helps employees to know when they are on the right track or when to approach their

**Table 9: Frequency of themes related to staff**

Themes	#
<b>Skills, Competencies and Knowledge</b>	<b>8</b>
Clear understanding of the objectives, deliverables and sequence of steps	4
Understanding of the limits to one's personal decision-making authority and what to do if there is a problem during implementation or if the deliverables are not going to be met on time	2
Ability to identify where individuals and their work fit into the plan	2
Having the expertise required to successfully implement the initiative (or access to expertise through contracts or partnerships)	2
Interest and skills in strategic planning	1
Understanding of the way government works	1
<b>Activities</b>	<b>6</b>
Coming up with own strategies or implementation activities that are aligned with the plan's goals, objectives and direction	2
Setting up regular meetings to discuss implementation activities amongst the staff (without managerial involvement)	1
Self-monitoring progress using individual or group work plans	1
Indicating to managers a desire or interest in being involved in specific initiatives	1
Asking the question of how new work or initiatives fit into the plan and priorities	1
Using the plan to identify the skill sets required for the future	1
<b>Personal Attributes</b>	<b>5</b>
Competent	2
Excited and passionate about initiatives	2
Ability to turn things around quickly	1
Organization's direction and strategic approaches align with individuals' personal and professional values and beliefs	1
A willingness and openness to look at things with fresh eyes	1

manager for assistance. Knowing the limits to one's personal decision-making authority and understanding how government works also helps prevent project teams from making errors in judgement that can negatively impact the success of initiatives. In addition, employees benefit when they are able to understand how the activities are related to the plan and the vision.

Having the right skills and expertise is important, but not always possible. Where employees do not personally have the skills or expertise, having access to expertise through contracts or partnerships also increases the chances of success. Finally, employees who have skills and an interest in strategic planning are also helpful to have within the organization, since they may have knowledge about certain tools that can enhance the team's chances of success, as well as a passion for the work.

### *Activities*

Two interviewees shared staff initiatives that have enhanced the implementation of the plan. In one organization, some staff members have developed their own strategies and activities that align with the objectives in the plan, which has helped to further the implementation. In another organization, young staff members have set up a 30 minute meeting once a week for staff to get together to talk about activities related to the plan:

The interests of the new generation coming in to the workplace are quite different. They like to talk more. One of the things that my folks have asked for is to meet once a week and talk amongst themselves about what they're doing, without any managers present. It's a tight 30 minute meeting and I make them give me an agenda. I'm finding that it keeps them involved and keeps them committed. When I started work 30 years ago, you would never think about being a policy advisor and meeting with no managers there. I remember saying to a couple of them, "This is a very small branch, and I see you talking to each other all the time. Aren't you talking about business?" Well, no. So, I think that one of the things that they do in these meetings is talk about

what their projects are. They share ideas and experiences, and there's a learning aspect. There's cross pollination. It's just sort of another way of everyone getting involved and everyone working towards the same goal.

### *Personal Attributes*

Staff who have good skills and who feel competent and excited about initiatives were identified as being effective at implementing projects and strategies. In addition, staff who have a good sense of how much authority they have and when to approach the leadership for assistance making decisions are also an asset during implementation.

With respect to values and beliefs, staff whose personal and professional values align with the direction in the plan may be more motivated during implementation. When staff believe that implementing an initiative is the right thing to do, "then you have got a recipe for people who are happy in their work, and are coming to work knowing that they are doing good stuff, and that is what you want." In contrast, staff who disagree with the direction or who see planning exercises as a façade are less likely to be engaged or successful during implementation.

### *5.2.6 Systems and Processes*

Participants were asked to share their thoughts about systems and processes that are effective for enabling implementation and keeping the plan alive. Thirteen interviewees identified monitoring and reporting on implementation progress as an important process. Six systems and processes were identified in addition to a few other practices, captured under "Other Systems and Processes" in Table 10. Systems and processes that were ranked as highly important are: internal communications and implementation monitoring and reporting.

### *Internal Communications*

Marketing the plan and getting a buzz going about initiatives were suggested as effective practices. In this regard, planning participants can play an important role as communications' ambassadors for the plan by sharing their enthusiasm and understanding with others in the organization. Selling the strategy was also noted as a critical aspect of marketing:

Good leaders get past the cultural barriers and the practical difficulties of implementing a strategy by getting the organization past that. They sell the strategy. They make the strategy real for the entire organization; everyone knows it, everyone knows their place in it, and everyone agrees with what they are trying to achieve. That is successful leadership. And it is up and down through management and right down into the trenches. It starts with the CEO or deputy, and if that person who cannot sell it, then they are in trouble as a leader.

Establishing key messages for communications to the broader organizations was noted as being useful. One interviewee also advised that it is important to regularly communicate good news about achievements and milestones, in order to profile initiatives and make them impervious to risks such as organizational change.

Wherever possible, leaders should aim to communicate with staff on a weekly basis to keep staff in the loop and check-in on progress, successes and challenges. Regular conversations are important to prevent instances where staff communicate issues at the eleventh hour and to help staff to understand what they need to do. Some staff may also fear taking steps without checking in with the leadership, which can inhibit implementation. Relating general conversations with staff to the plan can help increase understanding about objectives and the importance of initiatives.

**Table 10: Frequency of themes related to systems and processes**

Themes	#
<b>Internal Communications</b>	<b>10</b>
Help increase understanding about objectives and the importance of initiatives	5
Take the time to engage in direct communication and personally speak to staff about initiatives	4
Regularly communicate with staff to keep them in the loop and check-in on progress, successes and challenges	3
Market the plan	3
Establish key messages for communications	1
Regularly communicate good news about achievements and milestones	1
<b>Implementation Monitoring and Reporting</b>	<b>8</b>
Establish monitoring processes and be rigorous about following up with teams, reporting out, and using data	7
Create tools to facilitate monitoring and reporting (e.g. balanced scorecard, reporting framework)	2
Ensure that project risks are also monitored	1
<b>Project Management</b>	<b>7</b>
Map out the implementation plan and identify milestones, timelines and check-in points	3
Create tools to embrace project management approach to work (e.g. one-page timeline, framework of key steps for policy projects)	2
Establish tiers of priorities to enable agile refocusing when things come along that take precedence	2
Set up a project management office within the organization	1
<b>Implementation Evaluation</b>	<b>5</b>
Do a baseline survey before beginning implementation and then re-administer survey during and post-implementation to understand what needs to be adjusted	1
Use a continuous improvement approach rather than waiting for perfect	1
Do 360° evaluations with clients and stakeholders to find out how you are doing	1
Support face-to-face interactions between staff and clients during implementation to ensure you are delivering the right stuff and to get people using and benefitting from the initiative	1
Establish accountability and then monitor and evaluate results	1
<b>Client and Stakeholder Engagement</b>	<b>4</b>
Engage clients and stakeholders at the regional level to make best use of limited resources	1
Seek feedback on implementation plans from clients and stakeholders and make any necessary revisions before starting implementation	1
Establish mechanisms to stay in touch with stakeholders	1
Keep in touch to understand stakeholders' needs and wants	1
<b>Information Management</b>	<b>3</b>
Have a central repository for information to enable regular reporting on projects within the plan	1
Have a single place where you can go to identify the status of implementation projects and the staff working on them	1
Use OneNote to create folders that go further than a simple business plan and to manage corporate intelligence	1
Build a framework to collect evidence of short-term, intermediate and long-term wins	1
<b>Other Systems and Processes</b>	<b>n/a</b>
Tie the strategic plan to the branch's business plan	1
Use Lean processes if your aim is to improve processes	1
Work with Strategic Human Resources to set up systems and processes to motivate and retain employees	1

### *Implementation Monitoring and Reporting*

For monitoring and reporting, many different practices were suggested as being helpful, such as setting up a standardized reporting framework, establishing monitoring checkpoints and definitions of success, and having a single information repository where leaders and employees can go to check the status of projects and identify who is working on implementation tasks. However, interviewees also cautioned against complex reporting frameworks, data collection that is cumbersome, and reporting on aspects of implementation that “no-one really cares about”.

To ensure that progress monitoring and reporting is useful, interviewees suggested establishing monitoring and reporting priorities and requirements that are “directly proportional to the importance of the initiative”, collecting data for only those indicators that actually do inform

decision-making, and being rigorous about having structured documents and meetings to talk about the status of initiatives.

Engaging clients and stakeholders was also noted as an important practice for evaluating initiatives and determining when goals and objectives have been achieved:

Success will be in successfully serving the clients – the receivers and beneficiaries of the service. If that element has not been properly taken into account, then you could be delivering the wrong thing; you could be doing it very well and be delivering the wrong thing.

To prevent delivering the wrong thing, one interviewee suggested doing a baseline survey and regular follow-up surveys to monitor progress and evaluate success, while another suggested doing 360° evaluations to solicit feedback. Relationships and face-to-face interactions between branch staff and clients were identified as “the key nexus of the system”:

If the relationship between the client and the service provider is poor, the product won’t be accepted. Everything can be lined up and you can still fail if you can’t get the client using, agreeing with and benefitting from what you are delivering.

Other monitoring and reporting practices suggested include:

- Risk monitoring;
- Using OneNote folders as a central repository for progress monitoring and collecting corporate intelligence and evidence of short-term, intermediate and long-term wins; and,
- Facilitating dynamic monitoring and adjustments by using a balanced scorecard.

### ***Project Management***

Project management principles of mapping out initiatives and breaking down projects into smaller tasks were noted as useful for assigning work and accountabilities to individual staff members. Using work back schedules can help to create realistic implementation timelines and facilitate the process of identifying risks. Sophisticated project management tools and software were noted as impractical for most branch-level projects.

### ***Implementation Evaluation***

Five interviewees discussed the need for an implementation evaluation system. Interviewees suggested that evaluating success helps determine how the implementation is progressing and whether there is a need for adjustments. One interviewee suggested that in some cases, doing a baseline survey before you begin implementation can be helpful for determining how effective certain actions taken have been. Another interviewee spoke about the need to embrace continuous improvement:

A big part of my approach to implementing any strategy is a lot of what I would call continuous improvement cycles. How it works is like we plan what we are going to do, we do it as quickly as we can, and then we see how it worked and improve it going forward. So, that is really the nature of how I do my work. I don’t necessarily wait for perfect, because sometimes perfect can take forever, and other times, by the time you actually get your strategy perfect, the need for what you are trying to do has moved on.

### ***Client and Stakeholder Engagement***

Engaging clients and stakeholder during implementation is another facet that helps organizations determine how implementation is going. Interviewees noted that in some cases, clients will tell

you what they want, but that after you implement what they asked for, they realize that it does not meet their needs. Keeping in touch with clients can help organizations make agile changes once clients realize that what they asked for is not what they need. For organizations with limited resources, one interviewee noted that it can be helpful to engage clients and stakeholders at the regional level, rather than on an individual basis. To engage stakeholders in a continuous manner and keep the lines of communication open, organizations need to establish mechanisms or structure that facilitate communication. Suggestions included: town halls; generic email addresses; SharePoint sites; and, roadshows.

### ***Information Management***

Three interviews mentioned information management. One interviewee noted that having a central repository for information helps managers and employees know exactly where to go to access corporate intelligence. Implementation information needs mentioned include: the assignment of tasks and responsibilities; the status of tasks; successes or wins; risks; and, contacts.

### ***Other Systems and Processes***

Other systems and processes that were mentioned include Lean processes, integrating strategic plans and business plans, and working with Strategic Human Resources to motivate and engage employees.

### ***5.2.7 Resources***

Twelve interviewees commented on the impact that resources can have on implementation. Specific resources that help facilitate implementation were identified, and ways to make effective use of existing resources were discussed. Interviewees noted that resources are crucial for the success of implementation as well as for keeping the plan alive. Consequently, both themes in Table 11 were ranked as high importance.

### ***Resources Needed***

Five interviewees discussed the need for a dedicated resource to keep the implementation on track. Without a dedicated resource, the task becomes something that is managed off the side of managers' desks, creating challenges in terms of time and energy required to achieve success. Interviewees suggested that the role would involve keeping an eye on the workplace environment, monitoring and tracking progress, engaging employees and following up on tasks, providing advice to the Branch leadership team, and, developing communications. Due to the nature of the role, the employee would require an appropriate amount of authority in order to be successful:

When people lose sight of what you are trying to achieve and they get busy with other things, it doesn't get done. So somebody has to be making it important. Having somebody with enough authority to say, "When are you going to have that done?" and who can echo the implications of not having it done is important. Ultimately, there has to be someone who is holding the line in saying, "We need to get it done."

### ***Making Effective Use of Existing Resources***

Many interviewees discussed the challenges of overcoming resource barriers and several practices were identified as enhancing the use of existing resources, including evaluating the current use of resources, being flexible with respect to time and scope, and preparing a business case for resources. In the current economic environment, evaluating the current use of resources was noted as being a necessary practice:

**Table 11: Frequency of themes related to resources**

Themes	#
<b>Resources Needed</b>	<b>10</b>
Someone with the authority and responsibility for monitoring and tracking the status of initiatives, engaging people and maintaining morale, and sending out reminders and following up, in order to keep implementation on track and support staff	5
Someone with the right skills to have credibility with stakeholders and to understand client needs	2
Communication and technology tools	2
Reporting framework	2
Simple, accessible implementation plan	1
Passionate staff	1
Good relationships and partnerships with clients and stakeholders	1
The time to engage people	1
<b>Making Effective Use of Existing Resources</b>	<b>8</b>
Evaluate current use of resources	2
Consider whether you have the right expertise and skills on your team and how to get it	2
Prepare a business case for resources	2
Be flexible in terms of time and scope to achieve results with current resource levels	1
Be creative in coming up with ways to achieve results with existing resources	1
Take advantage of opportunities and quiet times of the year	1
Establish tiered priorities to assist decisions about resource utilization	1
Push existing tools to their limits	1
Make use of temporary deployments during implementation	1
Embrace learning by doing when there are time constraints	1
Ensure continuity from strategic planning committee to implementation committee	1

Any good business planning and implementation that I’ve seen includes the ability to ask at regular intervals, “Is there some piece of this that we need to stop doing? Are we spending time doing something that’s not adding value?” Because in the BC Public Service, we can’t afford to do that anymore, we just can’t. It’s not something we naturally ask ourselves, if there’s something we can stop doing.

In addition, making use of temporary deployments and finding other ways to creatively use existing resources were also touched on by interviewees:

In the past, I was developing a course for some training, but I didn’t have a budget. So, I actually, went out and found resources and created a working group, and I was able to touch just enough of a learning person’s time for them to say, “Yeah, you are on the right track.” I think that there are always creative ways to find stuff, to get something done. I think that has a lot to do with having worked in the non-profit world. I know that you can usually find a way to do something if you really want to do it.

One interviewee noted that establishing tiered priorities can be extremely helpful for making decisions about resource utilization during the implementation process. A number of other helpful practices were mentioned and are captured in Table 11.

