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DRAFT REPORT

City of Salem

2024 ENTERPRISE LEADERSHIP PERFORMANCE AUDIT

January 14, 2025

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Table of Contents

I. Executive Summary	1
A. Background, Scope, and Methodology	1
B. Statement of Compliance with GAGAS	1
C. Summary of Findings and Recommendations	2
II. Introduction	4
A. Background, Scope, and Methodology	4
B. Commendations	5
III. Findings and Recommendations	6
A. Roles, Responsibilities, and Organization	6
B. Communication and Prioritization	18
C. Mayoral and Council Support	25
Appendix A: Comparing Deputy City Manager and Department Director Roles	30
Appendix B: Peer Benchmarking Matrix	31
Appendix C: City Initiatives Inventory	36



I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. BACKGROUND, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

The City of Salem's (the City) City Manager's Office (CMO) is led by the City Manager and provides organization-wide administration, facilitates public communication and Council and Mayoral support, and coordinates City-wide special projects. In fiscal year (FY) 2025, the CMO has a budget of \$1,532,170 and six full-time equivalent (FTE) employees. As part of the CMO's role in providing organization-wide administration, the City Manager oversees department directors.

In recent years, the composition of the City's enterprise leadership team has shifted in response to resourcing constraints. The CMO established a second Deputy City Manager over Community Services (DCM-CS) by adapting a department leadership role vacancy to support the City Manager and the other Deputy City Manager over Enterprise Services (DCM-ES). The City Manager also oversees five additional department directors and coordinates with the City Attorney to provide legal advice and respond to public records requests.

The purpose of this engagement is to examine the leadership practices of the City and identify strategies for improving role clarity and decision-making processes to support an effective leadership structure.

Our audit objectives are to:

- Evaluate the roles, responsibilities, and reporting structure of City leadership, including the City Manager, Deputy City Managers, and Department Directors
- Assess decision-making processes used by City leadership to identify opportunities for improvement
- Review communication and prioritization frameworks among leadership to identify barriers to effective collaboration
- Assess Mayoral and Council support

Moss Adams conducted this engagement between October 2024 and January 2025. During fieldwork, Moss Adams conducted document analysis, staff interviews, interviews with current and incoming elected officials, and peer benchmarking. Based on the information gained during fieldwork, Moss Adams communicated the opportunities for improvement we identified through discussions with the City. Additionally, we highlighted opportunities for improvement in this report.

B. STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE WITH GAGAS

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards (GAGAS). GAGAS requires that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.



C. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Our findings and recommendations are summarized below, grouped into three areas: (1) Roles, Responsibilities, and Organization; (2) Communication and Prioritization; and (3) Mayoral and Council Support. Findings and recommendations are detailed in further depth in [Section III](#).

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS		
Roles, Responsibilities, and Organization		
1.	Finding	In comparison to peer cities, Salem has the lowest CMO FTEs per 10,000 residents at 0.34, in comparison to the peer average of 1.2. This indicates that the CMO is severely understaffed, which necessitates tactical management of functions and limits leadership capacity.
	Recommendation	The City should reevaluate its organizational structure to reduce the span of control for City leaders, delegate tasks to appropriate personnel, balance workload distribution, and renew focus on strategic oversight of functions.
2.	Finding	The CMO has two Executive Assistants whose workloads are unevenly and ineffectively distributed, resulting in potential inefficiencies.
	Recommendation	Implement a balanced distribution of administrative tasks by enabling one Executive Assistant to perform the tasks included on the job description and shifting the other Executive Assistant role to focus on supporting all elected officials, boards and commissions, and constituent management.
3.	Finding	The City has two high-level strategic team members who individually manage multiple high-profile responsibilities with limited resources, which limits their efficacy and creates operational continuity risks.
	Recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Reorganize the Homelessness Liaison position within the CMO, since much of this position's work relates to CMO initiatives. B. Review and reallocate job responsibilities for the Homelessness Liaison and CSO to right-size workloads and reduce business continuity risks.
4.	Finding	The CMO lacks specified communication personnel, which prevents the City from achieving a centralized communication function that would align external communications across City departments.
	Recommendation	<p>To enhance collaboration and alignment of external communications across all City departments, the City should explore opportunities to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Hire dedicated communication personnel within the CMO to execute communications strategies. B. Rebalance job responsibilities across current staff to ensure accountability for City-wide communication.



FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS		
Communication and Prioritization		
5.	Finding	ELT meeting practices, including agenda setting, meeting cadence, audience selection, engagement, and follow-up mechanisms result in inefficiencies.
	Recommendation	The City should establish clear guidelines for ELT meeting practices, including standardized agenda-setting processes, defined meeting cadences, appropriate audience selection, structured engagement techniques, and consistent follow-up mechanisms.
6.	Finding	Decisions are made using unclear processes and are inconsistently communicated to impacted personnel.
	Recommendation	<p>A. Develop a decision-making framework that evaluates alignment with the strategic plan, community impact, cost, and staff availability to provide additional transparency into the decision-making process.</p> <p>B. Define who is responsible, accountable, consulted, and informed about different decision types and ensure appropriate personnel are notified of projects and initiatives that impact their work.</p>
7.	Finding	The City does not have an effective way to track initiatives and other high-priority work, the parties responsible for executing them, and their progress.
	Recommendation	Implement a centralized project management system that tracks high-priority initiatives, assigns responsible parties, and monitors progress and incurred costs in real time.
Mayoral and Council Support		
8.	Finding	Due to inconsistent pre-meeting briefings, short turnaround times on Council packets, and insufficient use of committees, Council meetings can be long and focus on details rather than strategic, policy-oriented discussions.
	Recommendation	The City should work to enhance Council meeting processes such as providing Council meeting packets earlier, offering briefings to ensure Council members are well-prepared, and revitalizing the use of committees to facilitate thorough discussion and decision-making.
9.	Finding	The City does not have an effective system for managing constituent requests, making it difficult to uphold the Council policy requirement that any task requiring one hour or more staff time be approved by the full Council.
	Recommendation	The City should implement a centralized request management system that streamlines the process for tracking, prioritizing, and responding to constituent inquiries.



II. INTRODUCTION

A. BACKGROUND, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

The City of Salem's (the City) City Manager's Office (CMO) is led by the City Manager. The CMO provides organization-wide administration; facilitates public communication; provides Council and Mayoral support; and coordinates Citywide special projects. In fiscal year (FY) 2025, the CMO has a budget of \$1,532,170 and six FTE. During FY 2024, the City spent \$368,385 in Mayor and Council Administration and \$1,232,082 in the CMO, 92% of which related to personnel costs.

In recent years, the composition of the City's enterprise leadership team has shifted. The CMO established a second Deputy City Manager over Community Services (DCM-CS) by repurposing a department leadership role vacancy to support the City Manager and the other Deputy City Manager over Enterprise Services (DCM-ES). The City Manager also oversees five department directors and coordinates with the City Attorney to provide legal advice.

The City continues to undergo organizational structural changes in pursuit of operational efficiency and consistent high-quality service delivery to its community. To support this work, the City Council's Finance Committee asked Moss Adams to conduct a performance audit focused on City leadership practices. This performance audit addresses the following objectives:

- Evaluate the roles, responsibilities, and reporting structure of City leadership, including the City Manager, Deputy City Managers, and Department Directors
- Assess decision-making processes used by City leadership to identify opportunities for improvement
- Review communication and prioritization frameworks among leadership to identify barriers to effective collaboration
- Assess Mayoral and Council support

Moss Adams conducted this performance audit between October 2024 and January 2025. The project consisted of four major phases:

1. **Start up and management:** Project initiation consisted of collaborative project planning and project management with the City, including the development of the scope of work and the final work plan.
2. **Fieldwork:** Fieldwork included interviews, document review, best practice research, and peer benchmarking.
 - *Interviews* – We conducted interviews with key staff and stakeholders, including City employees, the mayor, and presiding and incoming City Council members to gain an understanding of the current resourcing, leadership, communication, and relevant practices in Salem.
 - *Document Review* – We reviewed documents, such as policies, procedures, community reports, organization charts, job descriptions, enterprise leadership team (ELT) meeting minutes, and other related documentation.
 - *Best Practice Research* – We combined our experience in city government with comprehensive best practices research to identify effective strategies to enhance leadership practices.



- *Peer Benchmarking* – We conducted outreach to leaders in city management functions from peer cities to gather information on CMO staffing and organizational structure, and to gather input on challenges faced and lessons learned in effective city leadership. The cities of Beaverton, Bend, Eugene, Gresham, Hillsboro, and Medford participated in these benchmarking efforts. A complete summary of peer results is included in Appendix B.
- 3. **Analysis:** Based on the information obtained during fieldwork, we identified opportunities for improvement and actionable recommendations.
- 4. **Reporting:** We communicated the results of our analysis with findings and recommendations, presented first in a draft report. Before issuing the final report, the draft was reviewed with City leadership to confirm the practicality and relevance of recommendations.

B. COMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this section is to highlight the hard work and continued efforts of City staff in delivering efficient, high-quality service to its community, elected officials, and fellow employees. In addition to the opportunities for improvement noted throughout this report, these are important areas of strength to note:

- **Mission-Driven and Invested Staff:** Throughout our engagement with the City, staff were responsive, engaged in discussions, and demonstrated their commitment to improving City operations and service delivery.
- **Collaboration:** During our discussions, many interviewees recognized the contributions of their colleagues and credited the City's progress to their collective efforts toward a better future. A collaborative mindset is essential for any organization.
- **Tenured Employees:** The City has several leaders that have extensive careers with the City. These individuals often absorb tasks that surface as the City evolves, and as a result, hold a tremendous amount of institutional knowledge that enables them to lead and execute complex City-wide tasks, projects, and initiatives. These individuals have strong relationships, which help propel work forward despite resourcing challenges.
- **Council Member Onboarding:** The incoming Council members we interviewed characterized the City's onboarding process as collaborative and helpful. We received reports that the onboarding process included various in-person and virtual tools to assist incoming council members with their transitions. This is a strong practice that enables new Council members to quickly acclimate to their role.



III. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND ORGANIZATION

Leadership Capacity

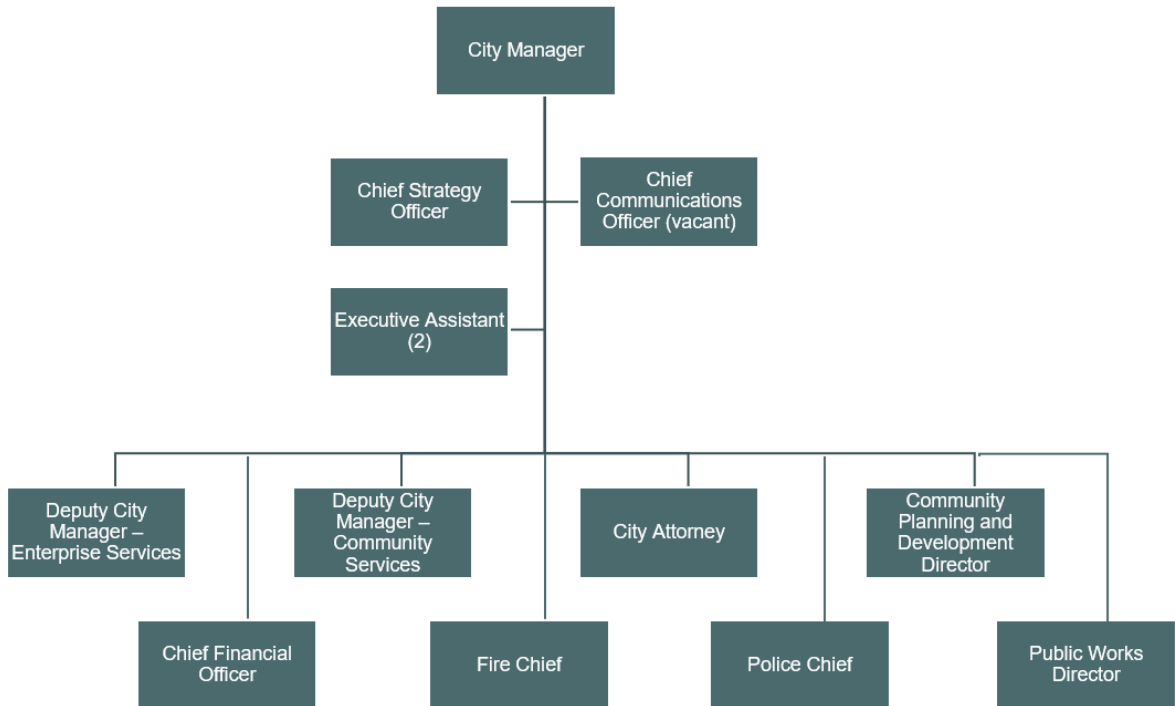
1.	Finding	In comparison to peer cities, Salem has the lowest CMO FTEs per 10,000 residents at 0.34, in comparison to the peer average of 1.2. This indicates that the CMO is severely understaffed, which necessitates tactical management of functions and limits leadership capacity.
	Recommendation	The City should reevaluate its organizational structure to reduce the span of control for City leaders, delegate tasks to appropriate personnel, balance workload distribution, and renew focus on strategic oversight of functions.

