OFFICE OF THE DANE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
**Dane County Workplace Climate Assessment**

**Prepared for:**

Office of the Dane County Board of Supervisors
210 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd
Madison WI 53703

**Final Report**
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KEEN INDEPENDENT RESEARCH

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# SUMMARY REPORT — Executive Summary

The Dane County Board of Supervisors in Dane County, Wisconsin retained Keen Independent Research (Keen Independent) in June 2023 to conduct an assessment of the County's workplace climate and provide recommendations on how to improve. The assessment was complete by mid-January 2024.

## Study Overview

The purpose of the study was to provide Dane County ("County") with customized recommendations for supporting a positive workplace climate. Major objectives included:

- Identifying areas of strength;
- Identifying areas where challenges and barriers exist; and
- Identifying resources needed to implement changes.

**Methods**. Keen Independent examined past County studies, reviewed policies and procedures, performed case studies of other counties and examined best practices as part of this effort. Nearly 1,500 County employees provided input that informs our recommendations.

## Summary of Recommendations

We use the culture cascade framework[1], which contains three major phases, to organize our recommendations.

1. **Leadership alignment:**
   - ➤ Reaffirm leadership commitment to vision and values.
   - ➤ Ensure managers receive continual training.
   - ➤ Leverage a committee to serve as workplace culture champions.

2. **Communications and decisions:**
   - ➤ Provide training on how to create an Equity and Inclusion Plan (EIP).
   - ➤ Clearly document and articulate the internal complaints process.
   - ➤ Ensure that internal communications have a rationale.

3. **Human resources and data systems:**
   - ➤ Increase transparency around hiring and promotions.
   - ➤ Align training with organizational values.
   - ➤ Set benchmarks for employee satisfaction.
   - ➤ Offer more direct, timely support to employees who identify as having disabilities.

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[1] Kleiman, N., & Shermansong, A. (2022). City Leader Guide on Organizational Culture Change: Creating Conditions for Innovation, Collaboration, and High Performance in City Hall.

## SUMMARY REPORT — Introduction

### Research Approach

This study concluded in December 2023 and used information from:

- Analysis of the County's policies, procedures and programs;
- Examination of County workforce and hiring;
- Interviews with County staff;
- Review of prior reports and recommendations; and
- Virtual workshop with County employees.

Keen Independent obtained input from nearly 1,500 County employees through these efforts (not counting any employees who were engaged for prior studies/reports). The study team contacted several managers and department heads directly to request interviews. Additionally, the study team was contacted via email and phone by several County employees wishing to request interviews. Individual interviews were conducted with 15 County employees at all levels representing eight departments. Interviews informed our assessment of current County programs, policies and initiatives.

The County provided data, contact information for interviewees and documentation of policies, procedures and programs for analysis.

### Organization of the Report

We first present brief summaries and analyses of data collected that informed our recommendations. Topics covered are:

- Workplace context;
- Complaints process;
- Training; and
- Internal communications.

Following this information, we present our recommendations and implementation models.

Our recommendations are supported by additional research documented in appendices. Listed below is each appendix.

A. Review of workforce policies and procedures;
B. Workforce data analysis;
C. Review of Equity and Inclusion Plans;
D. Results of employee virtual workshop;
E. Internal complaints review;
F. Complaints procedures best practices;
G. Review of literature and best practices for promoting a positive workplace climate;
H. Comparative research from other counties; and
I. Department initiatives and opportunities to support positive workplace culture.

# SUMMARY REPORT — Workplace context

Dane County Government is served by over 2,600 employees. Keen Independent collected information to provide context to the County's workplace climate by examining policies and procedures, workforce demographics and County employee input.

## Policies and Procedures

Written policies and procedures set the tone for workplace climate. Keen Independent reviewed policies and procedures that apply to the Dane County workforce (detailed summaries appear in Appendix A). Categories of documents we reviewed include:

- Governing ordinances;
- Hiring and separations policies;
- Workplace conduct policies; and
- Accommodation and leave policies.

**Assessment**. Overall, the County's policy and procedure documents support a positive workplace climate. A major strength is that most of these documents provide rationale for their contents, which promotes transparency and standardization of processes.

The County may consider revising its probationary period policy to give employees a greater sense of security during the probationary period. Several County employees who participated in interviews and the virtual workshop expressed feeling like they had "no rights" during their probationary period.

**Equity and inclusion plans (EIPs)**. The study team also reviewed departmental EIPs (Appendix C). Though there is an established template, the EIPs varied widely in their detail and some appeared unfinished. The requirement for each department to have an EIP can support a positive workplace climate, but departments must all demonstrate commitment to developing and maintaining their plans.