### *5.2.8 Living Plan*

Five specific themes emerged during the discussions about living plans. In particular, interviewees noted that plan reviews, commitment at all levels of the organization, effective leadership, progress monitoring and reporting, and embracing strategic thinking are key factors for breathing life into strategic plans. Of the five themes, two were ranked as high importance: plan reviews and commitment. For plan reviews, five criteria were suggested for knowing when changes are required. The remaining three themes were ranked as moderately important; however, there was some overlap between prior questions on leadership and systems and processes, which may have

**Table 12: Frequency of themes related to living plans**

Themes	#
<b>Criteria for Plan Reviews</b>	<b>11</b>
Changes (e.g. environmental, policy, structural, organizational, leadership)	6
Stakeholder feedback	4
Scheduled check-ins	4
Implementation barriers	3
Implementation evaluations	3
<b>Commitment</b>	<b>8</b>
Branch commitment to create an implementation plan and assign accountabilities	4
Individual commitment to participate in the development of the strategic plan	3
Executive commitment to use the strategic plan for decision-making	3
Manager commitment to be directly involved and to work at resolving implementation barriers	1
<b>Leadership</b>	<b>7</b>
Keep the momentum alive	4
Link back to the plan in all communications	3
Create an implementation committee and/or assign someone to manage the implementation	2
Have owners or champions for each initiative	2
<b>Progress Monitoring and Reporting</b>	<b>6</b>
Monitor progress, accomplishments and barriers	3
Ensure internal and external reporting on implementation progress	3
Focus on accomplishments and celebrate successes to keep interest and commitment up	2
<b>Strategic Thinking</b>	<b>4</b>
Ensure everyone understands the strategic plan, how their work fits in, the linkages and impacts of projects	2
Identify how projects fit into the natural cycles of the branch, politics, the government, and stakeholders	1
Embrace an emergent approach to strategy formulation	1
Get the level of detail in the strategic plan right to facilitate strategic thinking and action	1

resulted in less discussion of those topics during questions about living plans. See Table 12 for themes.

### *Criteria for Plan Reviews*

Five criteria were identified for knowing when to conduct plan reviews: changes; stakeholder feedback; scheduled check-ins; implementation barriers; and, implementation evaluations. Six interviewees identified change as an important criterion; however, realizing when changes have created the need to go back and reassess the relevance of the plan can be challenging, especially when teams are focused solely on annual updates. Keeping in regular contact with a broad range of connections and discussing the environment at branch meetings can help leaders to identify the right times:

I've just been really amazed and really blown away by some people. I mean, when I first joined the public service, I thought all they were doing was going around and talking to people, but the guys that I've seen who are really quite amazing are these folks who have their antennae out everywhere, smelling the scent on the wind all the time.

Stakeholder feedback was also noted as being key. As one interviewee noted, "If you can't get your clients using, agreeing with, and benefitting from what you are delivering, everything can be lined up and you can still fail." Many public sector issues are complex and understanding the actual problem and appropriate solution can be challenging. To understand stakeholder issues and their needs and wants, interviewees suggested developing relationships with stakeholders; staying in touch during the implementation process; and, narrowing in on issues using stakeholder

feedback. In the event that a strategy is rejected by stakeholders, interviewees suggested negotiating a compromise and recrafting ideas.

Having scheduled check-ins to review the plan was identified as a factor by four interviewees. While all four interviewees agreed on the need to have scheduled check-ins, there was no consistency regarding how frequently to have check-ins. One interviewee stated, “Our process involves reviewing our plan at a minimum on a quarterly basis,” whereas another interviewee mentioned reviewing the plan every five years. Specific practices identified by the interviewees include: scheduling check-ins for after major ministry-level projects are complete, and scheduling check-ins as a rule for longer-term projects.

Significant implementation barriers or information garnered through an implementation evaluation process could also identify a need to review the plan. A common implementation barrier is time. One interviewee noted that organizations need to sometimes be prepared to refocus the pace and accept that things are going to come along that take precedence. For high priority strategic initiatives, organizations may benefit from creating baseline measures for some to assist with evaluating the success of actions taken during and post-implementation:

Before we started the implementation of a staffing project, we did a baseline survey with all our employees, which helped us to fine tune our objectives and our measures. After we did the implementation, there was some staff training, and then six months later, we did another survey to get feedback and determine if the actions worked. What we discovered was that we needed to adjust some of our actions; they were good ideas, but they didn't quite hit the mark.

### *Commitment at All Levels of the Organization*

Commitment at all levels of the organization was identified as critical for keeping the plan alive. Without commitment, organizations can become easily distracted by day-to-day crises, allowing the string of constant interruptions and urgent requests to take priority over the implementation of key strategic initiatives. One interviewee noted the importance of manager commitment being visible and active. Active commitment involves being directly involved in implementation projects and working through barriers. Another way for managers to actively demonstrate their commitment is to help employees to translate the strategic goals into some very specific goals and measures in their performance plans. To prevent a parent-child relationship and communicate a sense of trust, managers should encourage employees to identify performance indicators that they have control over. Evaluating one's own performance increases individual commitment by empowering employees to take ownership of their performance.

The most frequently mentioned type of commitment was branch commitment. As a group, branches need to commit to taking the necessary steps and working through processes. In addition, there needs to be a commitment to coming back and revisiting the plan. An important aspect of branch commitment is accountability. Commitment and accountability go hand-in-hand. Being committed to implementation is taking responsibility and being accountable for getting tasks done. Using a project management approach with responsibilities and timelines can help keep people focused and maintain momentum.

Executive commitment is also critical. Commitment at the executive level is about more than just buy-in and sponsorship. Executives need to demonstrate their commitment to the strategic plan, by using the plan. Day-to-day decisions and conversations should reflect the priorities, goals and values in the plan to help reinforce executive commitment. One interviewee suggested that once

the parameters of the branch have been clearly defined, executives should work to move work off the plate that doesn't fit with the new direction. Doing away with these tasks and responsibilities can help bring the plan to life by creating the capacity and time to implement priorities. When staff see their work, their jobs, and the business of the branch changing as a result of the plan, individual commitment follows:

One of the significant strategic shifts we made was to start dealing with the broader fire management issues. We were dabbling in it, but it wasn't recognized as being part of our strategic vision. We made it clear that we were going to move from being a strictly fire suppression organization to a fire management organization, which was a real fundamental shift, and it in fact caused the change in our name. It took a while for everyone to get it, but when people actually saw priorities change as a result of the plan, and they saw their jobs change, and they saw whole programs get created out of it, they realized that this document is driving where we're going. If you can get people to understand that, and see it real, and see that it actually drives actions, you'll get the commitment.

Aside from performance planning and role-modelling, individual commitment is enhanced by involving employees in the planning process and engaging their hearts and minds. As one interviewee noted, it is much easier to get people to commit to implementation when the plan actually means something to them.

### *Leadership*

Four interviewees noted that leadership is a key factor for keeping momentum alive. Keeping the plan going involves relentlessly linking back to the plan during all communications: Interviewees noted that leadership is about more than just managers. Having an implementation committee or a dedicated resource, as well as champions for initiatives, are aspects of leadership that organizations need to consider when attempting to bring a strategic plan to life. Interviewees also noted the importance of ensuring continuity within the steering committee from planning to implementation.

Interviewees also discussed the power of leaders to derail implementation. When there is a lack of visible leadership or commitment, or when leaders allow interruptions to take priority over implementation, employees lose the sense of implementation as a priority. As a consequence, the plan soon becomes irrelevant. Keeping your eye on the prize and driving the work of implementation down into employees' performance plans were suggested as being helpful for maintaining momentum.

### *Progress Monitoring and Reporting*

Six interviewees mentioned reviewing progress and accomplishments as key practices for keeping the plan alive. Progress reviews were suggested as being helpful for keeping everyone in the loop and for creating an opportunity to recognize accomplishments. Focusing only on what isn't done and forgetting about accomplishments can lead to a loss of morale. One interviewee suggested that focusing on accomplishments during the implementation process is helpful for keeping employees engaged:

People tend to forget how much they have actually accomplished. They stop thinking about it and focus on the next challenge, and if you're struggling with that challenge, then you end up in a negative environment. You have to continually try to keep that environment positive, and I think one of the ways to do that is to focus on your accomplishments. It helps keep people's interest and commitment up when they are reminded of how much they have accomplished.

There was no consensus regarding how frequently to review progress, accomplishments and barriers. One interviewee suggested that there should be a constant review, whereas another interviewee suggested monthly branch meetings and quarterly management meetings. Three interviewees touched on the idea of progress reports for reporting back to people within the organization and to clients on objectives and measures.

Another aspect that was touched on was reviewing progress in order to course correct, since many of the desired outcomes in public sector implementations are hard to identify or long-term in nature:

You never actually see the final outcome; you see progress towards the final outcome. When you think about a mechanistic approach to strategy or the implementation of a strategy, you have to have a course correction model in order to be able to measure that you are off course.

### *Strategic Thinking*

Aspects of strategic thinking were touched on by four interviewees. Two interviewees commented on the importance of ensuring that everyone understands the strategic plan and how their work fits in. Thinking strategically involves understanding the linkages between actions taken and the impacts or outcomes of projects. When leaders help employees to see the linkages between the plan, actions, and outcomes, the plan is made real for employees.

Other practices to help teams think more strategically include: creating a calendar of the natural cycles during the year, including work cycles, political cycles, and stakeholder cycles to help teams anticipate potential barriers or challenges; getting the level of detail right within the plan; and, taking an emergent approach to implementation:

Our leadership [team] didn't take a hard landing approach with hard targets for implementation. They wanted it to be slow and steady. We have a high-level strategy in terms of knowing where we are going, but what we are really focusing on are the cultural aspects and some of the smaller wins along the way. This approach helps people to understand the strategy and what it means for the organization.



## 6.0 DISCUSSION

### 6.1 Strategy and Living Plan Practices

The Governance and Structure Branch has committed to ensuring that their strategic plan becomes a living document. A living plan requires a living strategic planning process. For this reason, strategy and living plan practices are discussed under a single section. The literature review on living documents pointed to the importance of viewing the strategic planning process as an iterative and incremental cycle. While the purpose of the initial cycle is to develop a strategic plan and begin to integrate the plan into organizational decision-making and operational processes, the aim of subsequent iterations is to review the plan and refine strategies; make adjustments to the implementation plan; undertake any incremental implementation planning that is required; and, demonstrate the creation of public value.

The literature review and interview findings suggest that there are four major phases in a living strategy process and three key characteristics of living plans. See Figure 8: A Living Strategy Cycle. These phases are based on John M. Bryson's strategy change cycle, which is more detailed than Thomas Plant's holistic strategic planning model. The living strategy cycle identifies key practices and the three criteria that help to bring public sector plans to life and keep them alive.

#### 6.1.1 Planning to Plan

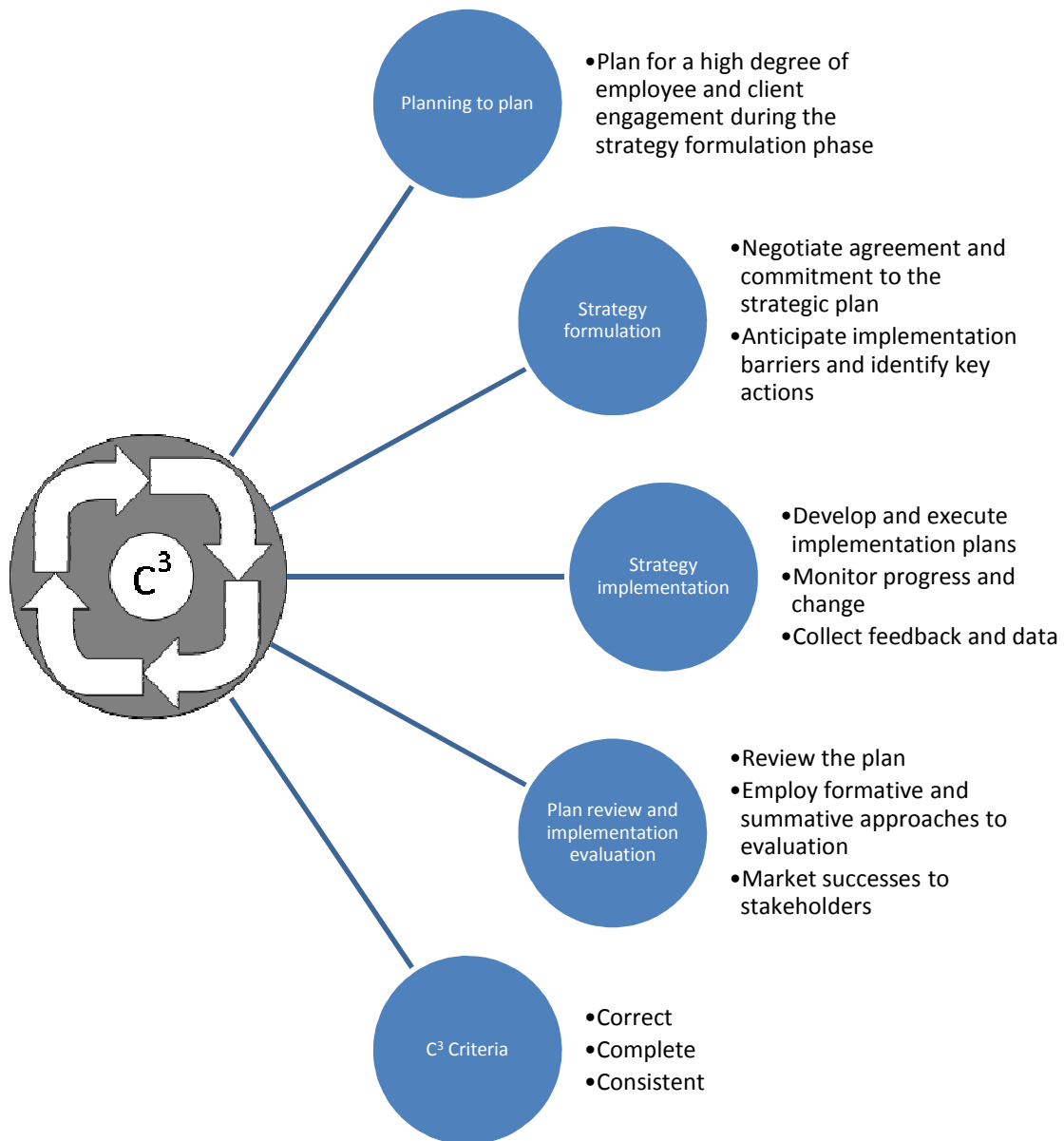
The interviews suggest that a living strategy process needs to include a high degree of employee and client engagement; however, engagement does not simply happen. Organizations need to plan for engagement and consider how to appropriately involve both employees and clients during the strategy formulation phase. While the Governance and Structure Branch has already developed its strategic plan and while the process did include a high level of employee engagement, the discussion will still cover practices for engaging employees during the strategy formulation phase, so that the report can serve as a complete resource in the future.

#### *Employee Engagement*

To ensure a high degree of employee engagement during future planning, the Governance and Structure Branch needs to create opportunities for employees to get involved and the opportunities need to reflect the Branch's values. The Branch Culture Survey indicates that the preferred culture types within the Branch are clan culture and adhocracy culture. Core values in these culture types include collaboration, commitment, communication, development, loyalty, tradition, innovation, transformation and agility. See Figure 9: The Four Culture Types in the Competing Values Framework. Open ended responses from survey respondents indicated that social gatherings, recognition, celebrations, matrix management, continuous learning, and a sense of fun are also valued. Planning processes that are built around these values are more likely to engage Branch employees.