Peer cities have between four and 29.5 FTE in their CMO in comparison to six FTE at the City of Salem. Although Salem has the second highest population among peers, it has the second lowest total number of CMO employees. Salem also has the lowest CMO FTE per 10,000 residents at 0.34, whereas the peer average is 1.2 CMO FTE per 10,000 residents. To achieve the peer average, the City of Salem would need a total of 20 FTE in the CMO. These comparisons indicate that the CMO is severely understaffed for an organization of the City’s size, complexity, and population served.

Metrics	City of Salem	Beaverton	Bend	Eugene	Hillsboro	Gresham	Medford
Population	177,928	101,165	106,184	178,056	107,976	109,423	90,887
CMO FTE	6	4	17	17	29.5	11 FTE, 4 LTE	4
CMO FTE per 10,000 Residents	0.34	0.40	1.41	0.95	2.73	1.37	0.44

City Manager Capacity

As of December 2024, the City Manager has 12 direct reports including two executive assistants, two Deputy City Managers, the Chief Strategy Officer (CSO), the City Attorney, the Public Works Department Director, the Community Planning and Development Department Director, the Chief Financial Officer, the Fire Chief, and the Police Chief. The Chief Communications Officer would also report directly to the City Manager, but that position is currently vacant. This is reflected in the chart below.



Twelve direct reports for an executive leader is excessive compared to the four to eight typically recommended by best practices. A range of four to eight direct reports allows for effective management and communication while ensuring that the executive can provide adequate support and oversight to each employee. A smaller span of control also helps promote improved delegation, as the executive is more aware of employee workloads, resource needs, and interrelated projects or initiatives. This, in turn, allows the executive to spend time on strategic enterprise-wide tasks.

According to the Society of Human Resources Management (SHRM), a wide span of control refers to a larger number of direct reports supervised by one manager, creating a "flat" organization.¹ This approach increases the number of interactions between the executive and their direct reports, which could cause executives to become overwhelmed. While a wide span of control can allow for more autonomy, for complex organizations such as the City, this increased flexibility may lead to organizational siloing, heightened emphasis on department performance and needs, and less effective collaboration.

All six peer cities understood the difficulties of managing a City Manager's workload and the importance of delegating work to the appropriate team. Each peer had at least one Deputy or Assistant City Manager to help the City Manager in overseeing city leadership and operations. Based on organizational charts, the City Manager at peer cities had a span of control ranging from 7.75 to 11 FTEs and an average of nine FTEs. Similar to the City of Salem, none of the peer City Managers had a formalized process for delegating work. Those we spoke to at peer cities described their approach to delegation as a work-in-process, namely due to recent restructuring, and a reliance on Deputy and Assistant City Managers and other city leaders to proactively help manage the City Manager's

¹ <https://www.shrm.org/topics-tools/tools/hr-answers/factors-determine-how-many-direct-reports-manager>



workload. Typically, city leaders were expected to take ownership over the key functional areas they oversee, and also occasionally handle additional tasks that arise during interactions with the City Manager.

It is important for the City Manager to be seen as a strategic-level leader, both in perception and in practice, to foster effective governance and public trust. Effective governance also requires visible, thoughtful, and equitable delegation of work to the appropriate level within the City to balance workloads and enable employee development.

Deputy City Managers' Capacity

The CMO has two Deputy City Managers whose work portfolios are significantly different. The Deputy City Manager of Enterprise Services (DCM-ES) carries many responsibilities that encompass complex technical work, such as union negotiations, employee engagement, investigations, hostile work environment claims, and they oversee the Customer Service Center, Fleet, Facilities, IT, Risk, and HR functions. This leads to elevated workloads for this position, especially considering the lack of director-level roles over the functions the DCM-ES oversees. These conditions create an operational continuity risk if the current DCM-ES were to leave the City.

Despite overseeing several critical departments, the DCM-ES does not have director-level roles that oversee HR or IT. Instead, these functions are led by three Assistant Human Resources Directors and IT department members who report to the DCM-ES. This structure requires the DCM-ES to be more involved in operational matters and managing risks, on top of their Deputy City Manager work in liaising between City functions and moving City initiatives forward. This reality leads the DCM-ES to act in the capacity of director for these functional areas while also pursuing City-wide initiatives within the CMO. While peers and elected officials at Salem appreciate the dedication and commitment of the DCM-ES to fulfill their duties, the regular excess working hours required to do so is not sustainable. The City is reportedly exploring the opportunity to delegate HR Director duties to an Assistant HR Director. This position's classification should be reviewed to ensure appropriate alignment with the duties required of an HR Director to help alleviate the DCM-ES's workload. In addition to this effort, we recommend that the City revitalize efforts to recruit an IT Director, which was recently stopped due to resource constraints. It is uncommon in a city of Salem's size to lack leadership over critical internal services such as HR and IT. Although resource constraints have necessitated these reductions, they are detrimental to leadership capacity and operations across the City.

On the other hand, the DCM-CS manages a series of departments and programs, including the Library, Parks and Recreation, Center 50+, Neighborhood Services, Cultural Tourism, and the Homelessness Liaison. The DCM-CS operates at a level that other ELT members characterize as directorial and appears to have a smaller workload than their counterpart. This perception is reasonable when considering the work portfolio of the DCM-CS. Out of the areas overseen by the DCM-CS, only the Library has a director-level role leading its operations. As a result, the remainder of the DCM-CS's daily interactions and responsibilities tend to fall into a director-level role. We summarized key differences between typical Deputy City Manager and Department Director roles in [Appendix A](#). In light of resource constraints, the City should reevaluate the DCM-CS position, either increasing the working duties of the position to reach the Deputy City Manager level or reclassifying the position as a director-level role.



Legislation and Government Relations

The CMO is often the center of intergovernmental relations because the function determines how the City will approach interacting with key stakeholders and partner organizations. However, the City doesn't have a dedicated policy position, so the CSO fulfills this role and staffs the City Council legislative committee alongside other assigned duties. Because intergovernmental relationship management is intertwined with many aspects such as large City initiatives, strategic planning, and communications, and typically needs input from the City Attorney and Council members, this approach to managing government relations adds to the excessive working portfolio of the CSO.

Two of six peer cities (Bend and Gresham) have policy analysts and management analysts to support their government relations function. Eugene is currently transitioning away from having many policy teams with heavy executive staff presence, to a more structured approach with dedicated team members and meeting schedules to minimize the amount of time all executive leaders need to be in attendance.

Department Leadership

In an effort to alleviate City resource constraints, the City repurposed existing personnel to structure and staff leadership roles. However, this shift has resulted in ongoing challenges in managing workload and leadership capacity, despite perceptions that City leadership is overstaffed. While it may seem that there are more leaders within the City, their workloads and spans of control have merely shifted rather than reduced. As a result, City leaders are often in the weeds on operations and have a limited ability to operate more strategically. This structure also encourages the practice of current leaders taking on additional responsibilities. Inflating working portfolios and expectations increases the risk of burnout, makes it difficult to meet existing workload requirements, and poses succession planning risks, since replacements would require a highly specific skillset and a high degree of institutional knowledge to be successful in their role.

Several leaders mentioned that they have gaps in middle management over important areas and are working to build effective teams to enable delegation. Typically, department directors rely on several managers who understand department operations to help with communication and ensure tasks are completed appropriately. However, due to limited City resources and capacity issues, many leaders are still figuring out how to manage their priorities and delegate work to the appropriate level while supporting work-life balance on their teams. The presence of highly skilled middle management and support staff can significantly enhance the capacity of directors to fulfill their responsibilities.

Job Descriptions

Clear roles, responsibilities, and workplace expectations are important to ensure City staff are effective and able to contribute in a collaborative environment. City leadership positions are largely defined by the functions they oversee and do not have up-to-date job descriptions to reflect strategic expectations. The City does not appear to have job descriptions for the CSO, Homelessness Liaison and Human Rights and Federal Compliance Manager ("Homelessness Liaison"), City Manager, Chief Financial Officer, or Public Works Director. Additionally, the job descriptions for the City Attorney and Police Chief were blank. Without adequate and up-to-date job descriptions, City leaders may be unclear about their job expectations and may act outside of their intended capacity. Both of these scenarios can increase organizational complexity and make clear and effective collaboration more difficult.

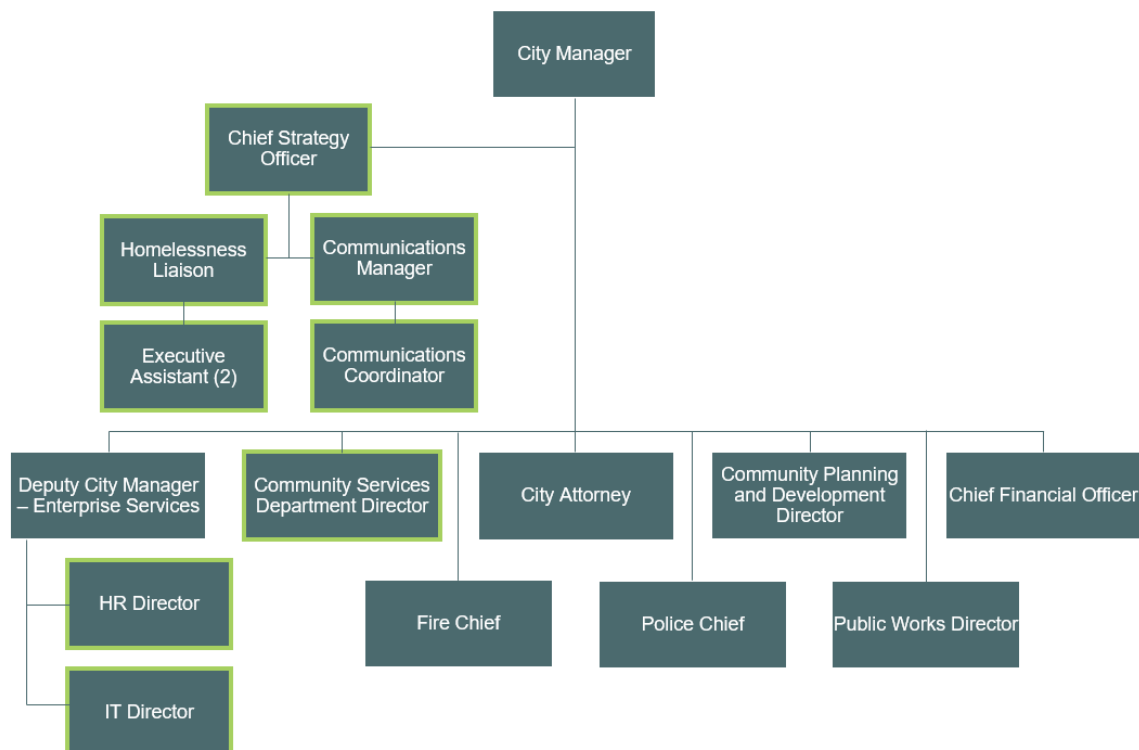


Recommendation

The City should comprehensively reevaluate its organizational structure with a focus on span of control for City leaders and key functions such as intergovernmental relations. Specifically, the City should consider making the following adjustments:

- Reclassify the DCM-CS as a Director of Community Services role given the scope of work within this position's portfolio. Alternatively, this position could be eliminated and existing functions redistributed among other departments, similar to the prior organizational structure of these teams, if required due to limited resources.
- Move the Homelessness Liaison into the CMO, reporting to the CSO (see Recommendation #3 for additional detail).
- Reassign the executive assistants to report to the Homelessness Liaison to reduce City Manager span of control (see Recommendation #2 for additional detail).
- Reestablish HR Director and IT Director positions to enable appropriate workload for the DCM-ES.
- Incorporate Communications staffing (see Recommendation #4 for additional details).
- Reduce director-level workloads through effective decision-making (see Recommendation #6) and prioritization (see Recommendation #7).
- Continue to build leadership capacity through manager development programs.