## Demographics

About 21.5 percent are people of color and 53.4 percent are women in the Dane County Government workforce. These percentages are higher than the respective percentage of available workers of color and women workers in the local workforce. The County hires workers of color and women at higher rates than would be expected given the local workforce demographics. Appendix B contains more details about these analyses and an assessment of the workforce analyses conducted by the University of Wisconsin Madison La Follette students.

1. Dane County full-time workers, 2023, and available workforce

| All EEO Groups | (a) Employees | (b) Percent of employees | (c) Availability | (d) Disparity index 100*(b/c) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Race/ethnicity** | | | | |
| African American | 161 | 6.5 % | 5.7 % | 113 |
| Asian American | 130 | 5.3 | 3.2 | 166 |
| American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or other[1] | 21 | 0.8 | 0.5 | 175 |
| Hispanic American | 178 | 7.2 | 6.1 | 118 |
| Two or more races | 43 | 1.7 | 3.2 | 53 |
| **Total people of color** | **533** | **21.5 %** | **18.7 %** | 115 |
| Non-Hispanic white | 1,943 | 78.5 | 81.3 | 97 |
| **Total** | **2,476** | **100.0 %** | **100.0 %** | |
| **Gender** | | | | |
| Women | 1,322 | 53.4 % | 52.1 % | 102 |
| Men | 1,154 | 46.6 | 47.9 | 97 |
| **Total** | **2,476** | **100.0 %** | **100.0 %** | |

Note:     1/ Includes Other Pacific Islander.

Source:     Dane County employee data, Census 2021 ACS data for availability analysis.

## Employee Impressions

Keen Independent prompted employees who participated in the virtual workshop to share their impressions of the workplace climate (detailed in Appendix D). Many expressed feeling like their coworkers were open to and accepting of their perspectives. However, some comments indicated that different working styles or accommodations are "not fully embraced" by everyone.

Participants in the virtual workshop who identified as having a disability provided lower ratings than other groups for this item.

2. Virtual workshop participants ratings of agreement with the statement, "At Dane County government, people you work with accept a variety of ideas, perspectives and working styles."
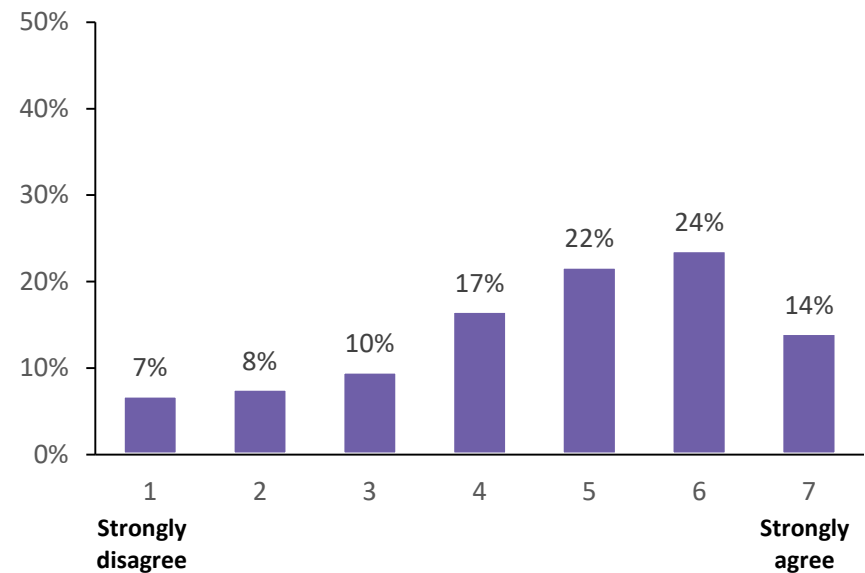


Note: n = 1,054.

Source: Keen Independent Research.

*I think the management in our office does not have a very good understanding of the concept of different working styles, leading to the mismanagement [of] certain staff who might otherwise work better under different conditions.*

*White female employee*

*I do worry that some people have not fully embraced the reality of work from home as a viable option. I also worry about larger pressures to force employees back into office buildings because the city has to pay rent on these buildings ....*

*White male employee*

*I appreciate the steps Dane County has taken to support workers who are diverse, but in the mission statement and vision, it does not discuss workers who have a disability or older workers. I do have a disability, and although they have made most of the accommodations I have requested, the "official" process is cumbersome.*

*Female employee*

*Cultural differences can still be scrutinized and not accepted, particularly in departments that are traditionally more homogeneous.*

*Male employee of color*

*In our work group we are always open to new ideas and better ways of doing things. We specifically look for different perspectives during discussions.*

*White male employee*

*We have regular conversations on how to best support others['] learning styles and respect their boundaries.*

*Female employee of color*

## SUMMARY REPORT — Workplace context

Employees also provided insight into how their managers affect the workplace culture. Although most virtual workshop participants agreed that their manager treats them with respect, there were several comments indicating that the treatment of staff by their managers can vary widely. Since leadership sets the tone for organizational culture, this was an area the study team identified early in the process as one where the County may want to focus.