Creating opportunities that reflect traditions, such as using the Victoria Executive Centre, working with a facilitator, and icebreakers and social gatherings, may facilitate engagement and support a sense of fun during planning. One of the interviewees reflected on an innovative planning practice that may resonate well with the Governance and Structure Branch culture. The interviewee arranged for a local government representative to come and talk directly to his Branch about the challenges it was facing and the local government's needs. After the presentation, the employees moved on to planning discussions and exercises. Creating an opportunity for employees to have face-to-face interactions with clients during planning may motivate participation by aligning with Branch values of development and innovation.

**Figure 8: A Living Strategy Cycle**



### ***Client and Stakeholder Engagement***

Planning for a high degree of client engagement is also vital. Burby (2003) found that the involvement of clients and other stakeholders leads to stronger plans that are more likely to be implemented; however, the key is to aim for broad participation by ensuring that groups are not neglected (p. 44). Burby states that, “The single most effective step planners can take to secure broader involvement by stakeholders is simply to invite a variety of groups to take part in the planning process” (p. 44). Interviewees suggested asking clients about their wants and needs, whereas Plant (2007) suggests seeking client and stakeholder input in developing a strategic vision (p. 3). All of these practices help ensure client and stakeholder buy-in and brings the plan to life

**Figure 9: The Four Culture Types in the Competing Values Framework**



during implementation. In addition, client involvement may be helpful in creating an External Advisory Committee (see *Section 6.2 Establishing an Implementation Structure*).

### *6.1.2 Strategy Formulation*

The interviews and literature review indicate that three factors enhance the likelihood of plans being successfully implemented and help to keep plans alive: negotiating executive agreement; building consensus amongst employees; and, anticipating implementation barriers. Anticipating implementation barriers is critical for integrating planning and implementation, whereas executive agreement and employee consensus help ensure buy-in and commitment to implementation.

#### *Negotiating Executive Agreement*

A living planning process requires consensus among employees and a sense of ownership at the executive level. To create ownership at the executive level, executives need to be involved in decision-making and need to agree with the plan. An effective practice for involving executives is to vet developments through the executive during planning. Interviewees noted that executives have a great deal of influence on implementation; off-the-cuff comments and decisions about resources can significantly affect the success of implementation and can quickly cause plans to falter. While the Ministry executive was involved during the planning process, it may also be important for the Branch to vet changes to the plan through the executive as strategies, goals and priorities change during subsequent iterations.

#### *Building Consensus amongst Employees*

On the other hand, building consensus among employees involves helping employees work through differences of opinion about issues, goals, strategies and priorities. Working through differences of opinions and building consensus is important in clan cultures. In addition, consensus is important to ensure motivation, engagement and commitment during implementation. Branch leaders can play an important role during the strategy formulation phase by helping employees reach consensus. In the book, *Getting to Yes*, Roger Fisher and William Ury suggest four principles for working through differences of opinion:

- Separate the people from the problem;
- Focus on interests, goals and principles, not positions;
- Generate a variety of possibilities to identify win-win solutions; and,
- Use objective criteria to make negotiated decisions based on shared principles (Fisher and Ury, 2002 in Quinn, Faerman, Thompson, McGrath, & St. Clair, 2011, pp. 302-306).

While consensus was successfully achieved during the Governance and Structure Branch's recent planning process, there is no guarantee that employees will always agree, and these principles may serve as a resource for Branch leaders, should differences of opinion occur in the future. In addition, recent teambuilding activities within the Governance and Structure Branch, such as the Myers-Briggs personality type testing and the Dealing with Difficult Clients training, combined with a new understanding about the Branch culture will help increase the chances of negotiating agreement amongst employees. Finding ways to apply and maintain these new skills, competencies and knowledge will ensure that they are a resource for the Branch when differences of opinion occur during strategy formulation.

### *The C<sup>3</sup> Criteria*

John McGregor states that, "A living document is evaluated using the C<sup>3</sup> criteria: correct, complete and consistent." (2006, p. 20). The interviews and literature review identified several characteristics of good strategic plans that can be categorized under the C<sup>3</sup> criteria.

#### Correct

Keeping a plan alive involves ensuring it is "correct". For living plans, correctness is not a question of right or wrong; instead, the term refers to a strategic plan that is accurate, exact or spot on. In order to keep their plan alive, the Governance and Structure Branch needs to ensure that the document is an accurate reflection of the Branch's strategic direction and initiatives. In addition, the Branch needs to make certain that certain aspects of the plan are exact. If the vision, strategies or performance indicators are unclear, employees may have difficulties interpreting what is required of them, or when strategies have been achieved. Furthermore, goals that are not achievable could result in a lack of motivation among employees, creating significant challenges for implementation.

Several practices were identified for ensuring accuracy: writing the plan using broad and flexible terms to enable evolving interpretations (USLegal, Inc., n.d., para. 2); using collaborative writing to enable the plan to be freely editable on an ongoing basis (Everything2 Media, 2003, para. 1); and, continually critiquing and updating the plan. The risk of using broad and flexible terms is that the plan will be vague and will be incapable of serving as a guide for decision-making and operations. On the other hand, collaborative writing and continual updates could lead to confusion amongst employees about which version of the plan is current. Using collaborative writing in a strategic manner to collect new information or suggestions for revisions could be a helpful practice for plan reviews.

#### Complete

As previously noted, bringing plans to life requires a strategic management approach and the integration of thought and action. In order for a strategic plan to be truly complete, the plan must include more than just the typical components found in strategic plans (see *Section 1.1 Identifying the Issue*). The Governance and Structure Branch needs to ensure that their strategic plan also includes key implementation actions, so that the plan can serve as a road map for implementation. Without considering key actions and barriers, the Branch risks selecting strategies that are either impossible to implement or challenging to implement. Strategies that pose implementation challenges may still be included in the plan; however, the Branch and its stakeholders will have a sense of the challenges they will face, which may help to curb skepticism and a decline in motivation when those challenges arise.

The strategic plan also needs to include a change management process, which would outline how to handle events that render the plan obsolete, e.g. ministry reorganizations, provincial elections (McGregor, 2006, p. 20). Being prepared to handle significant events can help the Governance and Structure Branch avoid being caught off-guard, and potentially provide the Branch with the slack it needs to enact predetermined steps to protect key projects, such as requesting feedback and data sharing about the success of initiatives sooner than anticipated or purchasing vital contracts or resources. Instead of figuring out what to do, leaders and employees can focus on carrying out the activities described in the change management process and may be more likely to effectively manage any changes. Aside from a change management process, the Branch leadership team or internal steering committee may want to consider developing a simple change management plan for the purposes of clarifying their thinking about implementation. Interviewees suggested that people underestimate how much value there is in thinking through change management practices.

Finally, new information created during the implementation evaluation must be appropriately incorporated into the plan. Keeping records of document changes and outcomes and outputs will enable the Branch to retrace its steps and market its successes. See Sections 6.1.4 Plan Review and Implementation Evaluation and 6.4 Breaking Down Cultural Barriers to Change for more information about marketing successes.

### Consistent

To come alive, the Branch's plan must be consistent in a number of senses. Interviewees noted the importance of branch plans link to government priorities, as well as the need to demonstrate consistent emphases from year-to-year. In addition, leaders whose decisions and priorities are inconsistent with the priorities in the plan may face challenges with buy-in amongst employees. When plans are inconsistent with employees' personal and professional values, organizations face resistance to change.

To ensure consistency, Plant recommends creating a strategic vision in conjunction with stakeholders (2007, p. 3). In the public sector, stakeholders include the government of the day. For the Governance and Structure Branch, ensuring that the plan is consistent with the mandate of the government and the priorities of the new Deputy Minister and Minister may be an important consideration. Ensuring a high degree of employee engagement during planning is also important to prevent building a plan that is inconsistent with employees' values and sense of important issues. As the plan evolves, reflecting on the guiding principles may help the Branch ensure thematic continuity.

### *Anticipating Implementation Barriers*

Strategic plans are more likely to come to life when organizations adopt an integrated strategic management approach and consider implementation during the strategy formulation phase. Lawrence G. Hrebiniak states that, "Execution or implementation is not something to worry about later. Execution issues or problem areas must be anticipated as part of a "big picture" dealing with planning and doing" (2006, p. 14). Bryson adds that anticipating implementation barriers during the strategy formulation phase is not typical of most strategic planning processes (2011, p. 61), but that doing so can help organizations prevent skepticism from taking hold among employees, clients and other stakeholders.

In order to anticipate implementation barriers, organizations need to spend time identifying the key actions to be taken over a six-month to one-year period. For goals and strategies where

implementation barriers are identified or anticipated, an opportunity is created for organizations to collaborate with their clients and stakeholders to identify ways to indirectly achieve goals and overcome barriers (Bryson, 2011, p. 61). However, as noted in the interview findings, it is important to avoid spending so much time planning that environmental factors change. To shorten the time between planning and implementation, the Governance and Structure Branch should consider incremental planning. Incremental planning is achieved by breaking complex projects into increments, i.e. key actions, future work sections, or portions, and focusing on the completion of only one increment at a time (McGregor, 2006, p. 19). Identifying key actions can help create a sense of order and help assign accountabilities without negating the possibility of using incremental planning techniques.

### *6.1.3 Strategy Implementation*

The interviews and literature review reveal that implementation plans, an implementation monitoring process, and collecting data and feedback are important aspects of a living strategy cycle. Implementation plans ensure responsibilities and accountabilities are clear, but it is important to carefully consider how to manage delegating authority. Implementation plans that are developed using an incremental plan can help teams avoid overplanning. Monitoring is important to keep momentum up and to alert leaders to implementation barriers. Collecting data and feedback during and post-implementation enables teams to evaluate the implementation success and make adjustments for the next cycle.

### *Implementation Plans*

An implementation plan builds on the key actions identified in the strategic plan and can include varying levels of detail; however, as Van Wart notes, “Organizations can become victims of overplanning” (2011, p. 326). To avoid overplanning, interviewees suggested that the implementation plan needs to be simple and accessible, and need only identify tasks, the person responsible, due dates, checkpoints and completion dates. These contents are consistent with effective delegation practices that involve responsibility, authority, and accountability (see *Section 6.3.3 Empowering People*). Once key actions have been identified for each strategic project or initiative, implementation project teams may find it helpful to adopt an incremental planning approach. Incremental planning would help teams keep the plan simple and avoid becoming caught up in endless planning and revisions. Myrna notes that action steps with due dates beyond 90 days usually end up being vague and inappropriate, adding supporting for short-range incremental planning (2012, p. 141).

The Branch may also benefit from developing a standardized implementation plan template. Having standardized implementation plans will facilitate strategic conversations within the Branch and ensure that implementation plan contents are simple and that planning processes are efficient. In addition, having a single repository for corporate intelligence was noted as being helpful. Simple tables created in shared notebooks in Microsoft OneNote are likely all that is required to monitor the progress of most projects. See *Section 6.6.2 Making Effective Use of Existing Resources* for the discussion on the advantages of Microsoft OneNote. While there are more sophisticated tools available, such as dashboards, balanced scorecards and project plans, both the literature review and the interviewees noted that complex tools are not necessarily needed. Instead, managers need an understanding of dynamic complexity and a model or framework to help guide implementation decisions and actions (Richardson, 2012, pp. 61-62; Hrebiniak, 2006, p. 17).

### *Monitoring Progress*

Establishing implementation monitoring processes and being rigorous about follow-ups were suggested as key practices for successful implementation and living plans. Interviewees noted that in order to monitor and report on implementation progress, specific tools and resources are required. Myrna agrees and states that employees need a formal system to keep momentum (2012, p. 137). Using a OneNote system will ensure that all Branch employees have access to implementation plans and that Branch leaders can monitor progress; however, this practice would depend on teams identifying due dates and checkpoints in their implementation plans. One interviewee also noted the importance of creating project risk registers and monitoring risks on an ongoing basis. This could be achieved by adding a risks column to the implementation plan.

Being rigorous about following up on tasks was noted as very important for success, but interviewees also shared that following up can sometimes be a challenge when the urgent takes priority over the important. Hrebiniak notes that, “Execution is a process that demands a great deal of attention to make it work. . . . Faster is not always better; successful integration takes time and attention” (2006, p. 14). One interviewee suggested that managers set aside an allotment of time every week or every two weeks to follow up, whilst another interviewee relied on a dedicated resource to follow up with employees. Richardson agrees and states that managers need to make time for the important (2012, p. 63). Should the Branch have the option of hiring or reassigning an employee for a strategic projects manager role, this employee could be tasked with the responsibility of tracking task completion. Otherwise, each member of the Branch leadership team should set aside some time every week to check in on the implementation projects that she is responsible for.

### *Internal Communications*

Keeping the plan alive involves repeatedly emphasizing the vision and end-goals. To help people connect the pieces between implementation progress – including ongoing work, project updates, challenges, short-term and intermediate wins – it is important for the internal steering committee or Branch leadership team to establish a small set of key messages for communications. Key messages help establish a common language within the organization and increase understanding about objectives and the importance of initiatives, without communications becoming like background noise (Myrna, 2012, p. 137). Key messages should not only be reinforced in written communications, but also during direct communications with employees. As one interviewee noted, organizations need to be relentless in communicating about what they are trying to achieve, as this helps to establish the importance of initiatives and bring the plan to life. Consistent messages from various Branch leaders are also very important to prevent uncertainty about priorities.

Myrna advises that, “In the real world, the language you use matters a great deal.” (2012, p. 141). For this reason, Branch leaders need be thoughtful during communications to ensure that communications motivate and engage people – and reinforce the preferred culture – rather than encourage people to remain in the status quo. Words like “try” and “if” can inadvertently inhibit or slow down the implementation process (Myrna, 2012, p. 141). One interviewee shared a story about an executive who stated that performance plans were “stupid” in a public forum. The result of that single comment was a lack of engagement amongst employees and managers in the performance planning system, which created significant challenges for the interviewee and his team to keeping the performance planning process alive. To help keep the strategic plan alive, the

key messages should reinforce strategic emphases that align with the preferred culture, for example innovation, information sharing and cross-branch collaboration.

### ***Collecting Data and Feedback***

As noted in the literature review, two keys to a living strategic planning process are reviewing the plan and evaluating implementation efforts and success. For these practices to occur, organizations need to collect feedback and data; however, the interviewees noted that employees often begrudge data collection when data is not used to guide and inform decision-making and they feel that executives don't care about their time. Ensuring that decisions, communications and the use of resources reflect the plan's goals and vision is critical. A key consideration when it comes to data collection is the importance of the initiative. Interviewees noted that it is important to avoid trying to collect data and feedback on each and every initiative. Establishing tiers of priorities was suggested as a helpful practice to create the ability to easily scale up or scale down efforts.

To motivate employees to collect data and feedback, the Branch should commit to conducting implementation evaluations where the information is used to assist organizational learning, course corrections and marketing of successes. As well, collecting data and feedback to build business cases for more resources may be an important practice. See *Section 6.6.1 Resources Needed*. Other ideas for motivating employees are captured in *Section 6.3.2 Motivating and Engaging Employees for Commitment*.

