



Citywide Survey Final Report

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Introduction

A Diversity & Inclusion plan was initially created in the year 2000 as leaders noticed the disparity between the current demographics of the City of Salem and the community it serves. Over the years, minor updates to the plan were made but a comprehensive review was not undertaken. To further the City's Diversity & Inclusion efforts, the City of Salem partnered with HR and Equity Consulting Firm to dig a deeper into what may be causing that disparity within the workforce and make recommendation that could be used to update the prior plan.

An anonymous citywide survey of the 1,100+ employees, of which 466 responded was conducted. The absence of 634 voices was very clear feedback. The 466 survey respondents were open, honest and authentic with their responses and feedback. In addition to the survey two listening tours, focus groups and observations were undertaken.

Overview & Purpose

Dedicated staff and citizens are the City of Salem's greatest resource. Over 1,100 employees work together to provide services, solutions and support to meet the needs of the community. In early 2018, the City approached the HR and Equity Consulting Firm (the firm) to evaluate the strength of current practices and identify areas to improve.

An anonymous survey was designed by the firm in collaboration with the City of Salem's key stakeholders from various departments, tenures and positions as part of a larger strategic plan to increase equity and diversity within the organization. Among other available resources, information obtained from this anonymous survey is a valuable tool as we build a robust diversity, equity and inclusion plan of action.

In order to execute on the strategy, the firm also undertook a listening tour to build a greater understanding of the experiences and perspectives on the organizational culture, mission, impact and effectiveness. Employees were asked about what they liked and disliked about their workplace, as well as areas for improvement. The process valued participant voice and the firm hopes that all stakeholders shared openly and honestly. This feedback will be instrumental in the efforts to better support employees as well as the larger needs of Salem's community.

Key Findings

Below is a summary of key findings and recommendations to inform staff development towards a strategic initiative for 2019.

Snapshot of respondents

- ❖ 42% of all employees responded to the survey (466 / 1100).
- ❖ Employees with less than three years of employment formed the largest segment of the responses.
- ❖ Employees with tenure between 4-20 years of service had a uniform response rate of 13%.

- ❖ All departments were represented, with the largest response coming from the public works department.
- ❖ Racial identity of City of Salem's employees align mostly with the city's racial makeup: White: 83.05%, Self-identify: 9.66%, Hispanic: 5.79%, Native American: 3.22%, Asian: 2.36%, Asian Pacific Islander: 1.29%, Black/African American: 0.64%, Lantinex: 0 .43%, Multiracial: 12.5%.
- ❖ Gender identity: Male: 60.09%, Female: 36.27%, Transgender: 0 .21, Self-Identify: 3.65%.

Working at the City

Based on the survey results, overall, employees are satisfied in their roles at the City of Salem. Respondents are proud of the work they do, and proud to be a part of the City. Along with the positive impact employees feel they have on their community, low turnover, high staff morale and engagement suggest a workforce that likes working for the City and are committed to continuing their employment.

However, a deeper dive into the survey results finds discontent among approximately one-third of the respondent employees, as highlighted by these results:

- ❖ 35% of respondents provided insights into the cause of turnover in their departments, including a lack of competitive compensation, high stress, scheduling challenges and lack of people skills at the management level.
- ❖ 58% respondents said they have considered leaving the City, for various reasons that include not wanting weekend work, lack of skills/experience in the peer group and the high stress nature of their role.
- ❖ 26% of respondents said they have experienced bias at work, although the survey does not capture the nature of bias. Based on comments received, perceptions about working at the city range from low levels of trust, blatant discrimination and lacking transparency.

Communication and collaboration is a highly desired attribute, with 58% respondents choosing communication as a key area of improvement within the City at large, with collaboration trailing close behind chosen, with 34%.

Diversity and demographics presented another area where employees are split in their response – over one-third of respondents were unsure about city employees being representative of the community they serve, with two-thirds split between yes and no. Additionally, 50% of all respondents indicated that speaking another language would support them fulfilling their job duties and serving the community; however, only 15% of the overall respondents said they actually speak a relevant second language.

Respondents across all divisions are interested in meaningful change at the City of Salem, and in the City's ability to respond adequately to the changing needs of the community being served.

Data Driven Action

According to the survey, the City has many positive aspects that can be leveraged to create a work environment and community that is responsive to the needs of its key stakeholders. While there is some discontent among employees who responded, it is worth noting that employees believe that the City can begin to make steady improvements and create a culture grounded in shared values and purpose. Forty two percent (42%) of respondents are interested in connecting with one another to create a culture of belonging.