3. Virtual workshop participants ratings of agreement with the statement, "My manager treats me with respect and dignity."
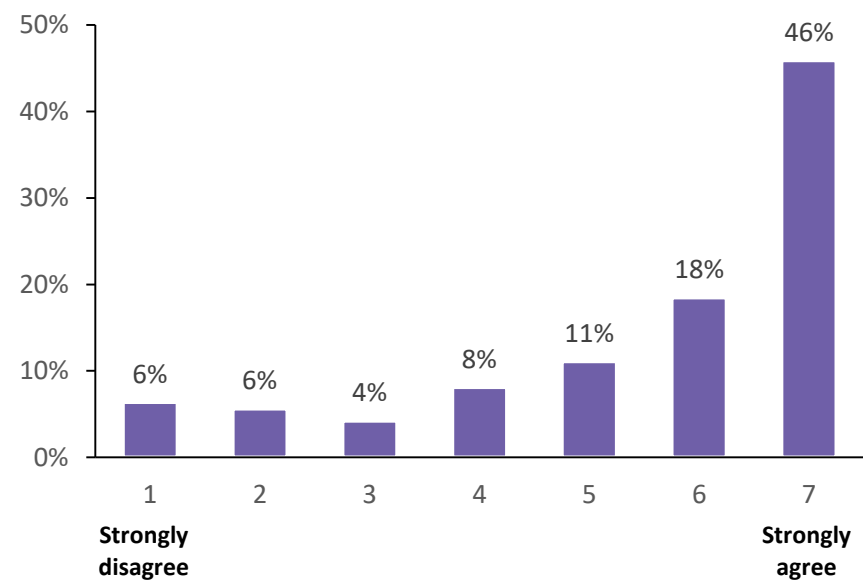


Note: n = 1,060.
Source: Keen Independent Research.

*... inconsistency, extremes of reaction, and an incongruent sense of acceptance and trust is the norm.*

*County employee*

*The actions of my manager and Department Head have led myself and several coworkers in my department to need long-term FMLA to address mental health issues created by those in power.*

*Male employee of color*

*Management generally treats me with respect but I've seen others not treated the same way.*

*County employee*

*Depends on which manager, I have many supervisors. Some are horrible, some detached, some ignorant or incapable, and some do indeed treat people with respect.*

*Male employee*

*My direct supervisor, I feel, does treat me with respect and dignity. However, I don't feel that the head of my division does.*

*White female employee*

*My director listens, takes time to meet with staff, promotes self-care, understands that family is important and is fair to staff.*

*Female employee of color*

*Luckily, I have a great direct manager ....*

*Multiracial male employee*

# SUMMARY REPORT — Complaints process

Dane County has several channels for receiving complaints from its employees. We provide our assessment of the complaints process and share County employees' impressions of the complaints process.

## Assessment

Generally, the complaints process supports a positive work environment. For example, having multiple people and offices that receive complaints can help employees who may feel more or less comfortable with certain individuals. However, the entire complaints process the County actually practices is not fully outlined in the "Complaints Against a County Employee — Management Response to Non-Criminal" policy document in the Administrative Practices Manual. Additionally, the document does not provide employees with information about how to dispute any unsatisfactory outcomes of complaint investigations. We provide a more detailed assessment of the complaints process in Appendix E.

It is best practice to offer informal avenues for submitting complaints (best practices are outlined in Appendix F). The County already offers several informal complaints avenues and may consider promoting those options to employees more often.

## Employee Impressions

Virtual workshop participants were asked to rate their comfort with reporting an instance of discrimination in the workplace. More than half of virtual workshop participants indicated agreement that they would feel comfortable reporting such an instance. However, women and participants who identified as having a disability chose lower ratings than their counterparts.

Comments from individuals who provided lower ratings indicated that some employees feel they are ignored or punished for reporting workplace discrimination.