### ***6.1.4 Plan Review and Implementation Evaluation***

#### ***Criteria for Plan Reviews***

To prevent a sense of endless planning and a decrease in employee engagement, plan reviews prompted by minor changes should be conducted by the internal steering committee (see *Section 6.2 Establishing an Implementation Structure*). For major changes to the plan, new discussions, agreements and decisions will be required (McDonald, 2009, para. 5), and the Branch should reconvene to discuss the proposed changes.

The literature review identified four criteria for plan reviews:

- The passage of time;
- Environmental or contextual changes;
- New information; and,
- Scope changes.

When asked how frequently plans check-ins need to be scheduled, interviewees gave a variety of responses; however, checking the relevance and accuracy of plans more frequently than annually seemed to be the general consensus. McGregor states that reviews should be scheduled in accordance with the evolutionary trajectory of projects (2006, p. 19). Once implementation plans have been created, the Governance and Structure Branch may benefit from seeing whether there are logical times to check-in on the strategic plan over the coming year. This practice would enable the timing of implementation evaluations and plan reviews to be co-ordinated and would cut down on the amount of time invested in planning. As an alternative, the committee could perhaps consider scheduling quarterly check-ins to review the plan during an internal steering committee meeting.

On an annual basis, the internal steering committee should review the Branch-developed repository of webpages and emails capturing environmental and contextual changes and trends. As noted in *Section 6.6.1 Making Effective Use of Existing Resources*, Microsoft OneNote functionality can simplify this task and make it easy for all Branch employees to participate in developing a repository; however, setting up a training session to teach people how to send webpages and emails to the shared folder will be critical.

As the Branch collects or receives evaluation data, the information should be used to make adjustments to the plan. The internal steering committee should use the C<sup>3</sup> criteria to determine the scope of the changes required. If a significant number of changes are required or if the new information impacts the scope of an implementation project, a Branch-wide plan review should be initiated to ensure agreement across the Branch. If the changes are minor, they should be handled by the internal steering committee.

Plan reviews and implementation evaluations are helpful implementation controls; however, as Hrebniak notes, ensuring controls provide timely and valid feedback is important. For Branch performance measurement, implementation evaluations can provide useful information about progress. Celebrating and recognizing milestones and accomplishments can help motivate and engage people and increase commitment. Survey participants indicated that in addition to celebrating work-related milestones, celebrating personal milestones also helps motivate and engage Governance and Structure Branch employees.

### ***Implementation Evaluations***

Implementation evaluations serve three purposes: to facilitate organizational learning, to inform adjustments to implementation approaches, and to ensure impacts and successes are recorded and reported to clients and stakeholders. At key moments during the implementation process, the Governance and Structure Branch should collect data and feedback to determine how successful actions have been and whether adjustments are needed. The interview findings confirmed the validity of practices identified in the literature review for collecting feedback, namely: inviting clients to provide feedback, and building relationships with clients and staying in touch during implementation. Should the Branch decide to establish an External Advisory Committee (EAC) (See Section 6.2 Establishing an Implementation Structure), the Branch could additionally engage the EAC members in providing feedback and collecting data. Interviewees noted that possible responses to negative feedback are: adding an education strategy; recrafting the idea and raising it again at a later stage; and, negotiating a compromise. One interviewee suggested that an easy way of recording positive feedback is to add three columns to the implementation plan: short-term wins, intermediate wins, and long-term wins.

### ***Reporting***

As noted in Criteria for Plan Reviews, the Governance and Structure Branch should try to schedule plan reviews and implementation evaluations in accordance with the evolutionary trajectory of projects. Depending on environmental changes, scope changes, new information and the pace of the Branch's strategic projects, reviews would be scheduled more or less frequently. An alternative would be to schedule quarterly reviews. Once the plan has been reviewed and progress and accomplishments have been evaluated, the Governance and Structure Branch would benefit from sending out a progress report and marketing its successes.

The aims of the reports are to keep stakeholders engaged and to help promote new definitions of success. Interviewees noted that sending out progress reports too frequently can decrease

engagement, since the reports may not contain information of interest to stakeholders. Highlighting accomplishments related to adhocracy culture may be a particularly important facet of the progress reports for the Governance and Structure Branch, since the Branch Culture Survey findings indicate that the current criteria of success are problematic.

## 6.2 Establishing an Implementation Structure

In the article, *Implementing Change in Public Sector Organizations*, Cunningham and Kempling suggest that the most important principle for enabling change is to build a guiding coalition (2009, p. 341). The authors define a guiding coalition as “a committed leadership team . . . [that] acts as champions, researchers and facilitators in listening to people, gathering information, researching, and making adjustments during any change process” (p. 332). In this study, the literature review and interviews identified three possible forms of implementation structures: a document change control board; an internal steering committee; and, “parallel track” committees in the form of an external advisory committee (EAC) and an internal secretariat.

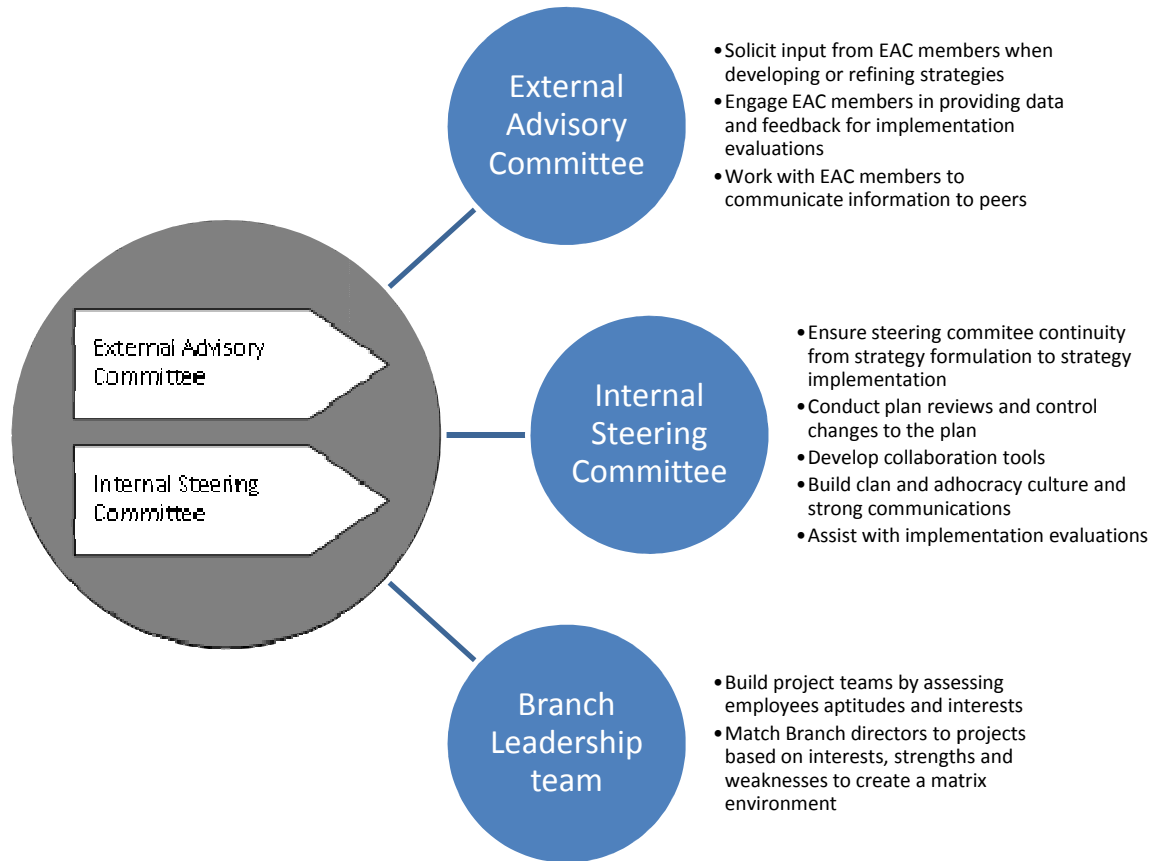
McGregor’s suggestion for a document change control board would not cover off the gamut of tasks and responsibilities identified during the interviews. As a consequence, the tasks and responsibilities noted for the document change control board will be integrated into the other two possibilities. Having an internal steering committee only is possible, but may make it more challenging for the Governance and Structure Branch to routinely engage clients and external stakeholders. The suggestion for “parallel track” committees was made by an interviewee in Alberta’s Ministry of Municipal Affairs. Local governments in British Columbia use advisory boards for a wide range of issues and the parallel track committees approach would thus fit well into the existing system and culture of local governance.

As noted in *Section 6.1 Living Plan Practices*, bringing plans to life requires a strategic management approach. To create a living plan, the Governance and Structure Branch needs to ensure that any implementation structures, such as steering committees or secretariats, do not inadvertently separate strategy formulation (thought) and strategy implementation (action) within the Branch, and impede strategic management.

While establishing “parallel track” committees requires a higher degree of time and investment from the Governance and Structure Branch than having just an internal steering committee, there are several benefits to having an EAC. For example, the EAC members may be able to provide instrumental data and feedback to help the Governance and Structure Branch conduct useful formative evaluations and make adjustments to the plan. In addition, the members may be able to assist with communicating information from the Governance and Structure Branch to their peers in the local government system.

In the article, *Making Plans that Matter*, Raymond Burby found that involving key stakeholder groups during the strategy formulation phase leads to a much higher chance of implementation (2003, p. 39). Key stakeholder groups for the Governance and Structure Branch were identified during the planning process, and could potentially be involved in championing initiatives and helping guide and inform strategic projects and initiatives that are led by the Branch. While Burby’s study only considered plan making, the findings from the interviews suggest that involving key stakeholders throughout the process leads to better outcomes. Determining how frequently to bring the EAC members together would be an important consideration for the Governance and Structure Branch to avoid stretching employees.

**Figure 10: Considerations for Establishing an Implementation Structure**



One of the Branch ideas for culture change is to share more information with clients; however, information sharing with EAC members may also require some education at times (see Table x: The Four Culture Types and Approaches to Implementation), since members may have differing levels of knowledge and understanding about various issues, challenges, and how government works. Should the Governance and Structure Branch decide to establish an internal steering committee only, the tasks and responsibilities noted for the EAC could possibly be achieved through existing partnerships, such as the Union of British Columbia Municipalities or the Local Government Management Association; however, the experience of other jurisdictions suggests that the size and power of municipal associations may make partnering with them on small scale implementations more challenging than helpful.

The internal steering committee should ideally be representative of the spectrum of interests and functions within the Governance and Structure Branch (McGregor, 2006, p. 20), requiring membership from all four Branch units and from the Branch hierarchy. In addition, ad hoc members with specialized knowledge from the Strategic Human Resources Branch, such as

building organizational culture or evaluating performance, may be helpful until the Governance and Structure Branch develops its internal capacity to conduct these activities independently.

Hrebeniak cautions that the separation of planning and doing becomes dysfunctional “when planners see themselves as the smart people and treat the doers as ‘grunts’” (2006, p. 13). To avoid this scenario, the Governance and Structure Branch may benefit from ensuring continuity from those steering committee members who were involved in developing the strategic plan. Continuity would counteract any beliefs within the Branch that the innovative and challenging work only takes place during planning (p. 14). In addition, increasing the overlap between thought and action is believed to result in a greater degree of success during implementation (p. 14).

One of the key responsibilities of the internal steering committee would be to conduct plan reviews and control changes to the plan. Should the Governance and Structure Branch adopt collaborative writing using a SharePoint or other tools, the representative membership of the internal steering committee would make the committee an ideal forum for weighing up the benefits and costs associated with proposed changes. Co-ordinating the timing of plan reviews and implementation evaluations may be a helpful practice; however, formative implementation evaluations may need to be conducted more frequently than plan reviews and summative implementation evaluations to ensure that implementation strategies are refined in a timely fashion. Other tasks and responsibilities noted during the interviews and literature review include: keeping records of document changes; developing simple tools to help implementation project teams to collaborate; building a team culture, openness to change, and strong communication practices; and assisting with implementation evaluations.

Creating implementation project teams is another key task that was identified during the interviews. Three possible methods for creating project teams are self-selection, selection by the steering committee, or selection by the Branch leadership team. Self-selection is more likely to identify those employees who are passionate about certain strategic projects and initiatives; however, employees who self-select to join a project may not necessarily be work-unit experts or have the required aptitudes. If self-selection were used, the internal steering committee would be able to assist with communications and co-ordination. Selection by the internal steering committee could be problematic and inappropriate, since the task of selecting employees would require discussing and assessing employees’ aptitudes and suitability for working on and leading certain strategic projects and initiatives, as well as learning and development opportunities and interests. Since the task would require a degree of confidentiality and sensitivity, selection by the Branch leadership team is most appropriate and most likely to lead to greater implementation success.

The idea of establishing a requirement for executives to partner with implementation project teams as an executive sponsor based on their interests, strengths and weaknesses is an interesting idea, which would fit well with the Governance and Structure Branch’s existing and preferred future cultures; however, this type of initiative would need to be implemented at the division-level, rather than at the branch-level. This idea could be scaled down to involve Branch directors instead, where Branch directors self-select to work on projects of interests or negotiate and agree on the best person. The survey respondents indicated a strong desire to reduce hierarchy culture within the Branch. One of the key ways of doing so is to encourage and support cross-branch projects and collaboration.

To encourage collaboration within the Branch, the Branch directors should consider adopting a matrix management style. Matching Branch directors to strategic initiatives and projects based on their interests, strengths and weaknesses – rather than the logical fit based on Branch functions or the staff who are involved – may be an effective way to implement this idea and support culture change within the Governance and Structure Branch. In addition to interests, strengths and weaknesses, managerial style should be considered to match style with strategy (see *Section 6.3.1 Characteristics of Effective Leaders*). The role of the sponsor would primarily involve eliminating roadblocks and obtaining the resources required by the project team, but the directors could also potentially be involved in providing updates to the Division and/or Ministry Executive when appropriate.

## 6.3 Leadership

### 6.3.1 *Characteristics of Effective Leaders*

The interviewees identified several characteristics of individuals who succeed at implementing strategic plans and changes. In particular, interviewees agreed that leaders who use either a transformational or an inclusive management style are more effective; however, a recent study on the impact of implementation style on performance determined that, “There is ‘no best way’ to do it” (Andrews, Boyne, Law, & Walker, 2011, p. 663). Instead, the authors found that, “Implementation style matters, but only in conjunction with strategy” (p. 663). Andrews et al.’s finding contradicts the interview findings that a transformational or inclusive approach is best; however, it provides evidence to affirm the thesis of this report, that “the concept of fit or organizational alignment is important for understanding implementation” (p. 663). Consequently, the Governance and Structure Branch may achieve more success if the leadership team finds ways to move between leadership styles and adapt their managerial approaches based on the nature of the task at hand. A prerequisite will be for Branch leaders to identify their own personal managerial style and the nature of the change initiative (see Appendix 10.1 for more information).

Matching Branch leaders to strategic projects and initiatives based on their personal strengths and managerial approaches, rather than according to the organizational structure, may help the Branch align implementation style to strategy, build adhocracy culture, and ultimately keep the plan alive. Hrebiniak notes that, “Execution will fail when no-one has a stake in the game” (2006, p. 23). This practice may also build on individual director’s personal values, and help ensure that project leaders are passionate and committed to the implementation process.

