
For Information

REPORT TITLE: **Update on the 2020 Audit and Accountability Fund Reviews**

FROM: Sean Baird, Commissioner of Service Excellence and Innovation

OBJECTIVE

To provide an update on the results of the 2020 Audit and Accountability Fund reviews.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- The Province of Ontario’s Audit and Accountability Fund assists municipalities with identifying opportunities to advance service delivery efficiencies through a third-party independent reviewer.
 - With Council endorsement, the Region of Peel was successful in applying for Audit and Accountability funding to support the Advancing Digital Service Delivery Review, and the Development Planning and Engineering Service Review.
 - The Advancing Digital Service Delivery Review identified an estimated \$6 million in cost avoidance and \$0.8 million in cost savings achievable over a five-year period.
 - The Development Planning and Engineering Service Review identified an estimated \$1.3 million to \$1.8 million in cost avoidance achievable over a five-year period.
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DISCUSSION

1. Background

In November 2020, the Province of Ontario, through the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, opened a second intake of proposals for the Audit and Accountability Fund (AAF) which assist municipalities in finding service delivery efficiencies through a third-party independent reviewer. Projects selected for the AAF align with the Province’s three priority areas that include:

- Digital modernization
- Service integration
- Streamlining development approvals

With Council endorsement (Resolution 2020-1069 and Resolution 2021-332), the Region was successful in applying for the AAF to support the Advancing Digital Service Delivery Review, and the Development Planning and Engineering Service Review.

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2. Findings

a) Advancing Digital Service Delivery Review

The objective of this review was to analyze and develop a roadmap of services prioritized for digital modernization. This work advances both the Region's Digital Strategy and Service Experience Strategy, as it will modernize service delivery through digital services that meet users' needs in a simple and cost-effective way.

The projected outcomes were improved access to Regional services, greater service continuity, better client experience, improved business processes and cost avoidance through digitalization of services.

The review found that less than one-third of Regional services are available digitally. Most services require the resident to make a phone call, send an email, fill out a PDF, or visit in person. On the back end of these services, Regional staff must manually enter information, often into multiple systems, copy data between tools, and perform multiple follow-up tasks to complete the service process.

Opportunities for improvements were made through the creation of a Digital Services Roadmap which prioritized 17 initiatives into four workstreams. Each initiative will deliver digital service improvements, efficiencies and customer experience benefits. An estimated \$6M in cost avoidance and \$0.8M in cost savings is achievable over a five-year period.

b) Development Planning and Engineering Service Review

The objective of this review was to analyze the Region's development planning, engineering and site servicing application and approval processes in partnership with the City of Brampton, City of Mississauga and Town of Caledon, and in consultation with the development community. This work seeks to enhance service delivery and value to customers by focusing on streamlining and modernizing opportunities to improve process and cost efficiencies.

The projected outcomes were improved client and stakeholder experience, increased process efficiencies ahead of technology implementation, enhanced coordination with local municipal partners, improved quality of submitted applications, and a well-designed performance measurement system.

The review found that key areas of strength already exist within the current state including the Region's desire for collaboration with its local municipal partners, high standards of customer service, and a commitment to results-based management and employing supportive technology tools to measure and monitor key performance indicators. One of the main gaps identified by the consulting team is the insufficient resources needed to support the Region's development review functions.

Additional opportunities for improvements were made through 14 recommendations that will result in an estimated \$1.3M to \$1.8M in cost avoidance and optimization of staff's fee-recoverable time achievable over a five-year period. Other benefits include improved quality of development application submissions, and improved client and staff satisfaction.

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3. Proposed Direction

The consultant's final reports will be submitted to the Province of Ontario and published on the Region of Peel's website¹ by October 15, 2021 as per AAF requirements.

The Region of Peel is committed to pursuing these recommendations as part of its Continuous Improvement Program.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Implementation of the recommendations made within the two reviews will result in an estimated \$7.3M to \$7.8M in cost avoidance and \$0.8M in cost savings achievable over a five-year period.

For the Advancing Digital Service Delivery Review, a request for Council's consideration will be made through the proposed 2022 capital budget for funds to implement the roadmap starting next year.

For the Development Planning and Engineering Service Review, the implementation of the roadmap will not require any additional capital costs aside from the previously budgeted continuous improvement initiatives, such as technology solutions that will automate application tracking, circulation and plan reviews.

CONCLUSION

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are making it more important than ever for the Region of Peel to deliver modern, efficient services that are financially sustainable and continue to meet the needs of the community. The Region's participation in the AAF reviews demonstrates its continued commitment to improving and modernizing service delivery and ensuring that taxpayers' dollars are used efficiently.

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¹ <https://peelregion.ca/regional-government/accountability/#aff>