This recommended structure is depicted in the following organizational chart, with changes highlighted in green:





By reworking the span of control and providing additional leadership and administrative support, the City can create a more manageable number of direct reports for each leader and allow them to dedicate more time and attention to their core responsibilities and strategic roles. This restructuring should also emphasize the importance of delegation, enabling leaders to assign specific tasks to appropriate personnel based on their skills and expertise. Within this structure, the City could optimize for operational efficiency while it empowers employees to take ownership of their roles and collaboratively work towards City-wide goals. Given the City’s resource constraints, leaders should carefully consider the restructure to ensure duties are not simply redistributed across existing roles.

As the City works to reduce the span of control and complexity to preserve leadership capacity, the City should focus on adequately staffing key functional teams, and balancing workload distribution among team members. Assessing the current responsibilities of employees to allocate tasks in a way that prevents burnout and promotes collaboration is key to long-term success. Paired with a renewed emphasis on strategic oversight, department and City leaders can shift their focus from day-to-day operational tasks to long-term planning and decision-making.

Leadership Administrative Support

2. Finding	The CMO has two Executive Assistants whose workloads are unevenly and ineffectively distributed, resulting in potential inefficiencies.
Recommendation	Implement a balanced distribution of administrative tasks by enabling one Executive Assistant to perform the tasks included on the job description and shifting the other Executive Assistant role to focus on supporting all elected officials, boards and commissions, and constituent management.

The CMO includes two Executive Assistants—one that supports City leadership, and one that works closely with the Mayor. Interviewees shared the perspective that this structure is not conducive to equitably distributing workload and administrative tasks, which hinders operational efficiency.

The Executive Assistant position has an updated job description that includes drafting correspondence, facilitating the resolution of citizen inquiries and requests, summarizing content of City materials and meetings for executives, delegating to and mentoring other staff, and researching and compiling information to present to executives and committee members for their consideration. However, we received reports that their work duties in practice do not reflect their documented responsibilities.

The work assignments of the Executive Assistant that primarily supports the CMO were characterized as unstructured, informal, and often unclear, partly due to the independent nature of the City Manager’s working style (see Finding #6 for additional detail). Alternatively, the Executive Assistant supporting the Mayor is reportedly occupied by work supporting the Mayor while CMO needs continue to persist. Because the Executive Assistant roles are not consistently clear in job duties and expectations, having them report directly to the City Manager adds to the City Manager’s span of control and presents inefficiencies in how their time is used. With the appropriate guidance and oversight, the ample administrative work that must be performed in the CMO can be better distributed among these positions.



Peer cities often housed one or more executive or administrative assistant to provide administrative support across the City. These roles typically assist in many ways, such as in coordinating city programs; helping staff, the mayor, and council members with calendaring; facilitating purchasing activity (i.e., ensuring office supplies are replenished); tending to the city's front office; preparing meeting agendas; preparing Council meetings; and taking notes for meetings. Occasionally, peer cities also leveraged purchasing department staff or policy analysts part-time to supplement the administrative or executive assistant as needed.

Recommendation

The roles of the Executive Assistants should be reevaluated to better address current CMO needs, such as providing logistical support, supporting meetings by managing meeting technologies and taking meeting minutes, supporting board and commission meetings, and providing editorial support in proofing graphical and non-technical City communication materials. A revised Executive Assistant role could also include administrative tasks that support Council members, such as providing support for calendaring, sending event reminders, preparing talking points, and tracking and managing constituent requests. In doing this work, the Executive Assistants would naturally coordinate with communications staff, providing additional assistance in crafting consistent and strategic messaging to internal and external stakeholders.

The Executive Assistant that primarily supported the Mayor resigned in December 2024. The City should use this opportunity to reimagine the roles of the Executive Assistants to provide greater administrative support in many areas by redistributing tasks among them. Additionally, if the City decides to continue use of a Mayor-centric assistant, it should review whether the classification of Executive Assistant is necessary for that role, or whether it could be reclassified to Staff Assistant. Depending on the scope and purview of information accessible by that position, the City may be able to realign the title and resource commitment of that position with actual levels of internal service and support it provides to City staff, elected officials, and community stakeholders.

Overall, the City should transfer oversight of the Executive Assistants to another position in the CMO, either the Homelessness Liaison or the CSO. The City should retain one Executive Assistant to perform the responsibilities listed on the Executive Assistant job description and consider reclassifying the other as a staff assistant to support the Mayor, Council, Boards, Commissions, and constituent management tasks (see Finding #9). This structure reduces the City Manager's span of control and would allow these positions to provide critical administrative support for tasks that are currently picked up by City leaders.



Leadership Strategic Support

3.	Finding	The City has two high-level strategic team members who individually manage multiple high-profile responsibilities with limited resources, which limits their efficacy and creates operational continuity risks.
	Recommendation	<p>A. Reorganize the Homelessness Liaison position within the CMO, since much of this position’s work relates to CMO initiatives.</p> <p>B. Review and reallocate job responsibilities for the Homelessness Liaison and CSO to right-size workloads and reduce business continuity risks.</p>

The City has specific functions that are branded as being part of the CMO but are housed outside of it. The Homelessness Liaison oversees several priority initiatives including homelessness, ADA compliance, human rights compliance, the Community Police Review Board, Board and Commission support, and volunteer recognition. Several of these functions are branded as CMO functions, although the position responsible for them resides within the Community Services Department, under the DCM-CS. The placement of the Homelessness Liaison outside of the CMO can lead to the perception that high-priority policy issues, such as homelessness and police review, are not treated as priority items by the City. Additionally, there is a risk that a single-person department independent of the CMO does not lend the position the authority within the City organization to move key initiatives forward as necessary.

Currently, the person in this position can navigate the role outside of the CMO due to their tenure and strong relationships with internal and external City stakeholders. However, this position oversees a wide range of areas that require significant time and attention. If this individual leaves the City or becomes otherwise unavailable, the City faces a heightened risk of disruptions in operational continuity over these critical areas. An individual from outside the organization is unlikely to be able to fulfill the myriad of job duties currently managed by this position.

Like the Homelessness Liaison, the CSO is a highly valuable long-term employee that leverages their deep-rooted institutional knowledge and strong city-wide rapport to do their job. Interviewees commonly shared appreciation for the CSO and characterized them as performing the jobs of multiple people. In addition to overseeing federal and state legislation, strategic planning, organizational changes, and City-wide coordination of initiatives, the CSO functions as a Policy Officer, Communications Chief, and Public Information Officer. The CSO also regularly absorbs tasks that are no longer owned by other team members, typically as City roles shift with reorganization efforts. The City Manager recently determined that the CSO role should transition to a Chief of Staff role and absorb additional duties beyond what is currently in this position’s responsibilities. However, this position is already overburdened and cannot sustain additional tasks.

If the City wishes to establish a Chief of Staff position, it should be a standalone position that can help absorb tasks from the DCM-ES, CSO, and Homelessness Liaison. Three peer cities (Beaverton, Eugene, and Gresham) have a Chief of Staff position. In Beaverton, the Chief of Staff supports the full-time mayor and elected officials. In Eugene, the Chief of Staff is a bit more involved, functioning as a division manager (director of the CMO as a division), and directly supporting and reporting to the City Manager. The Chief of Staff coordinates efforts, programs, and initiatives stemming from the



CMO and administers meetings and elections. Gresham converted its Government Relations Director to a Chief of Staff. The position was identified by peers as unique and generally augmented city staff and leadership capacity by accepting administrative tasks delegated to them from the City Manager. Given the City's current resource constraints and need for tactical support, we would not recommend the establishment of a Chief of Staff role at this time.

Because the Homelessness Liaison and CSO perform roles that require high-level, coordinated strategy, they are regularly involved in the City's ELT meetings. While it's a strong practice to ensure they receive adequate information to do their jobs, the need to constantly be present at these meetings competes with their growing workloads. There may be a better method to find the balance for these individuals, particularly by reintegrating the Homelessness Liaison position into the CMO, which could also clarify any misconceptions about the roles these individuals play for the City and its community.

When asked about highly visible City policy areas, such as those related to homelessness, policy work, sustainability, equity, and compliance, peers shared that these functions were typically housed in specific departments and overseen by the CMO. Because their work and focus is so broad and interdepartmental, peers reported placing these teams within departments allowed them to tap into larger pools of resources and leverage the strong organization-wide relationships that are already embedded in and across their city. For peers, intentional collaboration was the key to ensure that these functions were highlighted at-large as a city focus.

Recommendation

The City should assess the responsibilities of the CSO and Homelessness Liaison and realign them with their high-level roles by providing additional resources for the administrative tasks they manage. Because most of the Homelessness Liaison's role falls within the scope of the CMO, the position should be reestablished within that office. The City should also evaluate the job duties of each position and determine what could be managed by another position, for example:

- With the addition of a Communications Manager and Coordinator (see Recommendation #4), the CSO can delegate tasks related to communications management.
- With the potential revisioning of administrative support roles (See Recommendation #2), both the CSO and Homelessness Liaison can free up time currently spent supporting boards and commissions.
- Consider moving ADA compliance to Public Works, which oversees much of the City's infrastructure.

Historically, these positions have taken on more and more duties due to the employees' long tenure with the City and dedication to the community. However, this practice creates risk by overburdening two valuable employees with significant, highly visible responsibilities. To mitigate this risk, the City should redistribute existing workloads and refrain from adding new responsibilities or initiatives to the scope of these positions.



Communications Staffing and Organization

4. Finding	The CMO lacks communication personnel, which prevents the City from achieving a centralized communication function that aligns external communications across City departments.
Recommendation	<p>To enhance collaboration and alignment of external communications across all City departments, the City should explore opportunities to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Hire dedicated communication personnel within the CMO to execute communications strategies. B. Rebalance job responsibilities across current staff to ensure accountability for City-wide communication.

City Communications Structure

The City has faced challenges in its communications function for several years. The City has continued efforts to address community and internal needs for improved communications throughout the years, despite a lack of commensurate resources.

Ideally, the City’s communications function should be appropriately resourced to enable adequate community outreach and education about key issues within Salem. The City has been able to overcome under-resourcing and organizational siloing challenges to engage with its community in some areas. The 2024 Annual Community Report issued on the City’s website illustrates the City’s ability to speak to its overarching strategic mission. The report details the plans it has in place to achieve crucial goals in key focus areas and explains notable milestones that have already been achieved. This type of communication can serve as a beacon for both employees and the community at large to understand the direction the City is going and to know that funds are being spent appropriately.

In FY 2023, the City engaged with an external consultant to develop a Strategic Communications and Engagement Plan. The Plan aligned with the City Council Policy Agenda and established the following strategic objectives in designing recommendations:

1. Increase the public’s trust of City government and its awareness of City resources and activities
2. Increase consistency and quality of non-English communication, particularly in Spanish
3. Better represent City’s point of view/brand in all communications
4. Create a more effective, coordinated communications organization
5. Create greater public engagement in City activities and decisions

To achieve these objectives, the study provided recommendations to develop a hub and spoke communications team for consistent and strategic City-wide messaging and community engagement. The proposed structure of the communications team included the following resources:

RECOMMENDED POSITION	CURRENT STATUS
Chief Communications Officer	Position established; vacant



RECOMMENDED POSITION	CURRENT STATUS
Citywide Public Information Officer (PIO)	Position temporarily filled by another departmental PIO
Internal Communications Coordinator	No established position
External Communications Coordinator	No established position
Visual Content Coordinator	No established position
Community Outreach & Engagement Coordinator	Communications and Media Relations Specialist position is in place

These positions would then coordinate with department emergency communications liaisons, PIOs, social media liaisons, data services, and public engagement and event planners housed in other departments.

In January 2024, the CSO developed a new communications team composition and structure to revise the Media Relations, Communications, and Outreach functions at the City and adopt a hub and spoke model. Later in 2024, the City established a Chief Communications Officer position to charge one individual with leading City-wide communication and engagement efforts. This position was filled for less than 6 months and currently remains vacant. Based on recent experiences, City staff shared that instating the role at a higher, more strategic level added to mounting workloads. The role and title suggests the capability for large-scale changes that are prohibitively costly given current City needs, operational gaps, and resource constraints. During discussions, those interviewed suggested a more task-oriented position may be more well-suited for accomplishing current communications goals.