While being inclusive may not necessarily result in greater implementation success, the interview findings suggest that a clan leadership style helps build and maintain a happy and engaged workforce. Qualities, such as commitment, being flexible, being one of the people, and a desire to see people happy, productive and engaged, are all leadership characteristics that the interviewees suggested lead to successful implementation. This bodes well for the Governance and Structure Branch leadership team, since the Branch Culture Survey respondents indicated that the Branch leaders exemplify clan qualities and management approaches. Should any new leadership positions arise within the Branch, identifying candidates whose personal values align with clan and adhocracy approaches would be beneficial.

### 6.3.2 *Motivating and Engaging Employees for Commitment*

Most – if not all – interviewees spoke about buy-in and commitment at some point during the interviews. Buy-in is achieved by taking steps to ensure a high degree of employee engagement during the strategy formulation phase. Engagement in planning sets the stage for implementation

success by empowering employees with a sense of impact (see *Section 6.3.3 Empowering People*); however, sustaining motivation and engagement is crucial to ensure ongoing commitment amongst employees to work through the inevitable barriers to implementation. Without commitment, plans end up dead on the shelf. To achieve commitment, Hrebiniak advises that organizations need to establish both incentives and controls:

On one hand, incentives motivate or guide performance; on the other, controls provide feedback about whether the desired performance outcomes are being attained. . . . Incentives support the key aspects of the strategy-execution model. They must reinforce the “right” things if implementation is to succeed. Controls, in turn, must provide timely and valid feedback about organizational performance so that change and adaptation become part and parcel of the implementation effort.

Interviewees noted that incentives need not be monetary or formal to be effective. Informal recognition in the form of comments and congratulations was identified as highly effective for motivating and engaging employees and helping contribute to a positive work environment and culture. As mentioned in *Section 6.4 Breaking Down Cultural Barriers to Change*, ensuring that the Governance and Structure Branch’s criteria of success align with its strategies and activities is important. Similarly, incentives need to also help reinforce the desired culture. Quinn et al. (2011) identify four basic categories of motivators:

1. Existence and acquisition;
2. Belongingness and bonding;
3. Esteem and power; and,
4. Achievement, growth and learning. (p.206)

From the Branch Culture Survey, it is clear that motivators two, three and four hold the most importance for Governance and Structure Branch employees. Survey respondents indicated that social gatherings, recognition of all contributing team members (not just the project lead), and learning and development opportunities are valued incentives within the Branch. To increase employee commitment, the Branch leadership team should consider connecting these incentives with implementation milestones and achievements. This practice would not only have a positive effect on the Branch culture, but would also help motivate staff and keep commitment high.

Interviewees also suggested that performance planning can act as an incentive; however, Governance and Structure Branch employees have indicated a reluctance to see emphasis placed on targets and performance measurement. One innovative idea related to using the MyPerformance system to motivate employees is to let employees establish their own measures of success and evaluate their own performance. This type of self-evaluation helps shift the focus away from performance planning as a control to performance planning as an incentive, enabling the performance planning process to become a source of intrinsic motivation contributing to an employee’s needs for achievement, growth and esteem (Quinn et al., 2011, p. 213). In addition, the process can simultaneously help managers and executives to track the organization’s progress towards goals (Plant, *Holistic strategic planning: Integrating strategic and operational plans in the public sector*, 2007, p. 4). Coupling self-evaluation with mentoring can help reinforce the shift from performance planning as a control to performance planning as an incentive. See *Section 6.5 Skills, Competencies and Knowledge* for further discussion about using performance planning within the Governance and Structure Branch.

An important leadership skill for mentoring to occur is listening and assimilating. One interviewee noted employees are more engaged when they feel heard and understood. In the book, *Action Learning*, Ian McGill and Liz Beaty note that aside from passive listening, there are other practices that prevent people from feeling heard (2001, pp. 124-126). When managers do not put their own thoughts aside and judge messages while apparently listening, an employee may believe that the manager is not recognizing her perspective. Being distracted or inattentive; determining how to respond; offering sympathy; interrupting; and, filling pauses when employees are not finished speaking are all listening practices that can work against motivation and empowerment. Instead, reflecting back ideas and questioning aspects can help employees feel heard and understood, as well as respect and commit to implementing decisions that are contrary to their own ideas.

For more information about using controls to increase commitment see *Section 6.1.4 Plan Review and Implementation Evaluation*.

### *6.3.3 Empowering People*

Quinn, Faerman, Thompson, McGrath and St. Clair state that, “Delegation involves three core elements: responsibility, authority, and accountability” (2011, p. 60). Employees need to know what is expected of them, to be given the authority to do what they need to do, and to have an understanding about their own accountability. As John Myrna notes, “Whether for a tactical action step or a key result measure, one (and only one) person must be designated as accountable” (2012, p. 140). When delegating, employees also need the freedom to complete tasks in the manner that works for them (Quinn et al., 2011, p.66). As Quinn et al. note, “Employees may be told what needs to be done, but not how to do it” (p. 212).

Interviewees noted that delegating authority, while a critical element of effective delegation, can present some challenges. Employees who do not know when to let their manager know about problems can adversely affect the success of initiatives. Employees need to a clear sense of the limits of their own personal decision-making authority. When employees understand these limits, “decentralized decision-making can improve the speed of decision-making and the quality of decisions” (Quinn, Faerman, Thompson, McGrath, & St. Clair, 2011, p. 223). Interviewees also noted that organizations may benefit from identifying those employees capable of handling a larger degree of authority and assigning complex tasks to those employees. Directors involved in implementation project teams may play an important role in helping clarify the limits and helping guide decisions about task assignments.

To effectively lead implementation initiatives, achieve success, and keep the plan alive, the Governance and Structure Branch leadership team must empower the Branch employees. Empowering people requires not only effective delegation, but also a sense of meaning, a sense of competence, and a sense of impact (Quinn, Faerman, Thompson, McGrath, & St. Clair, 2011, pp. 212-213). A sense of meaning is achieved by putting the work of implementation into the bigger picture. Interviewees noted that it is important for employees to understand how implementation activities connect to the goal and the vision, as well as to the government’s mandate. During conversations with Branch employees, the Governance and Structure Branch leadership team should take care to contextualize implementation activities to establish a sense of meaning for employees.

A sense of competence is established when employees feel confident that they can achieve what is expected of them. To ensure a sense of competence, interviewees noted that it is critical for

managers to get staff the resources, information, skills and training that they need. As discussed in *Section 6.2 Establishing an Implementation Structure*, the role of Branch directors as project sponsors is to eliminate roadblocks and obtain the required resources. To obtain the required resources, project sponsors may find it advantageous to prepare a business case. Other practices include: getting creative with existing resources; accessing training to push existing tools to their limits; and, advocating for temporary deployments or time and scope adjustments when necessary. See *Section 6.6.2 Making Effective Use of Existing Resources* for further discussion on obtain resources.

Sharing information with employees also helps to establish a sense of competence. Survey respondents indicated that holding information too closely is a concern. Sharing information with employees sends a message of trust and transparency and can also help to reduce uncertainties and stress when employees feel they are “in the loop”. In addition, Hrebiniak notes that information sharing can improve co-ordination and increase an organization’s ability to be flexible and respond to implementation issues (2006, p. 23).

Getting staff the skills and training they need is also critical. Survey respondents identified learning and development as a top priority for them, but ensuring that skills development and training helps the Branch achieve its goals and vision will grow the Branch’s client focus and add value within the Branch, the Ministry, and the local government system. New knowledge also needs to be effectively managed with a knowledge management system; documenting knowledge and disseminating it throughout the Branch can help maximize learning in the Branch. In addition, accessing external knowledge can be achieved by establishing a community of practice with local government branches in other jurisdictions; however, the Branch may need to consider how a community of practice would fit with other existing structures (see *Section 6.4 Breaking Down Cultural Barriers to Change*). Formative evaluation activities will also help employees learn from experience (Chaston, 2011, pp. 292-294).

A sense of impact is attained when employees are able to influence plans and activities and feel heard and understood. Interviewees noted that allowing employees to influence plans enhances implementation outcomes. A recent Delphi study found a strong correlation between involving employees and the successful implementation of strategic management approaches and cultural changes (Pina, Torres, & Yetano, 2011, p. 582). In other words, the more effort that is put into involving and engaging employees, the more alive the Governance and Structure Branch’s strategic plan will become. Continuing to use participative approaches and maintaining the Branch’s clan culture will help employees perceive a sense of impact during implementation. One of the practices suggested by an interviewee is to commit to using at least one idea suggested by employees when asking for input. This practice may also help empower employees in a direct and tangible way.

#### **6.4 Breaking Down Cultural Barriers to Change**

The ability to manage and lead change is a vital skill for successful implementation. Managers who are unable to break down the cultural barriers to implementation may struggle to achieve results and get people past the historical ways of doing things. While managing and leading change was only ranked as moderately important in the interview analysis, the findings from the literature review and the Branch Culture Survey suggest that this leadership skill may be more important for the Governance and Structure Branch than the interview analysis would suggest.

In the article, *Agility is King*, Mike Richardson declares that, “Change has changed, becoming much more like a dynamic journey on a shifting landscape” (2012, p. 62). The dynamic nature and fast pace of change in today’s world has created a need for public sector organizations to develop their risk tolerance in order to embrace openness to change. As noted in *Being the Best 2010/11*, the BC government’s human resource plan, “The public service has [traditionally] been managed to minimize risk above all else” (British Columbia Public Service, 2010, p. 7). Survey respondents indicated that focusing on rules, processes and small issues translates to employees not challenging themselves. Maintaining hierarchy culture and the reliance on rules and processes to minimize risk is a managerial approach that is incompatible with strategy implementation, since implementation inevitably involves taking a risk (Plant, *Holistic strategic planning: Integrating strategic and operational plans in the public sector*, 2007, p. 3). One of the Branch ideas for culture change was to reduce or stop risk aversion. This idea reflects the desire – and need – to increase adhocracy culture within the Branch. However, succeeding in an environment of dynamic complexity requires leaders to unlock and challenge old mental models:

The paradigms, mindsets, assumptions and beliefs held by you, your team and your organization are the mental models through which you interpret the world. Old, used-up and out-of-date mental models imprison our thinking and ability to see new possibilities and pathways. That’s cancerous to agility. (Richardson, 2012, p. 63).

To unlock and challenge the mental model of risk aversion, Governance and Structure Branch leaders need to “[create] an environment that helps people to deal with the shadowside of change” (Brown & Jarrett, 2008, p. 16), because the shadowside of change creates fear amongst employees and resistance. Michael Jarrett suggests that overcoming fear involves taking prudent risks, working together, and helping one another to cope (2008, p. 16). Prudent risk-taking and the inevitable mistakes can create opportunities for organizations to learn from mistakes and develop their risk tolerance. Role-modelling these behaviours may help set the tone and influence employees to face their fears and transform the Governance and Structure Branch culture (Schein, 2010, p. 3).

In addition, practices suggested by the interviewees, such as sharing information, maintaining strong relationships, and promoting a high-level of trust within the Branch, will help to create an environment where employees feel safe to face change and challenge their own mental models about risk-taking. Branch get-togethers, such as meetings, social gatherings, and learning and development activities, provide opportunities for Branch leaders to reflect on the shadowside of change and for the Branch to recognize and celebrate accomplishments related to overcoming fears and resistance. Talking about change can help employees feel safe and supported.

Before prudent risks can be taken, interviewees suggested that employees need to simply take an interest in new approaches. To cultivate interest in new approaches, the Branch could consider establishing and participating in communities of practice, embracing continuous improvement, and building in time to work on creative and innovative solutions to identified problems. Building in time to work on solutions to identified problems could potentially form part of implementation project teams’ activities or be tagged on to monthly Branch meetings, but this approach would not necessarily create a space that facilitates the constructive exchange of ideas (Sorensen & Torfing, 2012, p. 5). Mark Nuttall states that, “The term *community of practice* refers to the social context and broader process of social learning and the shared sociocultural practices that characterize

specific forms of learning and knowledge acquisition within social groups” (2010, p. 173). Sorensen and Torfing (2012) add that:

Innovation can be seen as an intentional, learning-based practice that incorporates occasional chance discoveries. . . . Collaborative interaction facilitates trust-based circulation and cross-fertilization of new and creative ideas, and ensures a broad assessment of the potential risks and benefits of new and bold solutions and the selection of the most promising ones. (pp. 4-5)

To realize the full benefit of learning within a social context, the Branch may benefit from establishing a community of practice with similar branches in other provinces where the purpose is not only for employees to explore new approaches and learn from others’ experiences (Duhaime, Stimpert, & Chesley, 2012, p. 281), but also to discuss the potential risks and benefits of new approaches and to develop and strengthen relationships with colleagues in other local government departments. Examining the fit with existing structures, such as the Provincial-Territorial Officials Committee, may be an important consideration for determining how best to create a space that facilitates the constructive exchange of ideas.

To determine whether implementation activities (e.g. implementation project teams led by directors with the right strengths and interests, routinely engaging clients through the EAC) are having a positive impact on the culture and environment, the Governance and Structure Branch leadership team should consider re-administering the OCAI a number of times throughout implementation (Lynch & Happell, 2008, p. 71). Whereas Cameron and Quinn (2011) advise that knowing whether changes are taking place involves identifying metrics, measures and milestones – just like other change initiatives – and suggest the following questions for organizations to consider:

- What are the key indicators of progress?
- How will we know we are moving forward?
- What constitutes success? Who should be held accountable, and for what?
- What are the metrics that should be reflected?
- How often should we assess progress?
- By what date will we have documented noticeable change?
- When will total change have occurred? (p.117)

In recognizing that changing organizational culture is the most critical factor for successfully implementing organizational improvement initiatives (Cameron & Quinn, 2011, pp. 1-2, 13), such as implementing branch-level strategic planning, and that the recommendations in this report will undoubtedly lead to culture change, determining how to assess whether the Branch’s culture is changing for the better will be an important activity. As noted in *Section 6.2 Establishing an Implementation Structure*, this activity could be undertaken by the internal steering committee.

Embracing continuous improvement as part of the plan review and implementation evaluation phase of the living planning process may help employees overcome any fears of failure, give them the confidence to take risks, and recognize mistakes as part of the learning process (Brown & Jarrett, 2008, p. 15). As noted in the literature review, the Branch will also need to use its new knowledge and insights to revisit and revise existing products (McGregor, 2006, p. 17), as this activity will help to embed the learning within the organization and bring the plan to life.

Aside from increasing adhocracy culture, the Branch Culture Survey indicated an equal and opposite need to reduce hierarchy culture. As has already been mentioned in *Section 6.2 Establishing an Implementation Structure*, creating implementation project teams to implement specific projects or initiatives, where directors are matched according to their strengths and interests, is one way of breaking down some of the organizational stability and uniformity that makes innovation and change a challenge. Another key practice is to change the organization's criteria of success. This change may pose somewhat more of a challenge since those involved in evaluating the Branch's success at the division or ministry-level may not necessarily agree with the need to redefine success. Tight economic conditions and the introduction of "Lean" techniques have reinforced the existing definitions of success that involve eliminating waste and redundancy, and demonstrating timeliness, dependability, smooth operations, and efficiency. While these factors are still important for demonstrating responsible government, citizens are also looking for government to innovate and deliver more services electronically. One of the interviewees suggested that branches need to learn how to market their accomplishments more effectively and claimed that,

We're all such policy wonks, that making noise about our own successes is just like pulling teeth sometimes, [but] I think there's ways to profile what you're doing. We manage so many problems below the radar that the people above us sometimes don't know how much of a difference we've made.