There is a need for leadership and staff engagement in managing change and becoming a high performing city entity; 32% of respondents want internal department focused work on culture change. The desire for culture change combined with the city's inability to adapt to changes, likely contributes to 26.39% respondents stating that they have experienced incident(s) of bias in the workplace based on age, gender, ability, national origin, race, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status etc.

Overall Recommendations

With the understanding that this work is iterative and ongoing, it is also important and urgent. To that point it, is necessary to leverage the survey data and immediately begin developing a strategic plan surrounding a change in the Culture of Diversity Equity and Inclusion here at the City of Salem. While respondents expressed some discontent and a feeling of 'lack of belonging', employees seem willing to participate in activities that will lead to culture change.

Intergenerational Workforce

Challenges:

The city employs people across a broad age range, with varying levels of fluency in issues of diversity, inclusion and values. The style of leadership that the younger generation (millennials) respond to is different than that of older workforce (45-55 age). Generally, this could affect recruitment, retention and overall job satisfaction.

Opportunity:

Leverage the skill sets of each age demographic to inform and educate on experience, technology and best practices.

Range of Tenure

Challenge:

Although the majority of the respondents are newer city employees, data shows that the respondents represent a range of tenure with differing historical knowledge, priorities, and values.

Opportunity:

In order to fill upcoming retirement seats, the City will have to think creatively about leadership

styles and culture to attract and retain new applicants. Succession planning should be prioritized and unique to each department.

Culture

Challenge:

There is a lack of trust and a degree of fear within the organization. Employees feel like they will be retaliated upon.

Opportunity:

Prioritize transparency and open communication to engender trust and authentic relationships City wide within departments, across departments, top down and community facing. Specifically promote policies, practices and procedures that are inclusive and sensitive to various cultures during executive/staff/department/team meetings, town halls, staff check-ins, et al.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Challenge:

There is a gap in knowledge around the topics of equity, diversity and inclusion. Which has created an environment that lacks equity, diversity and inclusion.

Opportunity:

Add DE&I training/workshops to the list of trainings offered and assign managers to attend. Help educate leadership and staff on creating environments that are aware of DE&I.

Guiding Priorities

Alignment with Strategic Plan:

1. **Develop** a set of internal values, in collaboration with key stakeholders including staff from various departments, of differing tenure and representative of the community across race, gender and socioeconomics.
2. **Create** a three-year plan to build aligned actions, and create a set of internal initiatives that can guide the Human Resources function in creating more meaningful relationships with employees.
 - a. Reframe HR's role as one that focuses on compliance, to one that is charged with creating culture change.
 - b. Make the Human Resources team more visible to employees.
3. **Invest** in inter and intra department training on foundational topics to promote inclusion and team development such as: shared values and language, best practices of high performing teams, emotional intelligence and leadership skills. This investment will lay a strong foundation to build DE&I fluency and expertise within the City's culture.

City Wide Training topics:

- Emotional Intelligence and Leadership Development
- Managing for implicit bias and working across diversity
- Shared vocabulary
- Hiring a diverse (age, gender, race etc.) workforce and retaining talent

Stakeholder Engagements: Feedback and Recommendations

Executive Leadership / Department Management Teams

As leaders the **onus** is on you. City of Salem needs bold leadership who is comfortable with being uncomfortable. Although there are many challenges (not enough time or resources), there is an opportunity for you to get creative and develop a revised mindset of what's possible. The ultimate goal of a leader is to create leaders. In order to develop those that you lead into leaders, it will require being in a relationship. This includes connecting with the individuals on your team to understand the goals as well as any barriers between them and their goals. Then connecting those goals to the City of Salem as an organization.

1. Create citywide mission statement and values list for website
2. Series of leadership trainings to support culture change
3. Citywide Managers training on leadership and culture change

HR Group

The HR department is often the first “touch point” of the employee experience. DE&I expands beyond hiring more minorities. Instead it starts with inclusion. Here at the City of Salem there is a great opportunity for City leadership to promote DE&I by having the HR team work closely and collaboratively with Department leadership to establish an open forum of trust and communication, since the foundation of DE&I transformation starts in Human Resources. Without creating a culture that makes employees feel included from the beginning, will those hires stay?

1. Audit HR and Departmental policies, procedures, and documents for inclusivity (i.e. recruiting, onboarding, job posting, compensation, performance evals, etc.).
2. HR consulting and coaching to support departmental team members and leadership understand how to incorporate DE&I into their work plans.
3. Create an avenue to receive ongoing feedback internally and externally.
4. Implement Employee Resource Groups (like focus group).