4. Virtual workshop participants ratings of agreement with the statement, "If it happened, I would feel comfortable reporting a case of workplace discrimination at Dane County."
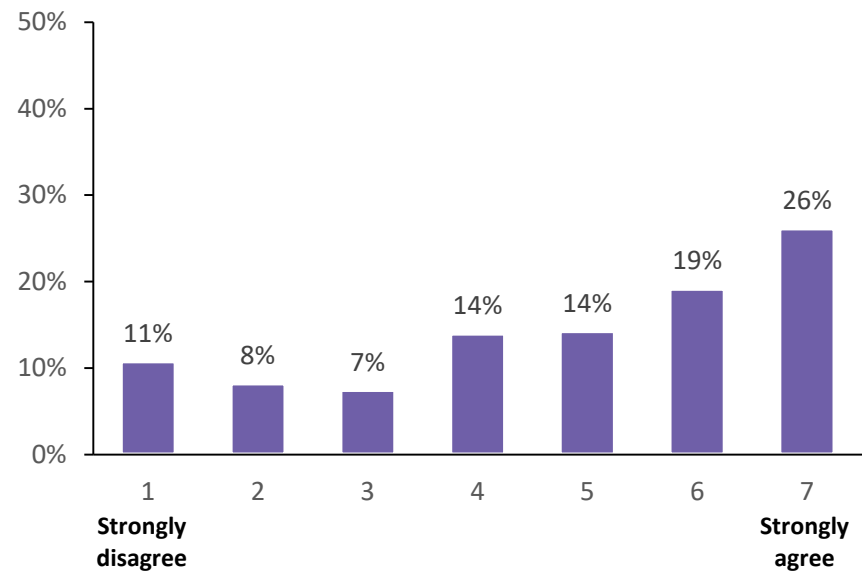


Note.    n = 1,059.

Source:    Keen Independent Research.

*I have reported workplace discrimination and without any investigation, my Department Head blamed me for being harassed. My direct manager ... takes no action when I continue to report specific acts of discrimination against my protected status.*

*Employee of color*

*I've witnessed discrimination by our [manager] on several occasions. Fear of guaranteed retaliation kept me from reporting it.*

*County employee*

# SUMMARY REPORT — Training

County employees recognize the importance of ongoing training. Keen Independent summarizes their input and provides an overview of best practices.

## Best Practices

Literature on positive work environments indicates that training is crucial to maintaining a positive work environment (a review of this literature appears in Appendix G). Leaders must be trained on management techniques and staff must be trained on job-relevant skills as well as interpersonal skills.

**Milwaukee County example**. The County of Milwaukee, Wisconsin has a Workforce Training and Development division that provides skill-based, regulatory, onboarding, mindset and other trainings for Department employees, students, interns and community-based providers.[2] Employees who are interested in training sessions may submit a request. All past training sessions are recorded and made available to all employees.

Appendix H provides more details on workplace initiatives within Milwaukee County as well as two other counties (Ingham County, MI and Ramsey County, MN) identified as benchmarks for Dane County.

## Employee Impressions

Employees who participated in the virtual workshop indicated that they wanted more training for staff at all levels, including leadership. Many made comments about training in response to a question about vision for a positive work environment. Others claimed that training is difficult to consistently receive.

*Have all the staff take classes on DEI every six months.*

*Male employee of color*

*Any time I have asked my supervisor about trainings … or advancing … answers are not known or given, and I don't feel supported.*

*County employee*

*Training and Development is extremely needed ….*

*Female employee of color*

*My department is making active coordinated effort for training and programming for DEI (yay!) but don't know if others are (boo!).*

*Multiracial male employee*

*I believe there is a huge need for ongoing mentorship and support. I worry about the quiet, subtle ways that people are made to feel unwelcome, unsupported, isolated, or resented.*

*White female employee*

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[2] Milwaukee County Health & Human Services (n.d.). "Workforce Training and Development: DHHS New Employee Orientation, HealthStream and DEI." Milwaukee County. Retrieved November 16, 2023, from https://county.milwaukee.gov/EN/DHHS/About/Workforce-Training-and-Development.

# SUMMARY REPORT — Internal communications

Communications in an organization can reflect the organization's culture and climate. Keen Independent collected best practice information on internal communications and provides additional relevant comments by employees.

## Best Practices

The culture cascade framework outlined in Appendix G highlights the importance of communications. Employees value transparency and a positive workplace climate is supported when leaders take time to effectively craft their communications. Effective communication can:

- Build motivation and trust;
- Create common identities;
- Strengthen employees' sense of responsibility; and
- Overcome internal conflicts and crises.

Department heads, managers and supervisors should lead by example and utilize the following guidelines:

- Share information respectfully and credibly.

- Select the most effective communication methods. This means making an effort to understand, appreciate and interact with staff to determine how receptive they are to various communications methods.

- Disseminate communications in a timely fashion.

- Train other employees on how to communicate appropriately and effectively.

## Employee Impressions

Employees participating in the virtual workshop agreed that communication is essential to preserving a positive work environment. Several expressed concerns that managers and supervisors do not communicate clearly and effectively.

*[A positive work environment looks like one with] clearer communication across the board.*

*Female employee of color*

*[A positive work environment looks like one with] trust and open communication between staff and management, even when we disagree strongly about important issues.*

*White female employee*

*Communication is also poor which leads to staff feeling isolated or left out. Only certain people seem to be "in the know" about decisions that impact a large amount of employees. It seems like there are secrets on purpose because leadership knows the decision isn't in line with the agency's core values.*

*White male employee*

# SUMMARY REPORT — Recommendations

Keen Independent recognizes the value in using a framework to scaffold organizational change. We used the culture cascade framework[3] (detailed in Appendix G) to categorize our major recommendations.