Building a reporting framework to collect both quantitative and qualitative evidence of short-term, intermediate, and long-term wins can help the Branch tell the story behind *all* their successes, whether related to eliminating redundancy or creating new digital processes. Where capacity is a challenge and evidence can only be collected for some projects, ensuring that evidence is being collected for projects that involve transformation and innovation will help the Branch to market those achievements and promote new standards and definitions of success. See *Section 6.1.3 Strategy Implementation* for a description of how to effectively market accomplishments.

## 6.5 Skills, Competencies and Knowledge

In order to achieve results and keep the plan alive, Governance and Structure Branch employees need to have a clear understanding of the strategic plan, the implementation plan and how work related to the strategic projects and initiatives helps drive the Branch its goals. Employees also either need to have the expertise required to implement particular initiatives or access to expertise. One of the Branch Ideas for Culture Change is to start mentoring. Mentoring entails establishing a "one-on-one relationship between an employee and someone who is more experienced. . . . Mentors are often one or two levels higher in the organizational hierarchy and may even be in a different department or division." (Quinn, Faerman, Thompson, McGrath, & St. Clair, 2011, p. 63).

Mentoring does not necessarily need to be a formal system where individual employees are matched to mentors, such as the performance coaching services offered by the Public Service Agency (British Columbia Public Service, 2012, p. 15), but can simply be a supportive and trusting relationship between a manager and employee where there is an emphasis on helping employees grow and develop (Quinn, Faerman, Thompson, McGrath, & St. Clair, 2011, p. 63). Shifting from the status quo towards mentoring may simply involve relating questions and conversations back to the strategic plan and employees' learning and development goals, to connect the pieces in a way that people are able to relate to. Storytelling may also be a useful approach.

The Public Service Agency has attempted to reframe the Employee Performance and Development Plan into a tool that is geared towards facilitating regular coaching (or mentoring) conversations between supervisors and employees, and has stated that, “The focus of the performance management process is no longer on the form we use, but on the working relationship between employees and supervisors to achieve the best results.” (BC Public Service, 2012, p. 16). The shift at the Public Service Agency and the new tool – MyPerformance – presents an opportunity for the Governance and Structure Branch to re-examine their mental models about performance planning and consider whether MyPerformance, coupled with self-evaluation and mentoring could enhance implementation success and add value to the strategy process by contributing to targeted employee learning and development. This may require the Branch leadership team to first connect with a performance coach to understand how to use the MyPerformance system as a mentoring or coaching tool.

See also: *Sections 6.3.3 Empowering People* and *6.4 Breaking Down Cultural Barriers to Change*

## 6.6 Resources

### 6.6.1 Resources Needed

The list of resources needed in *Section 5.2.7 Resources* captures interviewees’ perspectives about some specific resources that enhance implementation and help keep plans alive; however, each project is unique and the Governance and Structure Branch will need to spend time determining what resources are needed for each project. (For more information, see *Section 6.6.2 Making Effective Use of Existing Resources*.) In addition, considering constraints, such as government-wide controls on hiring, may be a necessary step.

In a study on implementing clinical supervision, Lynch and Happell (2008) found that being able to prove that activities are effective and have had a positive impact helps organizations compete for new resources and improves the chances of successful implementation (p. 71). Similarly, Alperstein, Sainsbury and O’Grady (2008) suggest that using a strong evidence base to inform objectives and strategies may help organizations to compete and capitalize on funding opportunities (p. 634). These findings suggest that evaluating the outcomes of initial implementation steps may be a good practice to help the Governance and Structure Branch build a business case and secure the availability of resources needed. This practice, coupled with vetting developments through executives during the strategy formulation phase, may also have the added benefit of creating support and interest amongst ministry leaders.

To manage the strategy and implementation process, the Branch may need to consider hiring a strategic projects manager or reassigning a current employee with the right expertise. The interview findings and the experience of other branches suggest that having a dedicated person to manage the strategy cycle may hold an important key for maintaining momentum and keeping the plan alive. As noted in *Section 5.2.7 Resources*, this employee would need an appropriate amount of authority in order to be successful in his or her role. Communications tools may hold less importance within the Victoria office of the Governance and Structure Branch since the majority of employees work in close proximity to one another; however, building a reporting framework and a simple and accessible implementation plan is important to enable useful strategic conversations to occur (Richardson, 2012, p. 62). See *Section 6.1.3 Strategy Implementation* for further details.

### 6.6.2 Making Effective Use of Existing Resources

Interviewees indicated that the first step towards making effective use of existing resources is to understand how resources are currently being used. Survey respondents added that there are some fundamental problems within the Branch – workload, resources and classifications – that need to be addressed and which may serve as implementation barriers. Once the Branch leadership team has an understanding of these issues, the Branch may benefit from determining whether the work currently being done, and the ways that resources are currently being used, align with the Branch’s new strategic priorities. Interviewees suggested that it is important for executives to demonstrate visible and active commitment by moving work off the Branch’s plate to make the time for the new activities. This may be an important consideration for the Governance and Structure Branch, since the Branch’s small size may make it challenging for employees to find the time to implement certain projects or strategies. Moving in the strategic direction may also involve revising mandates, changing organizational branch/unit names, and reallocating resources. Reallocating resources, rather than stretching capacity, may be an important consideration for the Governance and Structure Branch, since survey respondents have indicated frustrations about expectations to provide the same levels of service with fewer resources. As noted in *Section 6.1.2 Strategy Formulation*, the Branch may benefit from identifying some key actions to tackle these problems and using an incremental approach to implementation.

Interviewees suggested that a critical resource for establishing credibility with stakeholders during implementation is expertise. For implementation task groups facing an expertise gap, Charles Noble suggests pooling resources from across the broader organization (1999, p. 21). Pulling in people with the right skills and knowledge can help the Governance and Structure Branch build its internal capacity over time. See *Section 6.2 Establishing and Implementation Structure* for an example of pulling in ad hoc team members. Another possibility is to set up contracts or partnerships to access the right expertise.

Survey respondents have indicated a desire to increase the use of the technological resources available. As mentioned in *Section 6.6.1 Resources Needed*, the Governance and Structure Branch will need to develop tools to enable strategic conversations to take place. Of particular importance will be implementation plans; a monitoring and reporting framework; and, a repository for recording environmental trends and document changes, and collecting evaluation data and feedback. Some of the technological resources available that are suitable for these purposes include Microsoft SharePoint, OneNote, Excel, and Project. When making decisions about tools to assist strategic planning and implementation, the Branch may benefit from determining whether the tool is designed to handle detail complexity or dynamic complexity. Peter Senge states that conventional tools are designed to handle detail complexity (Senge, 1990 in Richardson, 2012, p. 61).

At this time, developing a SharePoint site or a Microsoft Project plan for Branch use may require more time and training investment than is possible or realistic; whereas, Excel is geared towards data analysis and accounting purposes. One interviewee suggested that her branch has had great success using Microsoft OneNote. Of the tools available, only SharePoint and OneNote have the capabilities to handle dynamic complexity of implementation, e.g. OneNote enables users to send webpages and Microsoft Outlook emails to a OneNote folder, which could enable efficient environmental trend monitoring and help create a Branch-developed repository of documents for updating the Branch’s environmental scan during annual plan reviews. In addition, the intuitive

nature of OneNote due to its similarity to paper-based filing systems may make a OneNote system a better choice for the spectrum of employees within the Governance and Structure Branch. Establishing the use of OneNote will likely require support and promotion from both an executive champion and an employee champion.

### **6.7 Systems and Processes**

Systems and processes that are important for successful implementation and a living plan are described in *Section 6.1 The Living Strategy Cycle*. The systems and processes discussed are:

- Using Microsoft OneNote to manage corporate intelligence;
- Developing short-range implementation plans;
- Monitoring implementation progress;
- Reinforcing key messages during written and in-person communications;
- Reviewing the strategic plan;
- Evaluating the success of implementation efforts; and,
- Reporting outputs and outcomes.

## 7.0 CONCLUSIONS

Implementation is a subject that is complex and in some ways poorly understood. As many academics note, most managers know far more about developing plans than they do about implementing them, and often, what they do know is learnt in the school of hard knocks. What is clear from the research is that many factors influence the success of implementation and that when managers have an awareness of the key factors to consider, success follows.

Throughout the implementation process, changes in the system have the power to steer organizations and teams in new directions, in wrong directions, in the right direction... Having a clear picture of where you are headed and making constant adjustments is crucial. Recognizing strategy as an iterative and incremental cycle, rather than a linear process, helps managers to better understand how to move their teams in the right direction. Managers also need to understand how and when to make changes to the plan. When plans are inaccurate, incomplete or inconsistent with what actually happens in an organization, they are dead. Breathing life into a strategic plan requires managers and employees to dedicate time and attention to both the plan and its implementation, and is a constant task not a one-time, quarterly or monthly event.

In the face of constant changes, employees need a sense of clarity and order. They need to know what is expected of them, and what to do next, and when to do it by. Effective delegation and empowerment practices are critical and providing unequivocal and consistent messages about priorities is mandatory. In addition, employees need to be happy and satisfied in their work. To keep motivation and engagement high, managers need to understand what motivates their employees; they need to listen to their staff; and, they must ensure that their team has the resources, skills, competencies and knowledge they need to achieve the organization's goals. Failure to get employees what they need will surely result in an unimplemented plan.

Culture cannot be ignored. Organizations that do not consider culture are unlikely to succeed in breathing life into their plan, because culture is the heart that keeps the plan alive. An organization's systems and processes, the way work is accomplished, the types of people that get promoted, the accomplishments that get rewarded, and all the other facets of an organization's culture can either work with or against implementation efforts. Being sensitive to culture and the shadowside of change – fear and resistance – is a determining factor for success.



## 8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

### 8.1 Review the Plan

Reviewing the plan is an important practice for keeping the Governance and Structure Branch strategic plan alive. Reviewing the plan involves monitoring environmental and contextual changes and identifying the impact of new information and scope changes. To facilitate reviews, the Branch may benefit from using a dynamic tool, e.g. Microsoft OneNote or Microsoft SharePoint, to collect information and/or data about events and trends. In addition, the Branch might consider scheduling quarterly reviews to ensure that check-ins take place with the passage of time.

Minor changes could potentially be handled by the internal steering committee, with a notice being sent to Branch employees and other key stakeholders about the changes and the reasons for the changes. If major changes are anticipated, the Branch may want to arrange a planning session to facilitate the process of having new discussions and making new agreements and decisions. The internal steering committee may also benefit from outlining a change management process for handling major changes, to ensure readiness in the event of events that cause the plan to become obsolete. When making adjustments to the plan, the Branch may find it helpful to consider the C<sup>3</sup> criteria – correct, complete, and consistent.

### 8.2 Use the Plan to Guide Decision-Making and Operations

Using the plan to guide decision-making and operations is a key practice for breathing life into the Governance and Structure Branch's strategic plan. Operations are guided by selecting strategic projects and priorities that align with the Branch's vision. Checking whether the new Deputy Minister and Minister support the Branch's vision of the future may be an important step to ensure executive buy-in and support for the Branch's strategic work.

Another way to guide decision-making and operations is to consider using My Performance to facilitate mentoring. Using MyPerformance to enable coaching conversations may provide an opportunity for the Governance and Structure Branch leadership team to help employees identify objectives that tie into the Branch's strategic plan. When employees are empowered to set their own objectives and measures, engagement in the performance planning process may be enhanced, which may in turn promote the integration of the strategic plan within Branch operations. When making decisions about learning and development opportunities for employees, the Branch leadership team may also want to consider supporting those opportunities that empower employees with the skills and competencies that they will require in the future.

### 8.3 Build an Iterative and Incremental Strategy Process

Building an iterative and incremental strategy process involves developing implementation plans incrementally and conducting implementation evaluations. Incremental planning is a helpful practice for breathing life into strategic planning activities, as it helps prevent overplanning and help ensure that plans are tangible and realistic. To make use of incremental planning, the Governance and Structure Branch may benefit from creating a standardized implementation plan template. Potential categories in the template might include: tasks, the person responsible, due dates, checkpoints, risks, completion dates, and wins. In addition, project teams may find it helpful to adopt a planning range no longer than 90 days.

For evaluations, the Branch may find it helpful to reflect on the following three purposes for evaluating implementation: to facilitate organizational learning, to inform adjustments to implementation approaches, and to ensure impacts and successes are recorded and reported to clients and stakeholders. Implementation evaluations may help the Governance and Structure Branch keep their plan alive by creating opportunities for project teams to discuss ways to overcome barriers, and for the Branch to generate interest and buy-in amongst clients and stakeholders. To avoid burdening employees with data collection requirements that do not inform decision-making, learning, or marketing, the Governance and Structure Branch may want consider the importance of initiatives. Establishing tiers of importance may also be beneficial, as the tiers could be used to inform both evaluation and resource utilization decisions.

Marketing successes involves reporting on achievements and accomplishments; however, the Branch may find it helpful to consider how frequently to report back to clients and stakeholders, since reporting too frequently may decrease engagement. In addition, the Branch may benefit from highlighting accomplishments that relate to innovation, transformation and other aspects of adhocracy culture, as this practice may help promote new definitions of success within the Ministry.

#### **8.4 Take Steps to Enhance Employee and Client Engagement**

Employee and client engagement may help the Governance and Structure Branch achieve its goals and objectives. Employee motivation and engagement is improved when incentives reinforce the preferred culture. The Branch Culture Survey identified the following incentives, which may help motivate Branch employees: social gatherings, recognition of all contributing team members (not just the project lead), and learning and development opportunities. To enhance engagement during implementation, Branch leaders may find it helpful to connect these incentives to milestones and achievements.

Employee engagement is also increased through empowerment practices. When employees are empowered, they may be more motivated to take the steps necessary to achieve successful implementation. To empower employees, the Governance and Structure Branch leadership team may benefit from incorporating the following practices: connect implementation tasks to the bigger picture; work to eliminate roadblocks; take steps to obtain the necessary resources and training; increase information sharing; and, allow employees to influence plans.

Client engagement is also a key for successful implementation. One of the benefits of engaging clients might be to collect data or feedback to evaluate the effectiveness of steps taken during implementation. Another benefit could be to enhance buy-in by soliciting input into new strategies or adjustments to existing strategies. To engage clients on a routine basis, the Governance and Structure Branch may find it helpful to establish an external advisory committee; however, the Branch may also need to consider how an external advisory would or could fit with existing organizational structures and processes for engaging clients.

#### **8.5 Work with the Branch Culture**

Working with the Governance and Structure Branch's culture may help breathe life into the Branch's plan, as well as enhance accomplishments during implementation. The Branch leadership team may find it helpful to identify ways to create momentum and motivate change by connecting employee values to implementation tasks and accomplishments. One idea might be to review project teams' implementation plans and consider the possibility of setting up social

gatherings, skills development training, or an opportunity to recognize the team's work that coincides with the completion of a milestone.