The communication function remains decentralized across the City. Some departments, such as Police and Public Works, have dedicated PIO staffing, as is common in many cities. As a result, departments were often characterized as siloed by our interviewees, and ensuring congruence and uniformity of messaging within and outside of the City remains an ongoing challenge.

Errors in Communications Material

There is reportedly no one responsible for reviewing and supporting the City Manager in City communication content development. This situation can make it challenging for the City Manager to focus on strategic work and increases the risk of errors in the content created. An overburdened City Manager could be more susceptible to producing occasional errors that end up being shared with the public and stakeholders. Such occurrences could impact the City’s reputation and lead to community perception that the City is disorganized and needs to pay additional attention to details. By implementing additional safeguards such as a peer review of City-produced material, the City could mitigate this risk while enhancing community engagement and facilitate more productive discussions about how to navigate community issues, such as homelessness and revenue, more effectively.

Peer City Communications

Three of six peers (Beaverton, Bend, and Medford) had dedicated communications personnel organized in a team that helped coordinate between departments, enhance community engagement, and support city leaders by preparing talking points, managing newsletters, and managing the city’s



social media and inquiries. The remainder had a decentralized communications structure that focused on regular meetings across city departments, and intentionally creating and sharing communication notes and other internal communication documents. One of these cities (Gresham) shared challenges in maintaining cohesion without a centralized communications function, and another (Eugene) is currently recruiting a Communications Director that will ideally increase cohesion by sending out summary emails to orient city staff.

Many of the peer cities are undergoing organizational structure changes as well and are working to determine the optimal team structure and size for various functional areas, including communications. As part of these shifts, peers also employed an all-hands approach, leveraging staff across their organization to fill in operational needs as applicable. For example, some leaned on their City Recorder or Government Relations Manager to coordinate internal messaging. At the time of our interviews, peer city communications staffing ranged roughly from two to four FTEs.

Recommendation

It is essential for the City to adopt a more strategic approach to setting up and managing its communications. Effective communication is critical for fostering transparency, building trust with the community, and ensuring that all departments are working toward common goals. There are opportunities for the City to strengthen communication, improve its overall messaging, enhance public engagement, and create a unified voice that reflects the priorities and values of the City and its community.

Ideally, the City could focus on bringing in dedicated communication personnel within the CMO to enact the Strategic Communications and Engagement Plan. The focus of their roles would be to coordinate among departmental communications staff and ensure alignment in community messaging. They could also serve as a central point of contact for all departments, facilitating collaboration and information sharing, and ultimately enhancing the City's ability to engage with the community and effectively address public concerns. The City should reinvigorate efforts to add communications staff in alignment with the recommendations previously provided, as follows:

- Repurpose the Chief Communications Officer to a Communications Manager role that reports to the CSO, to support coordination and also provide resources to assist in the development of communication materials.
- Add a Communications Coordinator position to support communications efforts and report to the Communications Manager.

Alongside hiring dedicated communication staff, the City should continue implementation of the hub and spoke model by regularly reviewing job responsibilities across communications staff embedded in departments to assist in city-wide communication. Similar to peers, assembling a communications team with these individuals allows the City to coordinate the flow of information between departments and create a space for important news to be tailored for and circulated to target audiences, including the general public.



B. COMMUNICATION AND PRIORITIZATION

Enterprise Leadership Team (ELT) Meeting Practices

5.	Finding	ELT meeting practices, including agenda setting, meeting cadence, audience selection, engagement, and follow-up mechanisms result in inefficiencies.
	Recommendation	The City should establish clear guidelines for ELT meeting practices, including standardized agenda-setting processes, defined meeting cadences, appropriate audience selection, structured engagement techniques, and consistent follow-up mechanisms.

Historically, the ELT struggled to create a collaborative culture, in part due the need to adapt to preferences of past leaders. However, interviewees noted that recent improvements in ELT meetings have helped foster collaboration across the City. Despite these improvements, they believe that the ELT meeting time could be used more effectively and expressed a desire for clearer processes regarding agenda setting and how stakeholders are chosen to participate in discussions. Several interviewees indicated that the team lacks follow-up mechanisms to ensure items were appropriately resolved or revisited at the appropriate cadence. This creates additional complexity in decision-making processes (see Finding #6).

Ideally, executive meetings should be organized in a way that helps participants understand their role and encourages them to contribute meaningfully to discussions. For these meetings to be effective, all participants should promote and engage in respectful, objective conversations, allowing critical issues to be explored and leading to clear resolutions or a list of actionable next steps.

Setting ELT Meeting Agendas

The process for setting the agenda for ELT meetings is unclear, making it hard for stakeholders to understand how topics are prioritized and chosen. Interviewees reported various views on how the agenda is created: some were unsure; others said it is developed collaboratively with the CMO, CMO Executive Assistant, and department heads; and some noted that there is no formal process. Those who have tried to add items to the agenda in the past reported it could take weeks for an item to be included. Participants also pointed out that the same topics often reappear on the agenda, suggesting a lack of resolution or follow-through between meetings.

While the ELT meeting is meant to track enterprise-wide issues, meeting participants shared that the meetings frequently focus on department-specific matters, leading to detailed operational discussions. Interviewees shared that topics may be placed on the agenda without sufficient context (e.g., a meeting segment to discuss updates on a specific commission), which raises questions about its relevance to the overall meeting objectives. Although it is important for department leaders to feel heard, focusing on details can hinder the team's ability to make strategic decisions and act at a higher level.

Peers also reported a loose agenda-setting process, relying more on intentional collaboration among discussion participants to identify, talk through, and resolve pressing matters at their city. Among the six cities, Eugene was the only city that had a formal process for planning leadership meeting



agendas, led by the Assistant City Managers. The process is focused on gathering talking points deemed important by city leaders and input from the Finance department, with the end goal of creating a meeting space that enables relationship building and intentional dialogue.

ELT Meeting Attendees and Schedule

ELT meetings are held weekly for two hours. Some interviewees shared that the effectiveness of the meetings varies, often due to issues like repeating discussions, focusing on tactical matters, or a lack of structure.

City leadership values well-informed decisions, which has led to a high number of participants in ELT meetings. While this practice can deepen discussions, it may also obscure key points and affect the clarity of decisions. Interviewees expressed uncertainty about whether the right people are present during those meetings, noting that the size has increased as the City reorganized and expanded the responsibilities of its core members. The participant list now includes many additional voices beyond the original group of the City Manager, Deputy City Manager, department directors, and a few key individuals. This growth had made it difficult to identify discussion leaders and key stakeholders, complicating participants' understanding of how they can contribute effectively to discussions and resolve agenda items.

Post-Meeting Actions

The ELT relies heavily on attending in-person meetings or reading meeting minutes to understand discussions and anticipate future actions. Currently, the CSO takes meeting minutes and shares them after the meeting, despite already having a heavy workload and more strategic responsibilities (see Finding #3). This reliance on in-person meetings and notes can hinder organizational coordination. The City could benefit from reevaluating how meeting notes are taken and distributed, such as assigning this task to the CMO Executive Assistant. Consistent note-taking and distribution can enhance communication and information flow, helping to further reduce siloes within the City.

Peer Cities – Leadership Meetings and Leadership in General

All peer cities held regular leadership meetings to keep leaders informed about current events and important City news. Most of these cities separated their executive leadership team from their managers and directors during meetings. This structure allows for more natural conversations but requires all stakeholders to attend every meeting, which can be costly and inefficient. Overall, peer cities stressed that leadership meetings are just one aspect of their management structure, and that strong interdepartmental relationships, along with a positive, collaborative, and trusting work culture, are equally important for coordinating effective work among City leaders.

Recommendation

Hosting effective senior leadership meetings is crucial for any organization to navigate a changing environment and respond to emerging needs. The American Management Association emphasizes that meeting participants must know how to engage effectively in meetings, while maintaining diplomacy and credibility.² Additionally, Harvard Business Review suggests several tactics to keep

² Leading Effective Virtual Meetings. <https://www.amanet.org/leading-effective-virtual-meetings/>



meetings focused, such as keeping tangents brief, ensuring participants recognize when they've finished their points, and ending each meeting with clear next steps.³ Alongside these, meeting best practices also highlight the importance of structure and inclusiveness to achieve organizational success and facilitate high-quality communication and collaboration. As the City refines its ELT meeting practices, it should consider the following improvements:

- **Clear Meeting Guidelines:** Meetings should be collaborative discussions to facilitate the flow of information and coordinate complex work. To support this, the City should have guidelines that explain the expectations for leadership meeting participants, including what they should plan to contribute.
- **Standardized Agenda-Setting:** Each meeting should have a clear purpose and specific objectives. A structured agenda outlines the topics to be discussed, the time allocated for each item, and the desired outcomes. The City should create a process for setting the agenda, which includes expectations for adding items, who to contact for additions, and how far in advance items should be submitted.
- **Appropriate Audience Selection:** Meeting participants should be selected to ensure meetings maintain focus on the agenda items, avoid digressions, and are a good use of each employee's time. This helps ensure that time is used efficiently and that all relevant topics are covered.
- **Defined Meeting Cadences:** The City should explore alternative meeting formats and schedules that separate City leadership into groups such as Deputy City Managers, directors, and expanded ELT meetings that meet weekly, biweekly, and monthly, respectively. This staggered approach can help share important information while allowing City leaders to balance meeting time with their regular job responsibilities. Having too many meetings can be a time commitment and contribute to increased workloads. These meetings, each with their own purpose, could follow a separate schedule to ensure those in the groups feel adequately supported and heard, without overwhelming them with meetings.
- **Structured Engagement Techniques:** When used appropriately, engagement techniques can bring out diverse viewpoints, leading to more innovative solutions and better decision-making. Creating an inclusive environment is essential for encouraging team members to share their ideas and perspectives, which helps achieve the best possible solutions. For the City, these techniques can emerge naturally if the right people are present in a meeting.
- **Follow-up Mechanisms:** At the end of each meeting, the City should have a process for assigning someone to summarize key decisions, outstanding items, and action items with clear deadlines for the relevant participants. Following up on these action items in future meetings helps ensure accountability and progress. Using technology can enhance this process, so the City should consider using tools like video conferencing recordings, collaborative documents, and project management software where appropriate.
- **Gathering Feedback and Making Adjustments:** As with any process, the City should regularly solicit feedback and assess the effectiveness of the meeting approach it is deploying. This can help identify areas for improvement, ensure that meetings continue to meet the needs of the team, and avoid the erosion of valuable staff time.

³ 10 Tactics to Keep Your Meeting on Track. <https://hbr.org/2022/01/10-tactics-to-keep-your-meeting-on-track>



Decision-Making Processes

6.	Finding	Decisions are made using unclear processes and are inconsistently communicated to impacted personnel.
	Recommendation	<p>A. Develop a decision-making framework that evaluates alignment with the strategic plan, community impact, cost, and staff availability to provide additional transparency into the decision-making process.</p> <p>B. Define who is responsible, accountable, consulted, and informed about different decision types and ensure appropriate personnel are notified of projects and initiatives that impact their work.</p>

ELT members reported that decisions are sometimes made using unclear processes and are inconsistently communicated across the City, especially to personnel that may be impacted by the decisions. Some interviewees shared that discussions during leadership meetings can lead to a decision, but it is unclear whether the topic has been explored sufficiently or if the prevailing opinion becomes the main factor in the decision. Many described leadership meetings as loosely structured, allowing for natural discussion, but this often results in a lack of focus on making decisions. This informal approach also allows matters to be revisited later. As a result, participants may leave meetings uncertain about whether a decision was actually made, leading to confusion about which issues are still open, which have been resolved, and what decisions were reached.

The lack of a decision-making structure is compounded by the City Manager's tendency to make decisions independently. Some interviewees noted this may occur when discussions in meetings stall or a request comes from a community stakeholder or elected official. Recent examples include pursuing the performance audit series, LEAN six sigma work, Mayor's Challenge, forming a Blue Ribbon Budget Review Committee, and developing a Chief of Staff position. Many interviewees characterized the City Manager to be regularly involved in executing tasks and reactive to requests from key stakeholders. While the City Manager's focus on execution and operational tasks is a natural outcome of their role, this approach may hinder their ability to engage in high-level, strategic work. Furthermore, the perception that the City Manager is active in operational tasks can undermine the autonomy of other City leaders.

