

Leading change, hand in hand

The success of the change initiative at the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (TBS)

During the Change Management Community of Practice session held on February 11, 2025, the Change Management National Centre of Expertise had the pleasure to interview **Noelia Abarbanel**, Director of Corporate Administrative Services and co-sponsor of the project, as well as **Mathieu Cornish**, Manager, Client Accommodation Centre and Change Leadership Consultant for the project.

This article summarizes the **highlights** of the themes discussed during the session.

Under One Roof

The project [Under One Roof](#) transformed the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (TBS) by consolidating more than 550 employees into a new, modern workspace, aligned with the hybrid work model and federal real property footprint reduction goals.

This initiative required major cultural and operational changes, such as moving to unassigned workspaces for everyone and implementing a reservation system.

Winning Practices

TBS's change management team has identified several key elements that are on the list of industry best practices to overcome the challenges and ensure the success of this initiative:

- **close collaboration** between the change sponsor and the change manager;
- **shared vision**;
- **open, transparent and ongoing communication**;
- **clearly defined roles**.

The key role of the sponsor

The Executive Sponsor, then Assistant Secretary and Chief Financial Officer of TBS, was active and visible by:

- participating in staff engagement sessions and demonstrating commitment;
- working in partnership with senior management to ensure buy-in and consistency in the messages conveyed;
- using peer relationships to influence and support change;



- communicating transparent messages to staff and encouraging feedback through ADM communications and available forums; and
- maintaining constant communication channels accessible to staff throughout the project (emails, intranet, monthly updates, meetings with employees).

Leader and change managers: hand in hand

The fruitful collaboration between the sponsor and the change managers was based on weekly meetings to discuss the adoption of the project among the workforce.

By frequently identifying challenges, gaps, and positive elements of the project using a [solutions registry tool](#), the team was continually adjusting its approach and action plan – which they consider a **key element** of the project's success.

The change management team directly supported the sponsor by:

- guiding senior management on the strategic direction to be taken (approach and messages);
- developing communication materials and training tools such as key messages, frequently asked questions, [executive engagement sessions](#), etc.; and
- facilitating engagement activities.

Together, they also used the ADKAR model and surveys to adjust their approach, always with the goal of meeting the needs of employees and ensuring a smooth transition.

The invaluable contribution of ambassadors

A network of change ambassadors was created at the request of senior management who wanted support in this area. Its members received a [half-day training](#) on change management.

The network has played a crucial role in supporting employees and ensuring adoption of new practices, but also in being a point of liaison between staff and management.

Their role has proven to be so valuable and appreciated that this network continues to be active within TBS to support further change.

TBS success story at a glance

To manage and lead change hand-in-hand, it is essential to align and communicate the project vision from the outset, hold senior management accountable, and engage staff at all levels. Frequent, transparent communication initiated early in the project is at the heart of a successful change management exercise.