The Branch leadership team may also find it helpful to consider the idea of prudent risk-taking, particularly when developing or refining strategies and identifying key actions for implementation. Since risk tolerance in the public sector has traditionally been low, the Branch leadership team might consider ways to role-model prudent risk-taking behaviours. In addition, the Branch may benefit from evaluating activities that involve risk-taking to create opportunities to learn from mistakes and develop the Branch's risk tolerance.

The Branch may also benefit from re-evaluating the Branch culture during and after implementation. Re-evaluating the culture may help the Branch determine whether implementation activities are moving the culture in a direction that aligns with the Branch's strategies. The results could also be used to reassess what actions to do more of, what to start and what to stop.

Finally, the Governance and Structure Branch may want to consider ways to promote new criteria of success among the Division and/or Ministry Executive team. Aligning the Ministry's criteria of success with the preferred Branch culture may enhance cultural congruence and may lead to better performance. One of the practices that the Branch may find helpful for redefining success is highlighting successes related to adhocracy and clan culture.



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## 10.0 APPENDICES

### 10.1 Governance and Structure Branch Strategic Plan 2013/14

Please note that the entire plan may only be viewed using an electronic copy of this report. To view the entire plan, please double click on the image below.



## Governance and Structure Branch Strategic Plan 2013/14

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

**Centre of knowledge and expertise:** practical, applied expertise; developing and sharing knowledge as our regular way of operating

**Focus on service delivery to clients<sup>1</sup>:** a human touch; direct relationships and effective partnerships

**Team approach, built on diversity:** breaking down silos; building a Branch community

**Open to change and innovation:** nimble; proactive and responsive; embracing and being supported through change

### VISION

We are knowledgeable, respectful, responsive and engaged public servants. We work together in a well-supported and innovative Branch. Our Branch advances effectively and collaboratively governed, well-structured, dynamic communities.

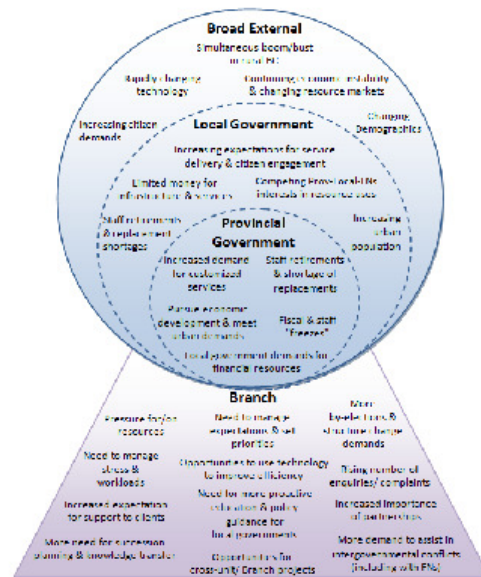
### BRANCH PURPOSE

To serve clients, manage issues, resolve problems and build relationships to enhance local and regional governance<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Includes: Local governments, special governance arrangements (e.g. Islands Trust, improvement districts); partner organizations (e.g. UBCM); citizens and taxpayers; Ministry executive; Minister/Cabinet; provincial ministries/agencies (e.g. MARR); LGD and Branch staff. We each have a different number/mix of clients.

<sup>2</sup> Services; administration and council/board; elections; stakeholder relations; citizen participation; corporate and regulatory powers; intergovernmental relations; structure; and, policies and procedures.

### ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN



## 10.2 The Competing Values Framework

### 10.2.1 Introduction

The Competing Values Framework (CVF) is a model of organizational and managerial effectiveness that was developed in the 1980s in response to growing recognition about the complexity of the world and the paradoxes of management. Over the past 25 years, the CVF has been used to “assess communication, leadership, organizational culture, core competencies, decision making, motivation, human resources practices, quality, employee selection, organizational capabilities, organizational change patterns, strategy, financial performance and many other [aspects of organizational and managerial effectiveness]” (Competing Values, 2009, p. 1).

The framework is based on the theory that “to be successful, organizations and their managers must move away from the traditional either/or thinking of the past and embrace the both/and thinking required for success in dynamic, complex environments” (Quinn, Faerman, Thompson, McGrath, & St. Clair, 2011, p. 329). Quinn et al. suggest that both/and thinking (or paradoxical thinking) involves examining basic beliefs and assumptions and seeing the value in areas that are not strengths (pp.2, 330).

The CVF model was created by bringing together four of the major management models of the twentieth century: the rational goal model; the internal process model; the human relations model; and, the open systems model. Each of these four management models is based on different underlying assumptions about organizational effectiveness and corresponds with an organizational culture archetype. The four organizational culture archetypes are: market culture; hierarchy culture; clan culture; and adhocracy culture.

The CVF assists managers, academics and students by uncovering the underlying assumptions and values of each of the management models and corresponding culture types, as well as the relationships that each of the types have to one another. For example, the human relations model is based on the belief that to be successful, organizations must focus on increasing the commitment, cohesion and morale of their employees, teams and customers, and must embrace communication and development practices. The human relations model corresponds with clan culture, which is exemplified by workplaces that feel like extended families, where people share a lot of themselves and where practices such as mentoring, loyalty, human resource development, teamwork, participation and consensus are highly valued (Cameron & Quinn, 2011, p. 75). Clan culture shares an internal focus with hierarchy culture and a belief in flexibility with adhocracy culture; however, clan culture and market culture are *competing*, in that the underlying beliefs driving the management styles are contradictory on the surface. Whereas in clan culture, focusing on people is seen as key to success, in market culture focusing on the bottom line is believed to motivate employees towards goal achievement and success.

The CVF approach suggests that a focus on one particular management model or approach is not enough in the dynamic and complex environments of today. To be successful, organizations must embrace a holistic approach by seeing the value of integrating the beliefs and approaches and cultural behaviours and values of each of the four management models (see Table 13). Managers must find ways to simultaneously focus on *both* people *and* goals and budgets.

**Table 13: The Four Management Models in the Competing Values Framework**

	Human Relations	Open Systems	Rational Goal	Internal Process
Theory of effectiveness	Human resource development and participation produce effectiveness	Innovativeness, vision, and new resources produce effectiveness	Aggressively competing and a customer focus produce effectiveness	Control and efficiency, combined with capable processes produce effectiveness
Criteria of effectiveness	Commitment, cohesion, morale, communication, and development	Innovative outputs, transformation, and agility	Productivity, and goal achievement	Stability, continuity, efficiency, timeliness, consistency, and uniformity
Managerial types	Facilitator, mentor, team builder	Innovator, entrepreneur, visionary	Hard driver, competitor, producer	Co-ordinator, monitor, organizer
Culture type	Clan	Adhocracy	Market	Hierarchy

### 10.2.2 Effects of Culture on Implementation Success

Organizational culture is a complex phenomenon, comprising observable or noticeable elements, such as the ways in which people interact or the clothing they wear, and unobservable or taken-for-granted elements, like beliefs about what qualifies as effective performance or values with respect to employee recognition (Cameron & Quinn, 2011, pp. 19-20). Edgar Schein, an influential researcher and author of *Organizational Culture and Leadership* describes organizational culture in the following way:

Culture is both a “here and now” dynamic phenomenon and a coercive background structure that influences us in multiple ways. Culture is constantly re-enacted and created by our interactions with others and shaped by our own behaviour. When we are influential in shaping the behaviour and values of others, we think of that as “leadership” and are creating the conditions for new culture formation. At the same time, culture implies stability and rigidity in the sense that how we are supposed to perceive, feel, and act in a given society, organization, or occupation has been taught to us by our various socialization experiences and becomes prescribed as a way to maintain the “social order”. The “rules” of the social order make it possible to predict social behaviour, get along with each other, and find meaning in what we do (2010, p. 3).

Culture – and the way it manifests in behaviours, leadership approaches, and the rules of the social order – is an important consideration for organizations implementing change initiatives. Change initiatives do not always imply major organizational change, but can take the form of projects and activities associated with strategic plans that change the way that employees work individually, in teams, or with clients. One of the primary reasons why it is important to consider culture is that the deeply held values and beliefs that influence behaviours, practices and leadership approaches can be silently working against the implementation of change initiatives if there is a poor fit or alignment between the two.

In cases where strategies, projects and activities are not aligned with an organization's culture, modifying the culture (or aspects of the culture) is vital for the successful implementation of those projects and activities (Cameron & Quinn, 2011, p. 13). The risk of not considering culture is that changes associated with projects and activities will be superficial and short-lived, as organizations will inevitably return to the stability of the status quo. During the implementation of change initiatives, the rules of the social order are challenged and leadership becomes a vital key in shaping and maintaining new cultural practices, behaviours and values. Cameron and Quinn warn that "failed attempts to change often produce cynicism, frustration, loss of trust, and deterioration in morale among organization members [and that] organizations may be worse off than if the change strategy had not been attempted in the first place" (2011, p. 13).

Conversely, if the values and beliefs of the change initiative are aligned with those of the dominant culture, then ensuring that all aspects of the culture are congruent and emphasize the same values and beliefs will help to support the implementation. Thus, identifying and questioning organizational culture is an important step prior to beginning the implementation of any initiatives.

### *10.2.3 The Four Major Culture Types*

As noted, there are four major culture types within the Competing Values Framework: clan culture; adhocracy culture; market culture; and, hierarchy culture. Each organization's culture is a unique mixture of the four types, but will tend to have a dominant orientation, or core value, that influences important aspects of the culture. The core values of each of the four major culture types are: collaborating; creating; competing; and, controlling. Each of the culture types is also associated with a number of other values which are based on these core values.

When it comes to implementing projects and activities and modifying organizational culture, Cameron and Quinn suggest that building or strengthening particular values requires a specific approach to managing employees which can be achieved using specific strategies (2011, pp. 53-60). In addition, ensuring a consistent approach to managing change can also help to reinforce the desired culture and support the implementation of the projects and activities. Table 14 presents the four culture types and the respective approaches to implementation.

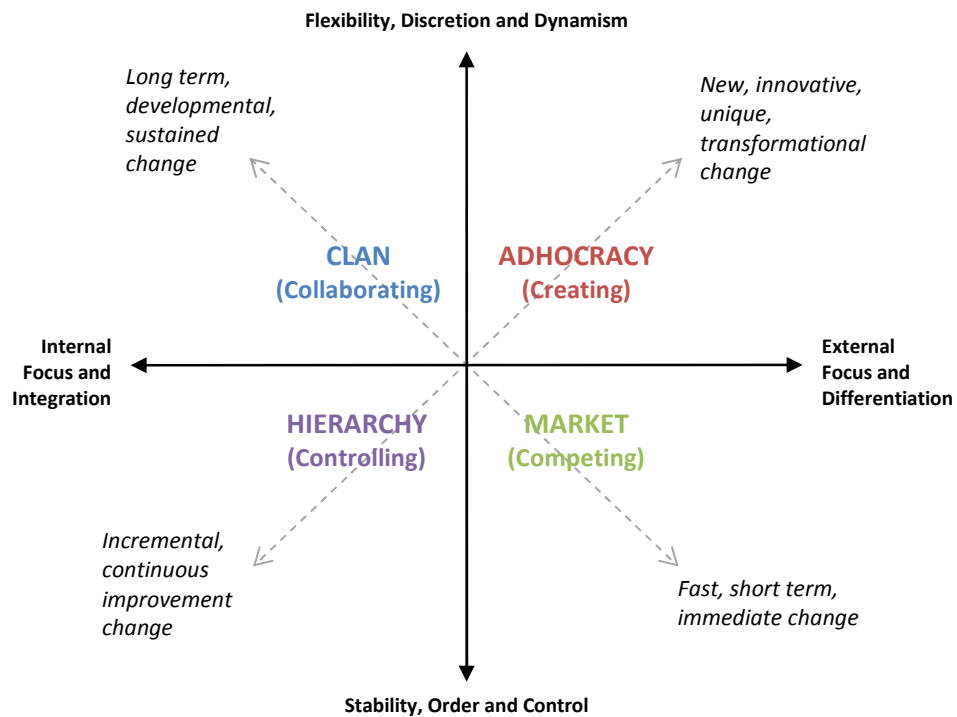
Organizations and their cultures tend to vary according to the emphasis placed on two key dimensions: flexibility versus stability, and internal versus external focus. These two dimensions are represented as vertical and horizontal axes in Figure 10, separating the four culture types from each other in the CVF. Culture types that are adjacent to one another have shared values, approaches or foci. For example, clan culture and hierarchy culture share an internal focus, but have different beliefs regarding the need for flexibility. Culture types that are diametrically opposed to one another are regarded as competing values, in that they share neither the internal/external focus nor the same approach to flexibility/control. Diametrically opposed cultures have different basic beliefs, assumptions and strengths that can be harnessed when using a competing values approach. For example, in clan cultures, flexibility and discretion are emphasized, and strategic initiatives tend to focus on the internal aspects of the organization, such as skills development and training or teambuilding. Whereas in market cultures, stability and control are valued, and strategic initiatives tend to have an external focus, such as delivering on contracts or meeting client needs.

**Table 14: The Four Culture Types and Approaches to Implementation**

	Clan	Adhocracy	Market	Hierarchy
Culture Description	A very friendly place to work where people share a lot of themselves. It is like an extended family.	A dynamic, entrepreneurial, and creative place to work. People stick their necks out and take risks.	A results oriented organization. The major concern is getting the job done. People are competitive and goal oriented.	A very formalized and structured place to work. Procedures govern what people do.
Core Value	Collaborating	Creating	Competing	Controlling
Associated Values	Commitment Communication Development Loyalty Tradition	Innovative outputs Transformation Agility	Market share Results Goal achievement Profitability	Efficiency Timeliness Consistency Uniformity
Culture Building Requirements	Requires a champion who responds to employee needs using competencies incl. morale assessment, management development and systems improvement	Requires a change agent who facilitates transformation using competencies incl. systems analysis, change management skills, consultation and facilitation	Requires a strategic business partner who focuses on aligning staff efforts/thinking with the organization's business strategy using competencies incl. strategic analysis and strategic leadership	Requires an administrative specialist who reengineers processes using competencies incl. process improvement, customer relations, and service needs assessments.
Strategic Emphases	Empowerment, team building, employee involvement, human resource development, open communication	Surprise and delight, creating new standards, anticipating needs, continuous improvement, finding creative solutions	Measuring client preferences, improving productivity, creating external partnerships, enhancing competitiveness, involving clients and suppliers	Error detection, measurement, process control, systematic problem solving, quality improvement tools
Change Management Approach	Participative: Values are uncovered and conflicts are worked through to create win-win solutions. Leaders engage others through communication and co-operation.	Transformational: Norms are challenged and the present system is questioned. Leaders model deeply held principles and self-sacrifice to ensure the common good.	Telling: Established facts are presented and logical path is pursued. Leaders provide education to overcome lack of understanding or superstition.	Forcing: Levers of power (e.g. authority, performance-based rewards, information) are identified and applied. Leaders encourage compliance.

Adapted from Cameron and Quinn (2011, pp. 53-60) and Quinn et al. (2011, pp. 316-320)

**Figure 10: The Dynamics of Change** (Competing Values, 2009, pp. 3-4; Cameron & Quinn, 2011, p. 39)



The implementation of culture building/change strategies will vary according to the rate of change (slow or fast) and the nature of the change (transformative or incremental). These variances are represented along the minor axes in Figure 10. For example, some changes have a more immediate timeframe and are important to help organizations compete for limited resources, such as measuring client preferences, whereas other changes involve developing the organization’s human resources to help the organization move in a specific direction over time, for instance conflict resolution skills development.

