

CASE STUDY

CITY OF THUNDER BAY – DIGITAL STRATEGY



A City of Thunder Bay program and service review in 2019 identified the importance of technology to the effectiveness of a municipality. The city was not taking full advantage of technology to deliver its services. This necessitated creating a corporate digital strategy.

“We are looking to capitalize on technology to create efficiencies while offering more digital services to the public. The digital strategy maps our current technology use, identify future needs and priorities, and address what it will take to become a more digital city.” – Linda Evans, General Manager, Corporate Services and Long-term Care and City Treasurer.

Work started with the city in spring 2021 to develop its first digital strategy. Perry Group’s digital maturity assessment of level 2 out of 5—confirmed the program and service review findings, characterizing the city as an early experimenter with some digital resister characteristics.

Already the strategy is having a major impact. Budgets for 2022 include a fund for digital strategy implementation. Work is already underway on many initiatives.

“We engaged Perry Group to assist with the development of our corporate digital strategy. Perry Group’s extensive expertise in IT, municipal service delivery & digital service transformation was evident throughout the process. The project methodology used was objective, comprehensive and collaborative. The result, a comprehensive corporate digital strategy which provides the framework and plan to achieve the goal of delivering end-to-end digital services to the citizens of Thunder Bay.” – Jack Avella, Director, Corporate IT, City of Thunder Bay

DIGITAL MATURITY ASSESSMENT

Located on the north shore of Lake Superior, with a population of 109,140, Thunder Bay is the most populous municipality in northwestern Ontario. The City of Thunder Bay is a single-tier municipality responsible for emergency services, planning and development, water and utilities, waste management, social and community services, transit and transportation. It employs over 2,500 people.

In developing the strategy, Perry Group met with the Council, community members, partners and representatives from every business unit to understand the situation and their technology and digital needs for the future. Demand for digital services and supporting technology was off-the-charts, with over 300 ideas and opportunities identified through this sweep.

Like many other organizations, IT was regarded as an operational rather than a strategic function. As such, investing in technology as an engine of transformation or an enabler of productivity gains was secondary to IT cost containment. The IT team had the same staff in 2021 as it did in 2001. Perry Group shared findings with leadership, management, and staff. This socialized the issues, challenges and built the case for change.

STRATEGIC VISION

Perry Group worked with leadership in setting the future strategy through developing a vision.

A collaborative approach to delivering customer centred, digitally powered city services.

A new set of digital strategy goals focused on:

- improving customer service—through additional or revamped online service offerings that allow citizens to do business with the city;
- enhancing operational efficiency—with an emphasis on digitization, automation, reduced duplication and improved productivity; and
- providing city management and staff a playbook for executing digital change in the right way.

Five work streams support the strategy:

1. **digital workplace**—connecting all staff using modern technology to make staff working lives simpler and easier;
2. **digitized business processes**—replacing paper-based, manual processes with automated, digital, real-time workflow-based processes;
3. **digital infrastructure**—connectivity, capabilities and cybersecurity to support the city and its community;
4. **GIS data & analytics**—managing data well and using it to drive efficiencies and monitor the effects of policy; and
5. **digital services**—providing great, self-service digital experiences to customers over visits or calls to City Hall.

The right conditions are critical for success. This means major changes around the technology and governance operating model; with stronger leadership around technology, clearer roles and responsibilities, improved governance, and expanded funding dedicated to technology-driven change.

The new digital strategy necessitates stronger business ownership of making services available digitally. The strategy positions leaders and service owners to lead digital change and transformation: championing more collaborative working. It lays out an approach to change management and building a culture that is digital ready; that's comfortable with digital, open to change, and prepared to make it happen. Finally, it describes where the city needs new capacity to deliver more effectively, reliably, and speedily.

RETURN ON DIGITAL STRATEGY INVESTMENTS

The strategy requires investment in technology-enabled change. Through a range of examples, Perry Group provided the potential return on investment that the city can expect. As a result, the strategy was endorsed by the City's Executive Management Team and approved by City Council in December 2021.

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Learn more about Thunder Bay by visiting www.gotothunderbay.ca and www.thunderbay.ca.

ABOUT PERRY GROUP CONSULTING

Perry Group Consulting is a technology management consulting firm here to help you build a better organization.

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