## Framework

The culture cascade framework contains three major phases that build upon each other to foster lasting organizational change.

**Leadership alignment**. The framework acknowledges that true organizational change must start from the top. When leaders are aligned with the vision and values of the organization, they are more effective at fostering positive change throughout.

**Communications and decisions**. In this second stage, the organization focuses on ensuring that policies align with the values and vision. Equally important is the communication around these decision-making processes and policies.

**Human resources and data systems**. Once the organization has established its culture through leadership and policy, it must maintain the culture through hiring, promotions and training. Additionally, collecting measures of employee satisfaction is an important component of this phase to ensure that progress is tracked.

Keen Independent used this framework to categorize recommendations we developed based on input from Dane County employees, data and document review and best practice research.

## Implementation

The following pages contain tables (Figures 5 through 7) that provide details on suggested strategies to implement our recommendations. Sections in each table are described below.

- **Resources required.** This section identifies time, personnel and budget necessary to implement the recommendations. The County already has many of these resources available.

- **Responsible party and role**. Here, we identify County persons who we envision spearheading each recommendation and provide descriptions of their responsibilities.

- **Tasks**. We list several examples of tasks that will help the County make progress toward implementing the recommendation. We identified the tasks we see as requiring low, medium and high amounts of effort and resources on the part of the County.

- **Tracking progress**. To ensure accountability, we provide examples of types of metrics the County could track in evaluating progress toward recommendation implementation.

Considering our recommendations in the context of the three culture cascade framework stages (leadership alignment, communications and decisions, and human resources and data systems) can help the County prioritize and see relationships between recommended actions.

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[3] Kleiman, N., & Shermansong, A. (2022). City Leader Guide on Organizational Culture Change: Creating Conditions for Innovation, Collaboration, and High Performance in City Hall.

# SUMMARY REPORT — Recommendations

5. Leadership alignment recommendations

| Recommendation | Resources required | Responsible party/role | Tasks | Tracking progress |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1-1. Reaffirm leadership commitment to vision and values | Leadership time<br><br>Staff meetings<br><br>Internal communications channels<br><br>Existing vision and values statements<br><br>Staff with strategic planning experience<br><br>Budget for outside strategic planning consultants<br><br>Project management software/tools | Managers and supervisors communicate vision and values with staff often<br><br>Department heads ensure consistency in communication of vision and values and direct efforts to develop or improve visions and values | Low effort:<br><br>■ Affirm existing vision and values in meetings and other communications<br><br>■ List vision and values on department website<br><br>Medium effort:<br><br>■ Solicit input on vision and values from employees<br><br>■ Regularly revisit vision and values and revise as needed<br><br>High effort:<br><br>■ Engage in strategic planning processes at the department level to define vision and values with internal and external input | Assess visibility of vision and values (e.g., on internal communications, department website)<br><br>Assess strategic planning task progress (percent complete) |

# SUMMARY REPORT — Recommendations

5. Leadership alignment recommendations (continued)

| Recommendation | Resources required | Responsible party/role | Tasks | Tracking progress |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1-2. Ensure managers receive continual training | Leadership time<br><br>Existing training resources<br><br>Training budget<br><br>Partnerships with external organizations offering training (e.g., YWCA) | Department heads ensure managers are properly trained and spearhead efforts to bring in trainers/increase training opportunities<br><br>Managers and supervisors request additional training | Low effort:<br><br>■ Encourage managers to seek outside training opportunities or certifications<br><br>Medium effort:<br><br>■ Revisit and update training materials regularly to align with current standards<br><br>■ Develop checklist of management competencies<br><br>High effort:<br><br>■ Conduct best practices research on management training and use results to shape training program<br><br>■ Partner with external organization to facilitate management training | Track dollars spent on external training per department<br><br>Track number of managers completing external trainings<br><br>Include training competencies in management performance evaluation process<br><br>Assess employees' perceptions of their managers' skills |

# SUMMARY REPORT — Recommendations

5. Leadership alignment recommendations (continued)

| Recommendation | Resources required | Responsible party/role | Tasks | Tracking progress |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1-3. Leverage a committee in each department to champion workplace culture | Leadership time<br><br>Staff time<br><br>Existing committees | Department committees own workplace culture initiatives and make recommendations to department heads<br><br>Department heads oversee the committees and act on committee recommendations | Low effort:<br><br>■ Task an existing committee with promoting positive workplace culture<br><br>Medium effort:<br><br>■ Develop directives and goals for a workplace climate committee<br><br>■ Solicit employees to serve on a workplace climate committee<br><br>High effort:<br><br>■ Form a workplace climate committee with the department head as the committee chair (committee serves as a sounding board for leadership ideas and recommends new initiatives) | Measure employee satisfaction through annual department surveys<br><br>Track attendance at employee engagement events |