#### 10.2.4 Culture Change using the Competing Values Framework

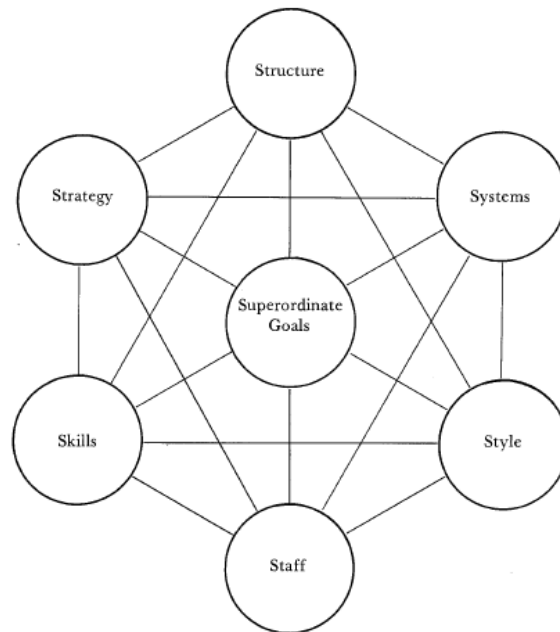
In the book, *Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture*, Cameron and Quinn introduce the Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI) and a comprehensive methodology for planning and implementing culture change. The OCAI is used to examine and assess key aspects of culture in organizations or in teams within organizations. Another key step in the culture change planning process involves identifying the specific actions that should be started, stopped, and what the organization or team should do more of with respect to each of the four culture types (Cameron & Quinn, 2011, pp. 105-111). Cameron and Quinn’s systematic approach and holistic perspective enables organizations to embrace the paradoxes inherent in management today.

### 10.3 The McKinsey 7-S Framework

The McKinsey 7-S Framework was developed by Robert Waterman, Tom Peters and Julien Phillips in the late 1970s to challenge the conventional belief that most – if not all – organizational problems could be solved through structural reorganizations (1980, p.14). This belief was based on Alfred Chandler’s dictum that *structure follows strategy*, which had led many managers and

executives to focus on the relationship between structure and strategy, without considering the many other elements of organizational realities. Waterman, Peters and Phillips suggested that an organization's ability to successfully change depends on more than just strategy and structure alone. They proposed instead that the ability to successfully change depends on the interaction of seven key elements: strategy, structure, systems, style, skills, staff, and superordinate goals (1980, p.17).

**Figure 11: The McKinsey 7-S Framework (Waterman and Peters, 1980, p.18)**



While the framework was originally developed to help managers and executives think more broadly about how to diagnose and solve organizational problems, it was soon recognized as being helpful for determining whether strategies could be successfully implemented (Waterman, 1982, p.60). Waterman proposed that,

To think comprehensively about a new strategy and the problems of carrying it out, a manager must think of his company as a unique culture and must think about the ability of the company to get anything really fundamental accomplished as a matter of moving the whole culture. . . . In this context, the 7-S Framework is saying that culture is a function of [at least] seven variables: strategy, structure, systems, style, staff, skills, and shared values. Now think of the 7-S diagram as a set of seven compasses. When the needles are aligned, the company is organized; when they are not, the company has yet to be really organized even if its structure looks right (1980, pp.69-70).

Thus, Waterman's comments can be taken to suggest that an organization's ability to successfully implement its strategic plan depends on the alignment of the seven key elements.

## 10.4 Branch Culture Survey

To view a high resolution copy of the Branch Culture Survey, please double click on the image below.

Branch Culture Assessment Survey Based on the Organizational Culture A...

<http://fluidsurveys.com/surveys/gsb/ocai/>

### Branch Culture Assessment Survey

**Based on the Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument, by Kim S. Cameron and Robert E. Quinn**

**How to complete the survey:**

The survey consists of an assessment of the Branch culture, followed by two questions where you are asked to share your opinion and ideas. The assessment is comprised of six sections, with each section addressing a specific aspect of organizational culture:

1. Dominant characteristics
2. Organizational leadership
3. Management of employees
4. Organization plus
5. Strategic emphases
6. Criteria of success

For each section, there are two columns - *Now* and *Preferred*:

- The *Now* column appears on the left and your responses indicate your assessment of the Governance and Structure Branch as it is currently, not as you would like it to be or you hope it could be.
- The *Preferred* column appears on the right and refers to the Governance and Structure Branch as you think it should be in five years, in order to be spectacularly successful, achieve its highest aspirations and become the benchmark for government.

Each section presents four statements - A, B, C, and D. For EACH column, please read all four statements and then divide 100 points among the four statements as you see fit. There is a calculator below each column to help you keep track of the total number of points you have assigned.

For the *Now* column, please give a higher number of points to statements that you think are the most accurate descriptions of the existing Governance and Structure Branch culture.

For the *Preferred* column, please give a higher number of points to statements that reflect your preferences for the future, i.e. how you would like the Governance and Structure Branch culture to be.

**TIP:** It may help you to think of the 100 points as a pie and each statement as a slice of the pie. The statements that you think are most similar to the Governance and Structure Branch as it is now, or that reflect your preferences for the future, would be bigger slices of the pie, and thus be assigned a higher number of points. You may assign zero scores to statements, if you think that the statement does not reflect any aspect of either the existing culture or your preferences for the future. Please remember to ensure that your total for each column equals 100.

Scroll over the words *Now* and *Preferred* below at any time to be reminded of the definitions.

Please note that the four statements for each section are exactly the same under both the *Now* and the *Preferred* columns.

Please also note that all references to the "Branch" below refer to the Governance and Structure Branch.

If you have any questions, please contact Melissa Meyer in person, by [email](mailto:melissa.meyer@gsb.gsu.edu) or by telephone (252-952-6596).

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#### 1. Dominant Characteristics

The dominant characteristics of the Branch culture

<b>Now</b>	<input type="text"/>	<b>Preferred</b>	<input type="text"/>
A. The Branch is a very personal place. It is like an extended family. People seem to share a lot of themselves.	<input type="text"/>	A. The Branch is a very personal place. It is like an extended family. People seem to share a lot of themselves.	<input type="text"/>
B. The Branch is a dynamic, highly responsive and adaptable place. People are willing to stick their necks out to deliver cutting-edge services.	<input type="text"/>	B. The Branch is a dynamic, highly responsive and adaptable place. People are willing to stick their necks out to deliver cutting-edge services.	<input type="text"/>
C. The Branch is very results oriented. A major concern is with getting the job done. People are competitive, decisive and achievement oriented.	<input type="text"/>	C. The Branch is very results oriented. A major concern is with getting the job done. People are competitive, decisive and achievement oriented.	<input type="text"/>
D. The Branch is a very controlled and structured place. Formal procedures, reviews and reports generally govern what people do.	<input type="text"/>	D. The Branch is a very controlled and structured place. Formal procedures, reviews and reports generally govern what people do.	<input type="text"/>
The values should add up to 100. Currently: 0		The values should add up to 100. Currently: 0	

#### 2. Organizational Leadership

The characteristic of leaders in the Branch

<b>Now</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Preferred</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A. The leadership in the Branch is generally considered to exemplify mentoring, facilitating, or nurturing. Leaders have a deep understanding of and concern for others, as well as themselves.	<input type="checkbox"/>	A. The leadership in the Branch is generally considered to exemplify mentoring, facilitating, or nurturing. Leaders have a deep understanding of and concern for others, as well as themselves.	<input type="checkbox"/>
B. The leadership in the Branch is generally considered to be visionary, innovative, or pioneering. Leaders are committed to facilitating adaptation and change.	<input type="checkbox"/>	B. The leadership in the Branch is generally considered to be visionary, innovative, or pioneering. Leaders are committed to facilitating adaptation and change.	<input type="checkbox"/>
C. The leadership in the Branch is generally considered to exemplify a strong work ethic and have a results-oriented focus. Leaders have a strong personal drive and are highly motivated.	<input type="checkbox"/>	C. The leadership in the Branch is generally considered to exemplify a strong work ethic and have a results-oriented focus. Leaders have a strong personal drive and are highly motivated.	<input type="checkbox"/>
D. The leadership in the Branch is generally considered to excel at coordinating and organizing projects to enable smooth-running efficiency. Leaders are recognized for their extensive understanding of the most minute details of the Local Government Division. The values should add up to 100. Currently: 0	<input type="checkbox"/>	D. The leadership in the Branch is generally considered to excel at coordinating and organizing projects to enable smooth-running efficiency. Leaders are recognized for their extensive understanding of the most minute details of the Local Government Division. The values should add up to 100. Currently: 0	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>3. Management of Employees</b>			
<i>How leaders relate to employees and how decisions are made in the Branch</i>			
<b>Now</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Preferred</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A. The management style in the Branch is characterized by team decision-making and effective communication. Consensus and participation are encouraged.	<input type="checkbox"/>	A. The management style in the Branch is characterized by team decision-making and effective communication. Consensus and participation are encouraged.	<input type="checkbox"/>
B. The management style in the Branch is characterized by negotiating win-win solutions. Innovation, freedom, and uniqueness are supported and promoted.	<input type="checkbox"/>	B. The management style in the Branch is characterized by negotiating win-win solutions. Innovation, freedom, and uniqueness are supported and promoted.	<input type="checkbox"/>
C. The management style in the Branch is characterized by setting goals, high demands, and achievement. Decisions are made by assessing their alignment with the overall direction of the Branch.	<input type="checkbox"/>	C. The management style in the Branch is characterized by setting goals, high demands, and achievement. Decisions are made by assessing their alignment with the overall direction of the Branch.	<input type="checkbox"/>
D. The management style in the Branch is characterized by decisions that promote conformity and stability. Secure employment is valued across the Branch. The values should add up to 100. Currently: 0	<input type="checkbox"/>	D. The management style in the Branch is characterized by decisions that promote conformity and stability. Secure employment is valued across the Branch. The values should add up to 100. Currently: 0	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>4. Organization Glue</b>			
<i>The values, beliefs and assumptions that unite people in the Branch</i>			
<b>Now</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Preferred</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A. The glue that holds the Branch together is loyalty and mutual trust. Commitment to this Branch runs high.	<input type="checkbox"/>	A. The glue that holds the Branch together is loyalty and mutual trust. Commitment to this Branch runs high.	<input type="checkbox"/>
B. The glue that holds the Branch together is commitment to innovation and development. There is an emphasis on being on the cutting edge.	<input type="checkbox"/>	B. The glue that holds the Branch together is commitment to innovation and development. There is an emphasis on being on the cutting edge.	<input type="checkbox"/>
C. The glue that holds the Branch together is the emphasis on achievement and goal accomplishment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	C. The glue that holds the Branch together is the emphasis on achievement and goal accomplishment.	<input type="checkbox"/>
D. The glue that holds the Branch together is formal rules and policies. Maintaining a smooth-running Branch is important. The values should add up to 100. Currently: 0	<input type="checkbox"/>	D. The glue that holds the Branch together is formal rules and policies. Maintaining a smooth-running Branch is important. The values should add up to 100. Currently: 0	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>5. Strategic Emphases</b>			
<i>What is emphasized in terms of the strategic direction of the Branch</i>			

<b>Now</b>	<b>Preferred</b>
A. The Branch emphasizes employee learning and development. High trust, openness, and participation persist. <input type="checkbox"/>	A. The Branch emphasizes employee learning and development. High trust, openness, and participation persist. <input type="checkbox"/>
B. The Branch emphasizes acquiring new resources and creating new challenges. Trying new things and prospecting for opportunities are valued. <input type="checkbox"/>	B. The Branch emphasizes acquiring new resources and creating new challenges. Trying new things and prospecting for opportunities are valued. <input type="checkbox"/>
C. The Branch emphasizes accomplishing its goals. Stretching capabilities and capacity to provide higher levels of service is a focus. <input type="checkbox"/>	C. The Branch emphasizes accomplishing its goals. Stretching capabilities and capacity to provide higher levels of service is a focus. <input type="checkbox"/>
D. The Branch emphasizes continuity, stability and efficiency. Finding ways to increase compliance and support smooth operations are important. <input type="checkbox"/>	D. The Branch emphasizes continuity, stability and efficiency. Finding ways to increase compliance and support smooth operations are important. <input type="checkbox"/>
The values should add up to 100. Currently: 0	
<b>6. Criteria of Success</b>	
<i>How the performance of the Branch is evaluated</i>	
<b>Now</b>	<b>Preferred</b>
A. The Branch defines success on the basis of empowering human resources, teamwork, employee commitment, and concern for people. <input type="checkbox"/>	A. The Branch defines success on the basis of empowering human resources, teamwork, employee commitment, and concern for people. <input type="checkbox"/>
B. The Branch defines success on the basis of providing cutting-edge services and creative solutions to problems. It is a leader and innovator. <input type="checkbox"/>	B. The Branch defines success on the basis of providing cutting-edge services and creative solutions to problems. It is a leader and innovator. <input type="checkbox"/>
C. The Branch defines success on the basis of being the best. Demonstrating productivity, accountability and good value for money is key. <input type="checkbox"/>	C. The Branch defines success on the basis of being the best. Demonstrating productivity, accountability and good value for money is key. <input type="checkbox"/>
D. The Branch defines success on the basis of efficiency and timeliness. Dependable service delivery, smooth operations, and eliminating waste and redundancy are critical. <input type="checkbox"/>	D. The Branch defines success on the basis of efficiency and timeliness. Dependable service delivery, smooth operations, and eliminating waste and redundancy are critical. <input type="checkbox"/>
The values should add up to 100. Currently: 0	
<b>7. What are the attributes or qualities of the Branch culture that you are...</b>	
<i>In your response, please identify the attributes or qualities that you are most/least proud of and reflect on an example of when this was illustrated in the Branch. Please feel free to reflect on the aspects of culture noted above or to discuss any other attributes or qualities that you think are relevant to the question.</i>	
<p>...MOST proud of?</p> <input style="width: 100%; height: 40px;" type="text"/>	
<p>...LEAST proud of?</p> <input style="width: 100%; height: 40px;" type="text"/>	
<b>8. What ideas do you have for ways that the Branch could build on those attributes or qualities that you are most proud of, in order to achieve its highest aspirations?</b>	
<input style="width: 100%; height: 40px;" type="text"/>	
<input type="button" value="Save Page"/> <input type="button" value="Submit"/>	

## 10.5 Interview Questions

The following questions were posed to the interview participants. Probe questions varied from interview to interview.

1. In your personal experience implementing strategic plans in the public sector, or reflecting on experiences you have observed, what are some of the ways that:
  - a. Strategy can either enhance or inhibit successful implementation?
  - b. Organizational structure can either enhance or inhibit successful implementation?
  - c. Leaders can either enhance or inhibit successful implementation?
  - d. Organizational culture can either enhance or inhibit successful implementation?
  - e. Employees can either enhance or inhibit successful implementation?
  - f. Resources can either enhance or inhibit successful implementation?
  - g. Systems and processes can either enhance or inhibit successful implementation?
2. In your personal experience implementing strategic plans in the public sector, what are practices that help keep strategic plans alive?