The City Manager reportedly communicates decisions on an ad-hoc basis, and some leaders shared that they are not consistently aware of new decisions or initiatives that impact their role. Inadequate communication can disrupt City operations and contribute to staff burnout, particularly if decisions require additional staff time and are made without staff knowledge or input. This results in a reactive working environment among leaders and staff, which can present challenges in prioritization and workload management.

Recommendation

Given the City's revenue crisis, decisions should be tied to a strategic goal to ensure the City's limited resources are used to advance progress on pre-defined initiatives. To enable consistent and clear decision-making, the City should create a simple decision-making framework that clearly defines its priorities and how decisions advance these priorities. This tool would define criteria and provide a



consistent process by which organizational decisions should be analyzed. It should be broad, adaptable, and flexible enough to be responsive to almost any situation.

Decision-making frameworks provide an objective mechanism to weigh and prioritize potential projects. Elements of an effective decision-making framework are included below.

Evaluative Criteria

A key component of any decision-making framework is the criteria used to evaluate potential projects. This could include a list of questions that should be considered for each major expenditure. For example:

- Does this decision meaningfully improve service to the community?
- Does this decision support the City's mission and strategic plan?
- Does this decision align with the City's core values?
- Does this decision increase operational efficiency?
- Does this decision have budget implications? If so, is it financially feasible?
- Does this decision increase equity in our community?

Guidelines

These guidelines should articulate any boundaries on the decision-making process. For example:

- Staff availability to take on additional projects or initiatives
- Whether the initiative is mandated by a third party or regulator
- The potential cost-benefit of the decisions
- The anticipated timeline to complete the project
- The appropriate decision-maker given the project or initiative

Logistics

The framework should address logistical matters to ensure projects and services are implemented and delivered most efficiently and effectively, including:

- What are staff responsibilities (i.e., positions responsible for community engagement, project identification, and execution)?
- How will this impact other City departments, including budgetary impacts and scheduling of projects to increase collaboration and communication?
- How should we engage the community throughout the process?
- Who needs to provide input on this decision?
- Who needs to be informed about this decision?
- By when do we need to make this decision?

Leadership should adopt a policy for evaluating the costs and benefits of proposed initiatives that are not included in the City's budget. Whether mandated or discretionary and proposed by City Council, community groups, or a department, new initiatives should be evaluated in a consistent manner. Each proposal should define lifecycle costs, including staffing requirements, and identify whether existing



resources will need to be reallocated or current programs or services will need to be deprioritized in favor of the new initiative. The City Manager should be responsible for performing this analysis in collaboration with the impacted or proposing department/agency and the Chief Financial Officer. In a limited resource environment, not every idea can be pursued.

The City should also develop and implement success-fail metrics for new projects and services to determine if the initiative is delivering its intended impact. These metrics help define what success looks like, allows leadership to make adjustments as necessary, and overall improves decision-making.

It may be helpful to use an established matrix to more explicitly clarify decision-making roles. There are several common matrices used in organizations, usually denoted by an acronym that represents the roles individuals hold during the decision-making process, such as RACI, which is defined as:

- **Responsible:** Who is responsible for carrying out the decision once it has been made?
- **Accountable:** Who has the authority to make this decision? If it is more than one person, how will the decision be made (majority vote, consensus, etc.)?
- **Consulted:** Who has important information to inform this decision?
- **Informed:** Whose work will be impacted by this decision? Who needs to be kept in the loop?

When routinely applied, a decision-making framework and clearly defined roles help maintain alignment with the City's unifying goals, ensure that decisions are made in a consistent manner, and promote employee understanding of decisions.

Alongside a decision-making framework, the City should build its communication channels to ensure that decisions made are appropriately communicated to individuals that need to know about them. This process should feature key steps such as designating someone to take meeting notes, determining the audience and impacted stakeholders for each decision, summarizing key points, and using email or communications personnel to disseminate the information. When developing the summary, the City should also emphasize ease of understanding and digestibility, and clearly highlight what changes will occur, why the decision was made (i.e., what purpose the change serves), who the changes will impact and how, and what those individuals will need to alter moving forward. By incorporating these aspects into the City's decision-making and communication infrastructure, City leaders can ensure that their decision-making processes will remain aligned with best practices and enable achievement of better outcomes.

Prioritizing City Initiatives and Work

7.	Finding	The City does not have an effective way to track initiatives and other high-priority work, the parties responsible for executing them, and their progress.
	Recommendation	Implement a centralized project management system that tracks high-priority initiatives, assigns responsible parties, and monitors progress and incurred costs in real time.



The City and its staff are service-oriented. The City's optimistic leadership fosters a culture aimed at operational excellence even in the face of significant budget deficits. However, without a clear prioritization framework, staff often struggle to understand how to approach their tasks effectively. The City manages many initiatives and projects without a system to track who is responsible, the progress made, or the total costs involved. This situation leads to a constant push to take on new work aimed at improving operations or responding to community requests, often without considering the impact on an already burdened workforce. In an environment where many things are deemed high priority, nothing can effectively be treated as high priority.

As a result, team members struggled to adjust their workloads as new assignments arise. Interviewees reported that they may be assigned work that they are not aware of until it's urgent. If the City cannot track work assigned to departments, teams, or employees, it risks overcommitting resources to new community requests, leaving others inadequately addressed. Over time, this can lead to staff burnout and turnover, as employees struggle to manage an overwhelming number of urgent tasks without clear priorities.

Because everything is treated as urgent, no single task stands out as a primary focus for achieving the City's vision. This confusion can lead to burnout, as staff feel constantly pressured to juggle multiple high-priority items. It is essential for employees to understand the purpose of their work and how their contributions fit into the bigger picture. This understanding can empower them to prioritize their tasks effectively and manage their responsibilities at a more sustainable pace.

How Peers Prioritize and Monitor Work

Five of the six peers prioritized work based on how well it aligned with key items in their city's strategic plan, which is developed by the City Council. They generally took a people-focused and holistic approach to managing this work. Collaborative teams, organized according to departmental structures, were used to break down tasks and implement their work plans. Time sensitivity was used to help prioritize items, and employees were trusted to speak up if they felt overwhelmed by their workloads.

Having work plans and a strategic plan with performance measures made it easier for peers to track their progress. Similar to their prioritization process, they relied on assigned teams to monitor their work. Their methods for tracking progress varied, including ad-hoc reporting requests, check-in meetings with teams, budget-based tracking, developing an internal tracker based on strategic metrics, and creating a City website to organize and display dashboards.

Recommendation

City leadership should develop a work prioritization framework to provide guidance and enable consistent decisions that align with its mission, strategic plan, and operating plan. A decision matrix or other objective tool can be particularly useful to balance needs because the task of setting priorities can be influenced by, and result in, emotional responses in any organization (see Finding #6).

A prioritization framework provides a tool to rank tasks based on criteria that the organization deems appropriate. This framework typically includes six to ten criteria that can be used to assess the comparative importance of tasks. Example criteria include impact to workflow, resources, community need, number of beneficiaries, and alignment with the City's goals and mission. Criteria may be weighted based on their relative importance and a clearly defined ranking scale. It may be necessary to revisit the strategic plan to identify clear priorities within the broad goals. Scoring tasks and



determining staff priorities using this tool provides a simple and consistent method for evaluating options, removes emotions, is adaptable over time, and facilitates agreement on resource allocation. When applied consistently, a prioritization framework can help maintain focus and alignment on the City's unifying goals.

To improve transparency in workload and initiatives undertaken, the City should adopt a centralized project management system that tracks high-priority initiatives, assigns tasks to staff, and monitors progress and costs in real time. While this may require an initial investment, it is essential for long-term operational success and sustainability. Such a system would enhance organization and transparency, streamline operations by simplifying task delegation and communication, and reduce the time staff spent in meetings. It would also increase accountability, ensuring that everyone is aligned with the City's goals. Additionally, real-time monitoring of projects and costs would allow the City to make timely adjustments, reducing the risk of budget overruns and project delays, and empowering employees to manage their workloads effectively. By having a comprehensive view of all initiatives, the City can better prioritize resources and build a historical dataset to inform future decision-making. Ultimately, this investment is crucial for the City's long-term success and its ability to respond to community needs and challenges.

To assist the City in this area, we created an initiatives listing document, included in [Appendix C](#). This document defines a City initiative as any identified area of work with a specific outcome that requires dedicated City resources and staff time. It captures the scope and scale of each initiative and project the City has agreed to undertake. Additionally, it helps City staff track their capacity and balance their willingness to take on new work against their existing commitments. There are currently 40 items on the initiatives inventory, which is arduously high given the City's significant resource constraints.

C. MAYORAL AND COUNCIL SUPPORT

Council Meetings

8.	Finding	Due to inconsistent pre-meeting briefings, short turnaround times on Council packets, and insufficient use of committees, Council meetings can be long and focus on details rather than strategic, policy-oriented discussions.
	Recommendation	The City should work to enhance Council meeting processes such as providing Council meeting packets earlier, offering briefings to ensure Council members are well-prepared, and revitalizing the use of committees to facilitate thorough discussion and decision-making.

A common concern raised in our interviews was the level of support the City provides to Council members to help them fulfill their responsibilities. Due to resource constraints, the City has limited ability to provide administrative support for Council members but strives to assist them as needed. For example, the City develops an annual schedule outlining Council work sessions on specific topics, such as the Transportation Systems Plan and the Parks System Master Plan in calendar year 2025. Having this schedule in advance is a good practice that helps Council members and the public stay informed throughout the year. It also allows Council members to prepare for upcoming actions



and events. To maximize the benefits, the City should ensure that Council members are aware of the published schedules and that they are easily accessible, ideally in one central location.

However, staff reported that Council does not effectively use committees to facilitate deeper discussions on complex topics. Interviewees noted that committees are tasked with providing recommendations on complex issues, but their recommendations are not always upheld by the full Council. As a result, the full Council sometimes focuses on the details of committee work rather than leveraging the comprehensive recommendations made by those committees. This skepticism about committee recommendations means the Council spends meeting time reviewing committee work instead of building on it, making the resources spent on committee work seem unnecessary. By using committees more effectively, the Council could improve meeting efficiency, allowing members to focus on strategic decision-making and addressing community challenges.

Another concern raised by interviewees was the effectiveness of Council meetings. Despite the City Manager's offers of study sessions and briefings, elected officials do not consistently attend these preparatory meetings. Council briefings provide an opportunity to review key issues and discuss agenda items in a more informal setting, which promotes informed decision-making and productive conversations. Without participating in these activities, Council members may feel unprepared during meetings and struggle to contribute effectively, often using meeting time to clarify topics, which may be viewed unfavorably by peers and stakeholders.

Some Council members pointed out that the meeting agenda packets prepared by City staff are often dense and not distributed early enough for them to review the material adequately. City staff have worked to provide packets earlier, the Wednesday before a Council meeting which provides five days of review time. While they understand that providing packets earlier adds to City staff's workload, they feel the lead time for receiving these packets is insufficient. Given that Council members serve voluntarily alongside their full-time jobs, it can be more challenging to complete their review of the packets in a timely manner. Best practices from the International City/County Management Association indicate that meeting organizers should prepare participants by distributing material such as the meeting agenda and any other "pre-work" material at least three to five days in advance, which is consistent with current practices at the City.⁴

Peer Cities and Their Council

Peer cities differed in the level of support they offered their Councils. Some provided help with scheduling, regular work sessions (interactive meetings where Council members can ask questions and get more information), and assistance in drafting talking points for important meetings. Many of these cities utilized their City Recorder, administrative assistants, or other department staff on a part-time basis to support this work. Generally, peer cities approached Council services on an as-needed basis and noted that their interactions with the Council were informal and often changed based on the Council's makeup and the City's structure. Additionally, peer City Councils tended to be more autonomous, as they developed their own strategic plans. Some of these cities also paid their elected officials a salary or stipend, which may contribute to their greater independence and organization.

⁴ Time Management Tips for Efficient Public Meetings. <https://icma.org/blog-posts/time-management-tips-efficient-public-meetings>



Recommendation

The City should focus on improving Council meeting processes to enhance governance effectiveness and efficiency. One key step is to provide Council meeting packets a day or two earlier, giving Council members more time to review the materials and prepare for focused discussions. This can lead to better-informed decision-making and reduce confusion during meetings. Additionally, the City should continue offering briefings before meetings to help Council members engage meaningfully with the agenda items. Gathering feedback from Council members can help make these preparatory meetings more accessible.

Revitalizing the use of committees can also greatly improve discussions and decision-making quality. Committees allow City officials to quickly understand key topics, enabling focused conversations and diverse perspectives. By using committees to discuss important matters before they reach the full Council, the City can ensure thorough consideration and encourage collaboration among Council members on next steps. This collaborative approach also enhances transparency and accountability within the City's governance structure.