# SUMMARY REPORT — Recommendations

6. Communications and decisions recommendations

| Recommendation | Resources required | Responsible party/role | Tasks | Tracking progress |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2-1. Provide training on how to create a consistent Equity and Inclusion Plan (EIP) using the template | Employee Relations time<br><br>Office for Equity and Inclusion time<br><br>Leadership time<br><br>EIP template<br><br>Training budget | Employee Relations and the Office for Equity and Inclusion collaborate on training content<br><br>Employee Relations manages internal training materials | Low effort:<br><br>■ Set County-wide schedule for updating EIPs<br><br>Medium effort:<br><br>■ Have leaders from departments with detailed EIPs meet with departments with underdeveloped EIPs to discuss strategies for improvement<br><br>High effort:<br><br>■ Seek outside trainers to facilitate equity and inclusion training<br><br>■ Develop a robust training module for drafting an EIP (e.g., that includes written and video materials to support different learning preferences) | Track how often EIPs are updated in each department<br><br>Track how often EIP training is accessed<br><br>Assess EIPs for completion on a biannual schedule |

# SUMMARY REPORT — Recommendations

6. Communications and decisions recommendations (continued)

| Recommendation | Resources required | Responsible party/role | Tasks | Tracking progress |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2-2. Clearly document and articulate the internal complaints process | Employee Relations time<br><br>Office for Equity and Inclusion time<br><br>Leadership time<br><br>Existing complaints policy | Employee Relations maintains and updates policy and procedure documents<br><br>Employee Relations and the Office for Equity and Inclusion collaborate on policy content<br><br>Managers and supervisors communicate policy content to staff | Low effort:<br>■ Continue to promote various avenues for filing complaints<br>■ Inform complainants of process details beyond what exist in the policy<br><br>Medium effort:<br>■ Codify the entire complaints process in a revised policy document<br>■ Include revised policy in training documents<br><br>High effort:<br>■ Develop, document and communicate a process for employees to dispute results of complaints investigations | Measure complainant satisfaction with how their complaints were handled<br><br>Measure employee attitudes toward the complaints process |

# SUMMARY REPORT — Recommendations

6. Communications and decisions recommendations (continued)

| Recommendation | Resources required | Responsible party/role | Tasks | Tracking progress |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2-3. Ensure that internal communications have a rationale | Leadership time<br><br>Existing communications channels<br><br>Training budget<br><br>Partnerships with external organizations offering training | Department heads provide oversight on intradepartmental communications<br><br>Managers and supervisors ensure that their communications contain rationales | Low effort:<br><br>■ Model effective communications in written messages from leadership to staff<br><br>Medium effort:<br><br>■ Inventory intradepartmental communications to identify opportunities for improvement<br><br>High effort:<br><br>■ Develop or identify training on effective communication for leadership | Measure employee perceptions of clarity in communications<br><br>Measure employee perceptions of transparency in their department/the County overall |

# SUMMARY REPORT — Recommendations

7. Human resources and data systems recommendations

| Recommendation | Resources required | Responsible party/role | Tasks | Tracking progress |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3-1. Increase transparency around hiring and promotions | Employee Relations time<br><br>Office for Equity and Inclusion time<br><br>Leadership time<br><br>Staff time | Employee Relations owns policies and procedures related to hiring and promotion<br><br>Department leaders take responsibility for the development of their staff members | Low effort:<br>▪ Communicate existing policies around hiring and promotions<br>▪ Acknowledge barriers groups have faced to employment and promotion<br><br>Medium effort:<br>▪ Develop a checklist of competencies needed to attain promotions by department<br><br>High effort:<br>▪ Create personalized growth plans with all employees that set standards for promotions<br>▪ Expand recruitment efforts to ensure County positions continue to attract diverse candidates | Track demographics of new hires and promotions<br><br>Measure employee attitudes toward hiring and promotions<br><br>Measure employee perceptions of support of and investment in their professional growth |

# SUMMARY REPORT — Recommendations

7. Human resources and data systems recommendations (continued)

| Recommendation | Resources required | Responsible party/role | Tasks | Tracking progress |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3-2. Align training with organizational values | Employee Relations time<br><br>Leadership time<br><br>Existing training resources<br><br>Training budget<br><br>Partnerships with external organizations offering training (e.g., YWCA) | Employee Relations owns process of evaluating training between all departments<br><br>Department heads hire outside training facilitators and ensure employees feel empowered to request training | Low effort:<br><br>■ Encourage employees to seek supplemental training<br><br>Medium effort:<br><br>■ Identify gaps in training within departments (e.g., by soliciting employee feedback)<br><br>■ Include training competencies in employee evaluations<br><br>High effort:<br><br>■ Inventory types of training offered in all departments<br><br>■ Partner with organizations or hire outside facilitators for mission-critical training | Measure employee satisfaction with training offered<br><br>Track all employees' outside training |

