

# Charter Transition Project Change Management Framework

WORKING DRAFT

## Introduction

The Charter Transition Project team ([link](#)) is charged with implementing voter approved charter amendments and supporting the City of Portland's transition to a mayor-council form of government and introducing a city administrator by January 1, 2025. This work is grounded in [city core values](#), the [desired outcomes](#) of the Charter Commission and the project's equity framework ([link](#)).

The project sponsors and project team are committed to utilizing change management best practices in the planning for and implementing these changes. Change management, as described below, is a proven approach to implementing and sustaining organizational change initiatives. Grounding the project in a change management methodology provides structure, elevates engagement and promotes alignment throughout the organization. This document outlines the project's approach to change management.

## What is Change Management?

Change management is the application of a set of strategies to manage organizational change efforts, of all scales, that recognizes that centering the people involved in the change is vital to sustainable, durable, and long-term success of change initiatives. It is one of the "how's" of the work. Whether the change is structural, process-based, relational, or technical, change management calls for a series of intentional strategies for preparing for, implementing and sustaining change over time to increase ownership and adoption of the changes. Thoughtfully crafting, communicating, and engaging staff and leadership in the change initiative increases success and sustains the change over time.

The Charter Transition project includes many levels of change, including the roles and responsibilities of the elected officials, how Portlanders elect the City's leadership, and the organization of the city to report to a city administrator and how we deliver service. Change management strategies will be tailored to the outcomes needed to deliver the desired and required outcomes of the project. Change management will be incorporated into project work plans based on the Kotter methodology.

## The Kotter Methodology in the Charter Transition Project

There are many approaches to change management, articulated in many methodologies, and each organization and change effort will need a plan that is catered to its specific needs and

context. This project will utilize the Kotter Methodology because of its focus on the strategic, operational, and cultural aspects of change, ensuring that the organization can successfully adapt to new situations while maintaining or improving performance. Kotter has proven effective for large organizations implementing complex changes. Its structured, step-by-step approach ensures we address both the pragmatic and interpersonal aspects of change with a focus on building momentum and promoting continuous improvement.

Additionally, selecting one framework will allow for consistency across the pieces of this project and easier collaboration where appropriate as city leaders work to manage and lead through this transformational change effort.

The Kotter Methodology includes 8 core steps, which we've divided into three phases – Preparing for Change, Implementing Change, and Sustaining Change. Articulated below are those 8 steps as well as examples of their application and tools for teams to utilize as appropriate in delivering on the outcomes of the work streams and the project as a whole.

### **Phase 1: Preparing for Change**

- **Step 1 – Create a Sense of Urgency:** Highlight the need for change and spark motivation within the organization to address it.
  - Tools: Data analysis, presentations, town hall meetings, surveys, case studies, readiness assessments
  - Examples in our project context: Quantify and share data to contextualize city challenges, discuss the implications of Measure 26-228, hold workshops to discuss current issues and the importance of change.
- **Step 2 – Build a Guiding Coalition:** Assemble a group of influential individuals who have the power to lead and support the change initiative.
  - Tools: Stakeholder analysis, retreats, team-building exercises, charters, values
  - Examples in our project context: Convene and develop Bureau Directors as Executive Leadership Team (ELT), identify thought leaders among cross-bureau collaborators and external stakeholders with diverse representation, build a Transition Team
- **Step 3 – Form a Strategic Vision:** Develop a clear and inspiring vision for the future that clearly outlines the desired outcomes of the change initiative.
  - Tools: Visioning exercises, strategy mapping, SWOT analysis, risk mitigation and scenario planning, leadership alignment
  - Examples in our project context: Define a shared vision for a more effective, collaborative, and innovative Portland; create a roadmap for addressing policy priorities, implementing Measure 26-228, addressing policy priorities, improving service delivery; pass Council Resolution 37609 providing guidance to bureaus; revisit Charter Commission's desired outcomes

- **Step 4 – Enlist Volunteer Change Agents:** Recruit enthusiastic individuals who are committed to the change and can inspire others to join the effort.
  - Tools: Communication plans, training sessions, change agent networks, mentoring
  - Examples in our project context: Identify and train employees who can serve as subject matter experts and change champions, empowering them to inform and communicate the vision and benefits of the transition; e.g. BOLT, Deputy Directors, Equity Managers

## Phase 2: Implementing Change

- **Step 5 – Enable Action by Removing Barriers:** Identify and eliminate obstacles that may hinder the progress of the change initiative.
  - Tools: Root cause analysis, process mapping, impact assessments, transition-specific restructuring, employee feedback channels, resource allocation planning
  - Examples in our project context: Programmatic Assessment – Analyze current processes, identify bottlenecks, and develop strategies to reduce silos and improve cross-bureau collaboration; Bureau reassignments by Service Areas
- **Step 6 – Generate Short-Term Wins:** Achieve visible, tangible results to build momentum and motivate the organization to continue the change effort.
  - Tools: KPIs/OKRs, project management, milestone tracking, working groups, success stories, regular updates
  - Examples in our project context: Establish Independent District Commission and Salary Commission, Adopt Resolution 37609 to help guide Transition, begin 90-Day Action Plans, establish role clarity for teams and key individuals, draft position description for future City Administrator and Deputies, establish Service Areas, leverage and communicate in “phases”, celebrate and communicate achievements.

## Phase 3: Sustaining Change

- **Step 7 – Sustain Acceleration:** Use the momentum from early successes to continue driving the change effort and address more complex challenges.
  - Tools: Continuous improvement, progress monitoring, change readiness assessments, debriefs
  - Examples in our project context: Assess the impact of initial changes, identify areas for further improvement, and iteratively refine strategies to address policy priorities and improve service delivery; integrate prior milestones and success into next phases
- **Step 8 – Institute Change:** Embed the new processes, structures, and behaviors into the organization's culture to ensure long-term success.

- Tools: Training, policy updates, ongoing communication, leadership development
- Examples in our project context: Identify opportunities to ease impacted stakeholders into changes over time instead of “flipping the switch”, provide training to employees on new processes impacting their day-to-day work, update relevant policies, and continue to communicate the benefits and progress of the transition to staff and stakeholders.

### **Additional Change Management Best Practices**

The Kotter Methodology focuses primarily on organizational-scale changes. Individual work streams may want to consider supplementing that model with focused efforts on individual-level impact and behavior change, utilizing other tools including ADKAR and other models where relevant and appropriate.

### **Commitment**

Change management is one of the “how’s” of project management, how we construct and lead through change projects in a way to engages stakeholders, lays appropriate groundwork and reinforces change over time. For any organization, sustaining change – large or small, complex or simple – is never a light switch, and calls for some real intentionality. Change is complex and hard and also presents many opportunities for improvements and for re-imagining systems that do not and have not served us and our communities well. Leading through change using a change management framework, in addition to other project management best practices catered to the needs of the project, will increase our chance of successfully implementing this significant set of changes.