Managing Constituent Requests

9.	Finding	The City does not have an effective system for managing constituent requests, making it difficult to uphold the Council policy requirement that any task requiring one hour or more staff time be approved by the full Council.
Recommendation		The City should implement a centralized request management system that streamlines the process for tracking, prioritizing, and responding to constituent inquiries.

The City lacks an effective system for managing constituent requests, leading to redundancies in handling them. This can result in multiple constituents raising concerns about the same issue or staff addressing questions that have already been answered. As mentioned previously, the City's strong focus on service creates a reactive culture, where constituent requests are treated as top priorities. This often involves several staff members to ensure accurate and up-to-date responses, regardless of the request's urgency or importance.

Without proper tracking and management systems for these requests, the City struggles to comply with the one-hour rule outlined in the City Charter, which requires formal approval from the City Council for any requests that will take more than one hour of staff time to address. This is because multiple staff members may end up investigating the same requests or reviewing past work to ensure consistent responses. Department directors often take on this additional work, which further affects their ability to manage daily operations. Overall, these inefficiencies lead to excessive staff time spent on minor concerns, contributing to an already heavy workload and causing disruptions as City employees pause their regular tasks to focus on what they perceive as high-priority requests.

Peer City Constituent Management

Peer cities had different methods for managing constituent requests, but most handled them in the order they were received. Three out of six cities—Beaverton, Hillsboro, and Gresham—did not have a



dedicated work management system and relied on managing emails, phone calls, and walk-ins to address requests. In contrast, Bend, Eugene, and Medford utilized various systems and software to manage requests more effectively.

Bend's system includes a web portal and mobile app that intake, route, and escalate requests as needed. City staff create tickets for every call or email request to ensure all constituent work is captured centrally. Eugene has moved from a central tracking system within their CMO to a mix of department-managed systems and an internally developed maintenance management system, allowing them to track requests as work orders and prioritize them systematically. Medford uses GovQA software, managed by its City Recorder, who distributes requests to departments as needed. This platform also tracks response times, which the city uses for performance management. However, Bend, Eugene, and Medford do not have a systematic solution for requests initially sent to the Council, typically allowing Council members to delegate these requests to city staff via email.

Recommendation

Best practices from ICMA suggest that cities should enhance civic engagement by removing barriers to citizen relationship management, primarily through the use of technology and efficient processes to ensure that all requests are promptly acknowledged promptly and addressed.⁵ Implementing a centralized request management system, while requiring an initial investment, can save City staff time by reducing redundancies in the current approach. It can also improve engagement and transparency by streamlining how requests are tracked, prioritized, and responded to, allowing constituents to monitor the status of their requests.

As the City considers implementing a centralized request management system, it should work to incorporate the following best practices:

- **Constituent Request System:** A centralized request management system allows residents to easily submit requests and enables City staff to monitor, prioritize, and respond efficiently. If requests come in via councilmembers or other mechanisms, they should be added to the system. This will help staff address recurring concerns by minimizing the effort needed to review past communications. The City should also look for solutions that can send reminders for long-standing requests to ensure timely responses.
- **Clear Processes and Guidelines:** The City should create clear processes for handling constituent requests, outlining steps for submission, tracking, and resolution, along with timelines for responses. Transparency in these processes will help manage constituent expectations.
- **Regular Communication:** Constituents should receive updates on the status of their requests. The system should facilitate regular communication to manage expectations and show that the City is actively addressing their concerns.
- **Feedback Mechanism:** A feedback mechanism should be established to allow constituents to share their experiences with the request process. This feedback can identify areas for improvement and enhance service delivery as the City refines its approach.
- **Data Analysis and Reporting:** The system should allow the City to regularly report on the data collected. Data can help City leadership effectively identify trends, common issues, and areas for improvement, and ultimately drive more informed decisions and resource allocation.

⁵ How to Improve Citizen Relationship Management for Local Governments. <https://icma.org/blog-posts/how-improve-citizen-relationship-management-local-governments>.



- **Collaboration Across Departments:** Promoting collaboration among City departments is essential for addressing requests comprehensively. This may involve cross-departmental meetings or appointing a liaison to facilitate communication.
- **Community Engagement:** The City should involve the community in discussions about the request management process to ensure that policies and procedures meet stakeholder needs. Engaging the community can lead to greater support for implementing the system and increase satisfaction and trust in City government.

By adopting these best practices, the City can improve its management of constituent requests, foster a more responsive and accountable government, enhance public perception, and build trust in leadership.

DRAFT



APPENDIX A: COMPARING DEPUTY CITY MANAGER AND DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR ROLES

The following chart provides a summary-level overview comparison of typical Deputy City Manager and Department Director roles. As the City iterates its structure moving forward, it should strive to align the roles and responsibilities of its Deputy City Managers and Department Directors within reporting lines to those listed below, to enable the highest degree of communication and collaboration.

	DEPUTY CITY MANAGER	DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR
Scope of Responsibilities	A Deputy City Manager typically has a broader scope of responsibilities that includes overseeing multiple departments and ensuring alignment with the city's strategic goals. They often act as a liaison between the City Manager and various departments, facilitating communication and coordination across the organization.	A Department Director is responsible for managing a specific department (e.g., Public Works, Community Planning and Development, or Parks and Recreation) and is focused on the day-to-day operations, budget management, and program implementation within that department.
Reporting Structure	The Deputy City Manager usually reports directly to the City Manager and may serve as a key advisor on city-wide issues and initiatives. They may also represent the City Manager in their absence.	A Department Director reports to the Deputy City Manager or directly to the City Manager, depending on the organizational structure. Their focus is primarily on the performance and management of their specific department.
Strategic vs. Operational Focus	This role often involves a strategic focus, working on city-wide initiatives, policy development, and long-term planning. The Deputy City Manager may also be involved in high-level decision-making and interdepartmental collaboration.	The Department Director typically has a more operational focus, concentrating on the implementation of departmental policies, managing staff, and ensuring that the department meets its goals and objectives.
Decision-Making Authority	The Deputy City Manager may have greater decision-making authority regarding cross-departmental issues and city-wide initiatives, often working closely with the City Manager on significant decisions.	The Department Director has decision-making authority related to their specific department but may need to seek approval from higher management for larger initiatives or budgetary changes.
Interdepartmental Collaboration	This role often requires facilitating collaboration among various departments to ensure cohesive operations and alignment with the city's overall mission.	While Department Directors may collaborate with other departments, their primary responsibility is to manage their own department's functions and objectives.



APPENDIX B: PEER BENCHMARKING MATRIX

The City of Salem engaged Moss Adams to conduct a performance audit of its leadership practices and identify strategies for improving role clarity, decision-making and communication processes, and overall support an effective leadership structure. As part of this work, we reached out to six peer cities to learn about their CMO staffing and organizational structure, and to gather input on what challenges and lessons were learned in establishing effective city leadership. We met with leaders from the cities of Beaverton, Bend, Eugene, Gresham, Hillsboro, and Medford. The following table provides an overview of key characteristics of each location, and we included a summary of lessons learned, and best practices drawn from our discussions, research, and benchmarking.

METRICS	CITY OF SALEM	BEAVERTON	BEND	EUGENE	HILLSBORO	GRESHAM	MEDFORD
Elected Officials	Mayor and 8 Council Members	Mayor and 7 Council Members	Mayor and 6 Council Members	Mayor and 8 Council Members	Mayor and 6 Council Members	Mayor and 6 Council Members	Mayor and 8 Council Members
Council Member Status	Volunteer, unpaid	Paid (full-time Mayor), stipend	Paid, stipend	Paid, stipend	Paid, stipend	Paid, salary	Volunteer, unpaid
Budget	\$732,548,570.00	\$467,755,736.00	\$ 1,117,335,700.00	\$968,000,000.00	\$982,393,292.00	\$880,054,932.00	\$431,035,000.00
Population	177,928	101,165	106,184	178,056	107,976	109,423	90,887
Budgeted Dollar per Capita	\$4,117.11	\$4,623.69	\$12,136.14	\$5,436.49	\$9,098.26	\$8,042.69	\$4,742.54
CMO FTE	6	4	17	17	29.5	11 FTE, 4 LTE	4
CMO FTE per 10,000 Residents	0.34	0.40	1.41	0.95	2.73	1.37	0.44
City Manager Span of Control FTE*	12	11	8	8	10	9	7.75
EA Support FTE	2 Executive Assistants	1 Executive Assistant	1 Executive Assistant	1 Executive Assistant	2 Administrative Assistants	1 Admin Assistant, 1 Policy Analyst	1 Executive Assistant
Deputy or Assistant City Manager?	Yes – 2	Yes – 1	Yes – 2	Yes – 2	Yes – 2	Yes – 2	Yes – 1
CMO Staffing Level	The CMO feels understaffed. There are no Communication staff, and the City recently had to reclass roles to add the two Deputy City Managers.	The CMO has a good structure currently, with one Assistant City Manager (the City is working on hiring for a second Assistant City Manager) and one City Manager.	The CMO feels adequately staffed with two Assistant City Managers, one Executive Policy Officer, and one City Manager.	Eugene has a strong City Manager form of government. The City Manager has eight direct reports. The CMO is led by a newly created Chief of Staff position. The Chief of Staff directly reports to the City Manager and supervises approximately 20 positions.	The CMO feels adequately staffed with one City Manager, one Deputy City Manager, and one Assistant City Manager.	The CMO feels adequately staffed with two Assistant City Managers and one City Manager.	Currently the CMO is undergoing a lot of change. There is a new City Manager, and two vacancies that will be filled in January 2025 for the Executive Assistant and City Recorder positions. The City is also actively hiring for an Assistant City Manager.



METRICS	CITY OF SALEM	BEAVERTON	BEND	EUGENE	HILLSBORO	GRESHAM	MEDFORD
Delegating Work	The City Manager is a high performer and a strong leader and likes to make decisions independently. As a result, often times things are done individually when they could be better delegated to other staff.	The City Manager does not formally delegate work through a set process, but the Assistant City Managers understand what they are expected to be responsible for based on the departments in their portfolio. Occasionally, the City Manager may assign small ad-hoc tasks that arise from City Council meetings.	The City Manager does not formally delegate work through a set process. The City Manager and each Assistant City Manager is responsible for a portfolio of departments where they provide guidance and support to departments and department heads.	The City Manager provides a great deal of autonomy to staff and directors in leading city-wide initiatives and projects. They are clear to provide desired outcomes, timelines, etc., and appreciate regular progress check-ins. For work that is of particular interest to the CM, they often lean into developing their own materials and communications.	The City Manager does not formally delegate work through a set process, but Assistant/Deputy City Managers understand what they are expected to be responsible for based on the departments in their portfolio. Occasionally, the City Manager may assign small ad-hoc tasks that arise from City Council meetings.	The City Manager does not formally delegate work through a set process, but the Assistant City Managers understand what they are expected to be responsible for based on the departments in their portfolio.	Delegation is difficult currently with a lot of change in the CMO. But normally work is delegated to the relevant department.
Support Staff and the City Manager's Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two Executive Assistants, one is partially split with the Mayor. On the CMO side of things, they manage calendars and appointments, answer phones, manage people who walk-in, and other tasks as needed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive assistant to the City Manager Project Specialist (acts as a project manager) who helps with administrative duties, calendaring, and purchasing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive Assistant who provides general administration for the City Manager and Assistant City Managers Purchasing Coordinator who helps with administrative support (~25% of FTE) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chief of Staff who supports the City Manager and Assistant City Managers and acts as the Division Manager for the CMO. There are 13 people reporting to the Chief of Staff. Services in the CMO include City Recorder, Mayor and Council support staff, strategic planning and management analysis, intergovernmental relations, and communications. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two Administrative Assistants that schedule for the CMO and City Council 2.5 FTE that staff the front desk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administrative Assistant that provides general administrative support for the CMO as a whole Policy Analyst that does policy and City Council support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive Assistant that provides administrative support for the City Manager such as calendar management, notetaking, and City Council meeting preparation
City Communication	The City does not have a Communications Officer in the CMO, and communication staff are decentralized across the City. Public Works and Fire/Public Safety have their own communication staff, but they focus on their respective areas and don't have direction or oversight to ensure consistency and uniformity.	There is a centralized communication group that does communications and public engagement work and reports to the Assistant City Manager. They do messaging, newsletters, and talking points and help make messaging cohesive.	There is a centralized communications team that city-wide communications go through, as well as decentralized communications staff in Police, Fire, and the Public Works Departments.	The City is in the process of hiring a new Communications Director. The CMO Communications Team has three FTEs and works across the organization to establish coordinated communications. The City is in the process of developing a more centralized coordination of communication services.	There are regular meetings with different levels of communication staff to unify messages. Communication notes are distributed to the leadership team as well, so everyone gets the same messaging.	The City has a decentralized communications team, which includes a communications team that works with Police, Fire, and City Council; a communications team that works in Public Works; and a communications team that works on website content, social media, and graphics. It is difficult without centralization to have cohesion.	There is a centralized communications team that responds to media inquiries and manages social media, as well as decentralized communications staff in the Police Department. They work well together to make sure messaging is cohesive.
Leadership Meeting Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive Leadership Team meeting weekly, but they do not always occur. The meetings include the City Manager, Deputy City Managers, Chief Financial Operator, Department heads, and other key individuals like the Strategic Initiatives Manager, and Homelessness Liaison. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assistant City Managers and City Manager meeting weekly Department heads meeting weekly Managers and CMO meeting monthly Quarterly all-management meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive Leadership Team meeting biweekly after Council meetings. These meetings include the City Manager, Assistant City Managers, Chief Policy Officer, and City Manager Direct Reports (City Attorney, Fire Chief, Police Chief, HR Director, Finance Director, and Communications Director). City Manager's Office Strategy meetings biweekly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership meeting agenda planning is coordinated by the Assistant City Managers. The City has been working to develop a new schedule for meetings and minimize the amount of time all executive leaders need to be in attendance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department heads meeting monthly. These meetings include the CFO and Government Relations Manager. CMO meeting weekly. Expanded Leadership Team meetings monthly. These meetings include executives, directors, and high-level managers. Standing committee meetings that are cross functional for things like 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive Leadership Team meeting weekly Senior Leadership Team meeting monthly (this includes ELT attendees, and City Manager reports) People Managers meeting monthly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department Director meetings weekly (this includes the Executive Leadership Team) Council Officer Meetings that are held before Council Meetings (this includes the Mayor, Council President, and Council Vice President)