# SUMMARY REPORT — Recommendations

7. Human resources and data systems recommendations (continued)

| Recommendation | Resources required | Responsible party/role | Tasks | Tracking progress |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3-3. Set benchmarks for employee satisfaction | Department of Administration time<br><br>Leadership time<br><br>Organization management software (or other repository for employee data)<br><br>Existing surveys<br><br>Budget for consulting services | Department of Administration owns County-wide efforts to survey employees<br><br>Department heads assess their methods of collecting feedback from employees | Low effort:<br><br>■  Use existing methods of capturing input to set short-term goals<br><br>Medium effort:<br><br>■  Identify ways to improve existing input collection methods within departments<br><br>High effort:<br><br>■  Convene a committee to inventory existing methods of collecting departments use to collect input from County employees<br><br>■  Develop a robust County-wide annual employee survey | Track number of departments setting benchmarks for employee satisfaction (or other relevant measures)<br><br>Track participation in annual surveys |

# SUMMARY REPORT — Recommendations

7. Human resources and data systems recommendations (continued)

| Recommendation | Resources required | Responsible party/role | Tasks | Tracking progress |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3-4. Offer more direct, timely support to employees who identify as having disabilities | Employee Relations time<br><br>Office for Equity and Inclusion time<br><br>Leadership time<br><br>Organization management software (or other repository for employee data)<br><br>Budget for consulting services | Employee Relations owns policies related to disability accommodation<br><br>Office for Equity and Inclusion assists departments in aggregating their resources and capturing appropriate data<br><br>Department heads oversee communications | Low effort:<br><br>■ Aggregate existing resources for employees with disabilities<br><br>■ Communicate County efforts to exceed ADA compliance<br><br>Medium effort:<br><br>■ Ensure departments have appropriate tools to document employee disabilities<br><br>■ Provide appropriate accessibility services for employees (e.g., meeting captions, voice-operated software, large computer monitors, high-contrast images)<br><br>High effort:<br><br>■ Conduct focus groups to identify opportunities to better serve employees with disabilities | Disaggregate attitudinal measures of workplace satisfaction by ability status |

# APPENDIX A. Workforce Policies

This document summarizes Dane County's workforce policies that relate to workplace culture. Sections of this document include:

- Legislation and governing ordinances;

- Hiring and separations policies;

- Workplace conduct policies; and

- Accommodation and leave policies.

Throughout this appendix, we present brief recommendations designed to help the County support a positive workplace, including diversity, equity and inclusions efforts, through its policies and practices.

# A. Workforce Policies — Legislation and governing ordinances

Dane County has adopted a series of ordinances that govern local activities. Below, we review a few ordinances that have direct implications for workplace culture.

## State Legislation

We summarize a few pieces of state legislation that relate to the employment of government workers.

**Wisconsin Act 10**. Adopted in 2011, Act 10 restricted the activities of public unions. The act prohibited public unions from automatically withdrawing dues and restricted wage increase bargaining to be no larger than inflation. This measure drastically decreased union participation in Wisconsin and has met numerous challenges.[1]

**Fair employment**. The Fair Employment section of the Wisconsin State Statute Chapter 111 defines classes protected from employment discrimination. These include age, race, creed, disability, marital status, military status, sex and sexual orientation.

Section 111.335 describes the bounds of discrimination related to assessment of arrest and conviction records. The statute holds that it is not employment discrimination to refuse to employ an individual with an arrest record when employment eligibility depends on whether the individual can be bonded by the employer or when a pending conviction is relevant to the job duties. It is also not considered employment discrimination to refuse to employ an individual with a felony in specified sectors or any conviction that relates to the job duties.

## Dane County Ordinances Regarding Personnel

Keen Independent reviewed two primary County ordinances that relate to personnel. The content of these ordinances is reflected in many of the Administrative Practices Manual policies (reviewed in next section).

**Affirmative action**. The Affirmative Action Ordinance (Chapter 19) begins with an equal employment statement saying that the County's policy is to hire without regard to federally protected classes. The ordinance acknowledges the historical barriers to employment that various minoritized groups have faced and affirms the County's commitment to "prevent and eliminate discrimination and to balance the County's workforce."[2] Subsequent sections of the ordinance outline what discrimination on the basis of each class identified can entail.

Additionally, the ordinance defines the role of the County Executive, Affirmative Action Officer and County department heads in supporting affirmative action. These roles include recruitment efforts, metrics for measuring progress and promoting a workplace environment that is free from harassment. Guidelines for filing complaints related to discrimination also appear in the ordinance.