Focus Group

The group is heavily invested in the success of the DE&I initiative which ultimately results in increased employee engagement, and workplace satisfaction. The overall feedback and

recommendations were categorized into: compensation, lack of people skills or inclusivity awareness at the management level.

Competitive Compensation: Some women have reported that they have been promoted into positions previously occupied by a man; they have taken on additional duties from the previous incumbent, yet not received additional pay or recognition.

Lack of People Skills/ Inclusivity Awareness at Management Level: This could stem from a multitude of experiences, but it has been reported that there is a general frustration with Management that they are either unaware of how staff are impacted, unsupportive to staff in times of need, or unaware of the responsibilities their staff incur. Some managers have a reputation for demonstrating an inability to empathize with staff and/or customers.

These type of findings can lead to an employee feeling less included in a particular team, department or group of workers for a variety of reasons that impact Diversity, Equity and/or Inclusion.

Larger Staff Group

The opportunity for all staff to share their feedback, thoughts and ideas is critical in creating an inclusive workplace. Often employees are not given the opportunity to make suggestions and provide observations as to organizational structure. Insight from the folks that the structure actually impacts, is key in moving the needle in DE&I work. Recommendations brought forward by this group included;

1. Share/communicate department successes, what's working and what's not going well.
2. A more robust and comprehensive onboarding process.
3. Managers be in the "trenches" - doing the work, not just directing the work.
4. HR spend time with departments without manager.

Action Related Recommendations

1. Reframing HR's role and its position within the departments this will assist in reshaping their image which is key in changing City of Salem culture.
2. Gaining a better understanding of the reasons behind mistrust expressed by staff members, seems imperative. Face to face discussions between groups/managers and HR may be beneficial to fully understand the concerns brought forwards by staff such as:
 - a. There is a general perception that the City turns a blind eye to underperformers, especially if they have greater tenure with the City. This occurs at all levels, including upper management and laborers.
 - b. Low levels of trust, blatant discrimination and lacking transparency.

- ❖ Some of these comments could have pertained to inconsistent treatment (especially within represented staff groups) that may or may not have pertained to a protected class.
 - ❖ Lack of communication.
 - ❖ Lack of consistent findings.
 - ❖ Challenges with information being discerned promptly and accurately through upper management channels.
 - ❖ Confidentiality and the challenges that arise once someone gains a reputation for being a “squeaky wheel” or for being “unable to cope” (with workload, relationships, etc.).
3. The City struggles greatly with emotional intelligence. Management staff have the best of intentions, but until they have the skill set to navigate communications and decision making with the mindset of DE&I their leadership skills will continue to suffer. Training and enhanced awareness will not only aid management staff, but it will provide them the basis to better assist staff with healthy emotional intelligence.
- ❖ Getting to the root of why staff have considered leaving the City seems imperative in deriving at solutions for inclusion and belonging so that people want to stay.
 - ❖ Consider additional focus groups. Create an additional survey.
 - ❖ We need longer and more frequent discussions, training and workshops to raise awareness.
 - ❖ Talk openly about experiences related to equity, diversity and inclusion. One to two hour meetings stifle progress and fluid communication.

Conclusion

The type of change that is needed to move the needle is going to **require** time and resources. Together, we can creatively use our time and resources to create the change we desire. Although the survey uncovered some startling and uncomfortable information, it also revealed there are many things going well. Many employees are satisfied with their role and are proud of the work they do.

This started with identifying some of the keys challenges within the City of Salem. It continues with peeling back the layers to reveal further challenges, creating a plan, and then implementing a transparent plan with measurable indicators and communication (internally and externally) on the achievements.

Everyone can play a part in creating a culture of belonging. Leadership is doing what is wanted and needed to support a healthy and thriving community. We have the key components a dedicated staff and leadership.

10 Ingredients for a Thriving Culture

In order for the City of Salem to be an employer of choice, stand out, and be a catalyst for change, create the following:

1. A pleasant, safe and comfortable working environment free of physical dangers, harassment, bullying or discrimination.
2. A trusting environment in which employees can speak their minds without fear of retaliation.
3. A supporting environment for teamwork, collaboration and innovation.
4. The opportunity to grow personally and professionally.
5. Acknowledgement for an employee's work.
6. Open, honesty communication.
7. Competent and ethical leadership.
8. Competitive and reasonable wages and policies.
9. The training, tools and equipment employee's need to be successful at their jobs.
10. Work-Life balance - Respect for their lives outside of work.