METRICS	CITY OF SALEM	BEAVERTON	BEND	EUGENE	HILLSBORO	GRESHAM	MEDFORD
			<p>These meetings include the City Manager, Assistant City Manager, and Executive Policy Officer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership Team meetings monthly. These meetings include Executive Team and all Department heads and business managers 		Strategic Planning, Asset Management, and Sustainability.		
Collaboration and Making Decisions	The City occasionally discusses items during Executive Leadership Team meetings, but for the most part City leaders inform and share information, and the City Manager makes final decisions.	The weekly department head meetings are theoretically when City decisions are made, but there are also retreats with department heads, City Council decisions, and more formalized work planning that is done for department decisions.	In general, decisions are made collaboratively through Executive Leadership Team and CMO Strategy group. The City Manager always reserves the right to make decisions.	City leadership works closely to make organization-wide decisions and all directors and key program staff are included.	Decisions are made collaboratively through Leadership and Executive Leadership Team meetings.	The City is working with a consulting firm currently to build out a more formal process. Currently it is very ad hoc and ends up being mostly the City Manager making decisions.	Decisions that are City-wide are normally made in the Department Director meetings. People can add things to the agenda. Code changes and Administrative Regulations are reviewed and finalized as a group.
Communicating Decisions	Decisions are communicated through City Manager emails and distributed notes from Executive Leadership Team meetings.	Decisions are communicated through emails and other city staff messaging as well as Intranet tool for static messages and tools. A lot of communication goes out at the quarterly all-management meeting, as well as Council meetings, budget presentations, and retreats.	The centralized communications team is in charge of City-wide communications. Department heads are expected to cascade information from the leadership team meeting to their staff. The City also has one communications staff that focuses primarily on internal communications. The City's has learned that informed internal employees are more resilient and satisfied.	Communications for all employees generally come from the Exec Team (all) or City Manager. Messaging to the broader organization regarding topics such as budget, personnel matters, or major policy changes are discussed and reviewed by the team for input. Decisions, and the process for making them, are shared, and owned by the team.	The City communicates decisions through the Department head meeting so everyone is on the same page. Decisions are also communicated through monthly City Manager videos that are sent out to the organization, HR newsletters, and "Happening in Hillsboro" newsletter, which are sent to signed up residents and staff.	The City is working on a more regimented structure of twice a month email updates.	Communication dissemination depends on which department is involved. For example, HR policy changes are communicated by HR. But there is also an Employee Matters monthly newsletter that is sent to all employees by the communications team, which includes things like administrative regulation changes, new employees, and retirements.
Prioritizing Work and Initiatives	The City has no clearly defined prioritization framework. There is an optimistic culture that results in overcommitting to tasks and initiatives.	There is a City-wide culture of delegating and evaluating priorities if there is too much on people's plates, but mostly people just figure out how to get all the things done.	The City prioritizes based on City Council goals and adopted strategic plans.	The City Strategic Plan set by City Council informs the prioritization of work.	The City Strategic Plan set by City Council informs the prioritization of work.	The City Strategic Plan set by City Council informs the prioritization of work.	Council goals are set with every biannual budget, and they inform City-wide work.
Tracking City Initiatives and Total Costs	The City does not have an effective way to track initiatives and work deemed as high priority to the City, the parties responsible for executing them, and their progress.	Initiatives are tracked through informal processes. Tracking is done through the budget and check-ins with departments.	Initiatives are tracked through the open datahub and dashboard on the City's website. These are organized into adopted City strategies and actions and show the progress towards accomplishing goals.	Tracking varies depending on the department. There are performance measures for each service area and specific data that is tracked and measured for them.	Tracking varies depending on department. Some departments use workplans and some don't.	Ad hoc, with Department heads providing reports upon request for additional information. Total costs are tracked through the Budget Team that provides monthly P&L reports.	With Council goals the City develops an implementation plan and internal tracker that is used to track initiatives and progress on adopted goals.



METRICS	CITY OF SALEM	BEAVERTON	BEND	EUGENE	HILLSBORO	GRESHAM	MEDFORD
Organizing Highly Visible Functions	The Police Review Board and Homelessness Liaison position are housed in the Community Services Division, outside of the CMO.	Currently homelessness is under the Assistant City Manager. There are staff members that coordinate the work, but there is no department head. The structure is not as optimal as desired and is a work in process.	There is a cross functional team that works on homelessness, which includes individuals from Housing, Community Development, Police, and Transportation. They work to enforce codes as well as provide resources.	Specific functions are housed within departments. Sustainability is in Public Works; Equity and Human Rights is in Central Services; Planning and Development, in coordination with other departments, is working on homelessness.	Homelessness is overseen by the CMO, but there is a lot of collaboration with the county and other departments. The City does not have a Police Review Board, but the Chief of Police has a Chief/Community Advisory Group.	The Gresham Homeless Services Team is overseen by the Assistant City Manager, but is not housed in the CMO. The Homeless Services Team is overseen by the Community Development Director.	Specific functions are housed within departments. The Police Review Board is under the Police Department and Homelessness is supported by multiple departments. For homelessness there are public media releases about what is being addressed and City progress.
Support for City Council	The Executive Assistant role supporting the Mayor is reportedly occupied by work necessary to manage the City's Boards and Commissions and city constituents, resulting in inadequate support for the Mayor.	The Mayor is full-time and is supported by the Chief of Staff and a communications person. A Project Manager also assists with Council calendaring.	A .5 FTE communications staff helps support the Mayor and Council.	The CMO regularly holds work sessions for City Council.	The City Recorder works with City Council and there is one Administrative Assistant who dedicates ~25% of their time to support the Mayor.	The Council Support position is vacant and is being filled by the City's Policy Analyst currently. The level of support and service is still a topic for discussion. The City is reorganizing and its needs are changing. It is unclear whether tasks such as social media management, speech writing, and calendaring are needed, and whether they will require dedicated personnel in the future.	The City Recorder works with City Council primarily, but the CMO Executive Assistant also occasionally supports City Council. The communications team provides talking points if they are requested.
Tracking Constituent Requests	The City does not have an effective system for managing constituent requests. Currently they are received through calls and emails to City staff and City Council members and are addressed informally on an ad-hoc basis.	The City does not have a constituent relationship management (CRM) system for managing constituent requests. They are received through phone, email, walk-ins and then are normally routed to the relevant party via email. The City wants management software but doesn't currently have anything in place.	There is a community service request system called Bend Works that has a web portal and mobile app. Constituents are encouraged to use it because it can route requests to the right department and escalate through the system if left unaddressed. If someone calls a department directly, the City has a staff person enter the issue in the Bend Works portal so it is tracked.	The City used to have a central tracking system, but now uses department-specific systems and tools. There is an in-house Maintenance Management System that is work-order based used for certain issues as well.	The City is working on a Transaction Processing System (TPS). Currently, most requests are handled through email; things come through Council and individuals respond and copy Council.	Requests are dealt with informally. Phone calls come to the CMO, and emails mostly go to Council and are forwarded to the appropriate party. There is a My Gresham platform for requests for service.	The City uses GovQA to track constituent requests that flow to the City Recorder for dispersal. There are performance measures, like time to response, that are captured by this system. Phone calls and emails aren't tracked but are delegated to the relevant department.

* Based on publicly available organizational charts sourced from city budgets and/or websites.

Peer Benchmarking Lessons Learned and Best Practices

City Manager's Office (CMO) Organization and Structure

- Typically, organizations have two Assistant City Managers and one City Manager.
- While many peers don't have a formal process for delegating work, they emphasized the importance of ownership over their work portfolios (and strategic plan where applicable) to help them prioritize their work.
- Executive Assistant support varied across peers, but most cities had at least one assistant that helps the CMO with general administrative support.
- Frequent Executive Leadership Team (ELT) meetings, often held weekly or biweekly, are a common practice to align on strategic priorities and review Council outcomes, enhancing communication, collaboration, and decision-making across leadership levels.



- Many cities convene weekly or monthly department head meetings to discuss operational updates and cross-departmental initiatives, while using monthly meetings with managers and senior leaders to prioritize broader organizational alignment. Additionally, some cities held cross-functional standing committee meetings quarterly to tackle strategic priorities such as planning, asset management, and sustainability. Cities found that these cross-functional meetings help promote dedicated decision-making time and foster collaboration among departments, breaking down silos and encouraging a more integrated approach to addressing complex challenges.

Communication

- Peers varied in communication department structure, with some describing decentralized departments with communications staff dispersed throughout the organization, and some describing a centralized structure with one central communication team. Peers noted that a centralized team helps with unification of messaging and cohesion.
- Some cities find it helpful to distribute monthly high-level talking points or communication notes to department heads to centralize messaging and content.
- It can be helpful for cities to prioritize internal communication to ensure staff feel informed and empowered to effectively carry out their roles while maintaining alignment with city-wide goals and priorities.
- The method of communicating leadership decisions varied across cities, but many emphasized the need for a structured and consistent approach to ensure clarity and help staff focus on key priorities. Similarly, peers highlighted the importance of reducing communication fatigue by streamlining communication methods, enabling staff to efficiently access and act on essential information.

Prioritization

- City Strategic Plans serve as a guiding framework for prioritizing work, ensuring that efforts align with long-term City Council goals and community needs.
- There was no consistent strategy among peers for where to place highly visible priorities such as homelessness. Some cities had it under the CMO, and others had it housed under departments that work on it such as Planning and Development, citing occasional strain on finite departmental resources. Some cities also mentioned homelessness being addressed primarily on the County level, with the CMO providing occasional updates or town halls on overall progress and related initiatives.
- Performance measures enable cities to demonstrate progress on initiatives and highlight the scope of City involvement and efforts. Additionally, displaying measures via dashboards and data hubs can enhance transparency, allowing constituents to better understand and engage with City actions. Some cities mentioned drafting performance measures alongside City Council goals or Strategic Plans to align city-wide efforts.

City Council and Mayoral Support

- Among peers, City Council had at least one staff member who assists with calendaring and agenda setting. Some peers also had project management or policy staff to support with broader Council efforts.
- Mayoral support varied significantly among peer cities, with some mayors relying on multiple full-time staff members and others operating without any formal support. The level and type of staffing often shifted across different administrations to reflect each mayor's individual needs and priorities.
- Most cities compensate their City Council members through a salary or stipend. This compensation is important because it ensures that serving in local government is accessible to a diverse range of individuals, not only those who can afford to volunteer their time. Additionally, for Council members who are juggling full-time employment, it acknowledges the additional effort and scheduling challenges involved, allowing them to engage in civic duties without added financial strain.

Constituent Management

- Some cities utilize management systems or platforms to track constituent requests related to infrastructure and maintenance work orders.
- Most cities don't have organized or robust ways to track general constituent requests, but many mentioned desiring management software.
- Cities that do use management software manually input phone calls and emails into the system so all issues are tracked.



APPENDIX C: CITY INITIATIVES INVENTORY

The following initiatives list itemizes specific projects and programs currently in progress at the City with the intention of not only highlighting the breadth of initiatives being undertaken across various departments at the City, but also tries to capture the responsibility and management of each initiative.

We define a city initiative as any identified area of work outside of regular daily operating responsibilities with a desired, specified outcome that would require dedicated City resources and staff time to achieve.

This work is intended to form the basis of a living document maintained by the City to aid it in tracking and monitoring its many concurrent initiatives, to foster transparency and encourage collaboration, and to enable City leadership to moderate workloads without losing their ability demonstrate the organization's dedication to achieving its strategic goals.

#	INITIATIVE	DETAILS	PROJECT TYPE	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	FUNDING	SOURCE DOCUMENT
1	Airport	Airport Master Plan projects – Covering runway, taxiway, apron rehabilitations, lighting upgrades, and infrastructure improvements. Currently considering a second carrier at the airport.	One-time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City (Airport owned by the City) 	\$24,115,000	Airport Master Plan
2	Housing	Housing Production Strategy – During summer 2024, the City worked with community members on housing needs and is now looking at strategies to promote housing development. The strategies could range from new financial incentives to changes in regulations. In Fall 2024, the City held focus groups with the development community about how to better encourage development in Salem. The City is expected to bring the Housing Production Strategy to the City Council for adoption in the late spring or early summer of 2025.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Planning and Development Public Works 	Unclear	Housing Production Strategy
3	Community Safety and Health	Provide emergency services while proactively addressing the impact of crime, fire, natural disasters, and health emergencies to residents, visitors, businesses, and property.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Police, Fire, Municipal Court 	\$172,544,470	City of Salem Strategic Plan 2021-2026
4	Welcoming and Livable Community	Develop Salem to be a safe and well-maintained city with a mix of quality housing for all residents, featuring access to parks, recreation, historic and cultural resources, and the arts.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City-wide Community Planning and Development Public Works 	\$44,297,510	Salem Area Comprehensive Plan, 2024 Annual Community Report
5	Strong and Diverse Economy	A diverse economic base, robust job growth, business retention and recruitment, and a thriving, resilient downtown.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City-wide 	Unclear	City of Salem Strategic Plan 2021-2026
6	Sustaining Infrastructure and Services	This priority includes many components including the Safety and Livability Bond and Revenue Task Force.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City-wide 	Unclear	2024 Annual Community Report
7	Climate Action Plan	Climate Action Plan encompasses 183 strategies across seven impact areas to reduce Salem's greenhouse gas emissions by 50% from 2016 levels. The strategies aim for a Carbon Neutral City by 2050 through government policy and infrastructure, commercial business participation, and efforts of individuals.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Works City-wide 	\$274,190	2024 Annual Community Report
8	Municipal Energy Master Plan	In 2024, Salem was awarded an energy efficiency and conservation block grant for a Municipal Energy Master Plan. Salem also enrolled in Energy Trust of Oregon's Strategic Energy Management for incentives and support for energy-savings initiatives.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Planning and Development Public Works 	Unclear	2024 Annual Community Report
9	Sustainable Business Network	With Marion County, Salem established the Marion County Sustainable Business Network, which provides support for business sustainability profiles, waste audits, and access to grants.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Planning and Development Public Works 	Unclear	2024 Annual Community Report
10	HOME Investment Partnership Program	The City of Salem partners with several non-profits and community partners to administer the HOME program to provide affordable housing to residents. The City does not offer direct support to individual residents, but it can refer residents to an appropriate community partner.	Ongoing, as funding permits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Planning and Development Community Services Department 	Unclear	2024 Annual Community Report



#	INITIATIVE	DETAILS	PROJECT TYPE	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	FUNDING	SOURCE DOCUMENT
11	Climate Action Plan Dashboard	Salem is creating a Climate Action Plan Dashboard to share information about energy use and generation, transportation, water conversation, natural resources, and materials and waste management.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Works City-wide 	\$50,000–\$115,000	2024 Annual Community Report
12	Solid Waste Policy	Prepare Solid Waste Policy with newly created Council subcommittee. Work is underway on an interim priority and development of a solid waste policy, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the collection, transportation, and disposal of solid waste are considered within the Climate Action Plan.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finance CMO 	\$2,00 –\$32,000	2024 Annual Community Report
13	Homelessness	Expand housing options to prevent homelessness in the community. Continue to offer incentives for affordable housing through tax exemptions, management agreements, and Urban Renewal grants. The City engages in weekly internal homeless committee participation, and drafts external communications on topic	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Services Department 	\$201,310, with a shift towards grant dollars	City of Salem Strategic Plan 2021-2026
14	Age-Friendly Initiative	Salem's City Council has made a commitment to actively work toward making the city a great place for people of all ages. This work was started within Salem's Center 50+.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Services Department 	Unclear	2022-23 Age Friendly Salem Action Plan
15	Salem Economic Opportunities Analysis (EOA)	The City Council voted to adopt the EOA on October 26, 2015. The City now uses the EOA and its findings to inform policy decisions about commercial and industrial land, including how to respond to requests to rezone such land. As part of the adoption of the EOA, the City also updated goals and policies in the Salem Area Comprehensive Plan to reflect Salem's land needs and better align with the City's economic development program.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City-wide Community Planning and Development 	Unclear	Salem Economic Opportunities Analysis
16	Teen Action Initiative	The Teen Action Team (TAT) Initiative provides fun, service-learning, and leadership opportunities in schools and neighborhoods, encouraging peer-to-peer advocacy on issues that matter to youth. This initiative is both a local teen service movement and a collective of programs and projects thanks to collaborative efforts between the City of Salem and local agencies and organizations.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library, and the Teen Advisory Board 	Unclear	Teen Action Initiative
17	Teen Advisory Board	The Salem Public Library Teen Advisory Board is a leadership development program for middle and high school-aged youth.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library 	Unclear	Teen Advisory Board
18	Clean Streams, Clear Choices Initiative	The City of Salem's Clean Streams, Clear Choices initiative was developed to educate the community on impactful choices they can make to help keep pollution out of the stormwater runoff and local streams.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Works 	Unclear	Clean Streams, Clear Choices Initiative
19	City of Salem Community Forestry Strategic Plan	A strategic plan for protecting, enhancing, and increasing the tree canopy in Salem, and to recommend a realistic tree canopy goal for Salem. The Community Forestry Strategic Plan establishes six goals and specific actions, priorities, and partnerships needed to achieve the goals. Goals and objectives adopted by City Council in 2013.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Works City Council 	\$10,000–\$50,000/project	City of Salem Community Forestry Strategic Plan
20	Neighborhood Associations	Neighborhood Associations provide a voice for citizens to participate in government decisions by bringing Salem residents, city officials and representatives to the table. Salem is supporting eighteen neighborhood associations.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Services Department 	\$203,060	Neighborhood Association
21	Sobering Center	Collaborative working group charged with developing a sobering center in Salem.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CMO oversees third-party program administrator 	\$11,000,000	Strategic Initiatives Manager, Courtney Knox Busch
22	Travel Salem Executive Committee	Monthly meetings to support Travel Salem initiative, and website that has tourist information.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CMO 	Unclear	Strategic Initiatives Manager, Courtney Knox Busch
23	Creating Community Resilience	Business support, job creation, and emergency response.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CMO City-wide 	Unclear	City of Salem Strategic Plan 2021-2026



#	INITIATIVE	DETAILS	PROJECT TYPE	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	FUNDING	SOURCE DOCUMENT
24	Building Great Neighborhoods	Neighborhood development, parks and recreation facilities, and bike and pedestrian safety.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Works Community Planning and Development 	Unclear	City of Salem Strategic Plan 2021-2026
25	2023 Strategic Communications & Engagement Plan Objective #1	Increase the public's trust of City government and its awareness of City resources and activities.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CCO City-wide 	Unclear	2023 Strategic Communications & Engagement Plan
26	2023 Strategic Communications & Engagement Plan Objective #2	Increase consistency and quality of non-English communication, particularly in Spanish.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CCO City-wide 	Unclear	2023 Strategic Communications & Engagement Plan
27	2023 Strategic Communications & Engagement Plan Objective #3	Better represent City's point of view/brand in all communications.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CCO City-wide 	Unclear	2023 Strategic Communications & Engagement Plan
28	2023 Strategic Communications & Engagement Plan Objective #4	Create a more effective, coordinated communications organization.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CCO City-wide 	Unclear	2023 Strategic Communications & Engagement Plan
29	2023 Strategic Communications & Engagement Plan Objective #5	Create greater public engagement in City activities and decisions.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CCO City-wide 	Unclear	2023 Strategic Communications & Engagement Plan
30	Community Violence Reduction Initiative	The Salem Police Department is taking proactive steps to intervene and address these challenges head on in collaboration with criminal justice system partners. Hosted community discussions with City Council.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DCM of CS Police 	\$4,000–10,200	Community Violence Reduction Initiative
31	Safety and Livability Bond	Delivering a myriad of projects associated with the Safety and Livability Bond measure related to sidewalks and streets, park upgrades, civic center earthquake safety, technology and cybersecurity, sites for affordable housing, affordable housing opportunity funds, fire engines and equipment, and future fire stations.	Ongoing (10 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Works Community Planning and Development Enterprise Services Fire 	\$30,000,000	Safety and Livability Bond
32	Paid Parking	Implementing paid parking in downtown, and hired a consultant to assist with process and outreach.	One-time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Works Facilities 	\$110,000–\$370,000	CMO (Keith Stahley)
33	Efficiency and Effectiveness Measures	The City has conducted efficiency studies, performance audits, and other operational improvements within the last five years. With support of the Salem City Council Finance Committee, the City will implement a series of performance and internal audits to assess the efficiency, effectiveness, and economics of City programs and services. This year the City is contracting for a new ERP.	One-time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CMO Enterprise Services 	\$6,300,000	Efficiency and Effectiveness Measures, CMO (Keith Stahley), 2025 budget
34	City Council Support	Better support for Council with earlier delivery of agendas, more frequent communications, and regular retreats. The City also oriented three new councilors.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CMO 	Unclear	CMO (Keith Stahley)
35	Employee Engagement	Understanding employee engagement and taking steps to improve it; enhancing communication with employees.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CMO 	Unclear	CMO (Keith Stahley)
36	Exploring AI	Created an artificial intelligence (AI) work group to develop a usage policy and identify opportunities to reduce staff workload.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CMO 	Unclear	CMO (Keith Stahley)



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37	Addressing PFAS	Addressing PFAS testing in the city which included: testing PFAS in river water supply and aquifer storage, testing in wastewater system, managing leachate agreements with landfill partners, sharing information with the public, and building partnerships to find long-term solutions.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Public WorksCMO	\$90,000–260,000	Website, CMO (Keith Stahley)
38	EMS Medical Transport	Taking over EMS Medical Transport including onboarding 60 new employees, acquiring equipment, and renovating a facility for operation.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Fire	First-Year Costs (including onboarding, equipment, and renovations): \$8M–\$15.1M Annual Operational Costs (staff salaries, benefits, insurance, maintenance): \$4M–\$7M.	CMO (Keith Stahley)
39	Revenue Needs	The City continues to navigate the challenges from limited revenues and resource constraints. It established a Revenue Task Force in 2024 and continues to undergo performance audits and conduct forecast validation work. The Revenue Task Force's work was carried out in parallel with the work of the Budget Committee and City Council as they consider amendments to the 2024 adopted budget and formulate the proposed 2025 budget based on revised revenue projections.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">CMO, CFO/ Finance Department	Unclear	2024 Revenue Task Force, CMO (Keith Stahley)
40	Boards and Commissions	The City is regularly instating and sunseting boards and commissions to execute tasks. Each board and commission requires City oversight, and staff resources to delegate, facilitates, and receive work.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Various – depending on the Board or Commission	Various – depending on the Board or Commission	

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