**Civil service**. The County's Civil Service Ordinance (Chapter 18) outlines several policies that provide guidelines around hiring, job performance, and workplace conduct. We summarize several sections here.

Collective bargaining. Although state law restricts the activities of public unions, the County allows employees to self-organize into employee groups that may advocate on their behalf.

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[1] https://pbswisconsin.org/news-item/unions-sue-to-reverse-act-10-restrictions-on-teachers-other-public-workers-in-wisconsin/

[2] County of Dane, Wisconsin. Affirmative Action Ordinance. §19.02(3). https://www.countyofdane.com/ordinances#introduction

# A. Workforce Policies — Legislation and governing ordinances

**Recruitment**. When the County is hiring for external recruitments, an announcement must be provided to the state job service office. The ordinance also requires a public announcement. Specific places where jobs may be announced are determined by the hiring division, but the ordinance suggests newspapers and trade association publications.

Job announcements are typically advertised on the County's NEOGOV job site, the Job Center of Wisconsin and Indeed.com in addition to job listservs maintained by the County's Employee Relations Department. The NEOGOV job posting links are shared with the hiring department, which may share the posting links with their professional groups and other relevant organizations.

**Examinations**. Part of determining the eligibility of job candidates involves the completion of examinations. Divisions may opt for oral or written exams that assess the candidate's relevant job skills. Veterans and their spouses are given additional points on their exams, depending on status. Based on exam scores, applicants are placed on eligibility lists, which are provided to the hiring division. Employee Relations will then notify candidates of their eligibility. An eligibility list may not be terminated prior to the 6-month eligibility period until all eligible candidates have been interviewed and the hiring department provides written justification to Employee Relations explaining why all candidates are not qualified. Employee relations then determines whether a new recruitment can occur.

**Criminal history**. Any hiring entity within the County may require applicants to disclose their criminal background and/or request the Sheriff conduct a background check. However, the ordinance prohibits discrimination based on an arrest or conviction record that is unrelated to the position.

**Alternative selection**. The Dane County Board of Supervisors recognizes that individuals can be at a disadvantage in the hiring process due to a disability or social/economic disadvantage, thus limiting their ability to gain experience in a job they could perform. With alternative selection, a job can be restructured to allow such individuals to perform its duties, gain experience and then advance to other jobs.

**Probation**. New hires within the County are subject to a probationary period of length dependent on job classification. During this period, employees may not use paid time off and will receive a performance evaluation within 60 to 90 days.

**Ethics**. The ordinance identifies types of employee conduct that are prohibited. These include fundraising, accepting gifts, sexual harassment, retaliation and discrimination.

**Salary plan**. The County has a step schedule of salary increments that is maintained in the "Employee Benefit Handbook Wage Appendixes" and "Management Pay Scales." The first step is the hiring rate and hiring managers may request higher pay steps for new hires that exceed minimum qualifications (approval is given by the Personnel and Finance Committee). Employees that demonstrate proficiency in their jobs and meet the longevity requisites may advance one pay step pending approval by the division's appointing authority. Employees who are denied pay step advancement can request a written statement containing reasons for the denial and can appeal the decision to the Commission.

**Retention**. When "exceptional" County employees are offered opportunities with other employers, the County may authorize the employee's advancement in the pay scale pending authorization from the County Executive.

# A. Workforce Policies — Hiring and separations policies

Dane County has several policies related to hiring and separations and many are provided to the public on its website. We reviewed ten of these and summarize aspects relevant to workplace culture.

## Hiring Process and Policies

When seeking to fill positions, the County creates job postings, screens applicants and interviews qualified candidates.

**Job posting.** When a County department wishes to fill a vacant position, it must first submit a requisition through NEOGOV, the County's HR software. The requisition requires information about the job's logistics (e.g., part- or full-time, start date, pay range, hiring manager) as well as class specification, which outlines the job responsibilities. This requisition is the basis for the job posting.

Employee Relations reviews the request and determines whether budget exists to fill the vacancy, as well as verifies that the request complies with applicable ordinances and regulations. The Office for Equity and Inclusion determines if "alternative selection" is appropriate (policy detailed on p. 3) and the request is sent to the Executive's office for approval. Once approved, the job is posted to the County's portal.

**Application process**. Interested applicants may apply to Dane County jobs through the governmentjobs.com portal. The County has a landing page (see Figure A-1) that prominently displays an equal opportunity employment statement as well as photos that include diverse workers. The County's hiring policy states its commitment to addressing "work force imbalances" through affirmative action (within legal constraints).[3]

A-1. Dane County careers landing page



Source:    Dane County. https://www.countyofdane.com/careers

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[3] https://admin.countyofdane.com/documents/emprel/pdf/Hiring-to-Fill-Positions-6-2021.pdf
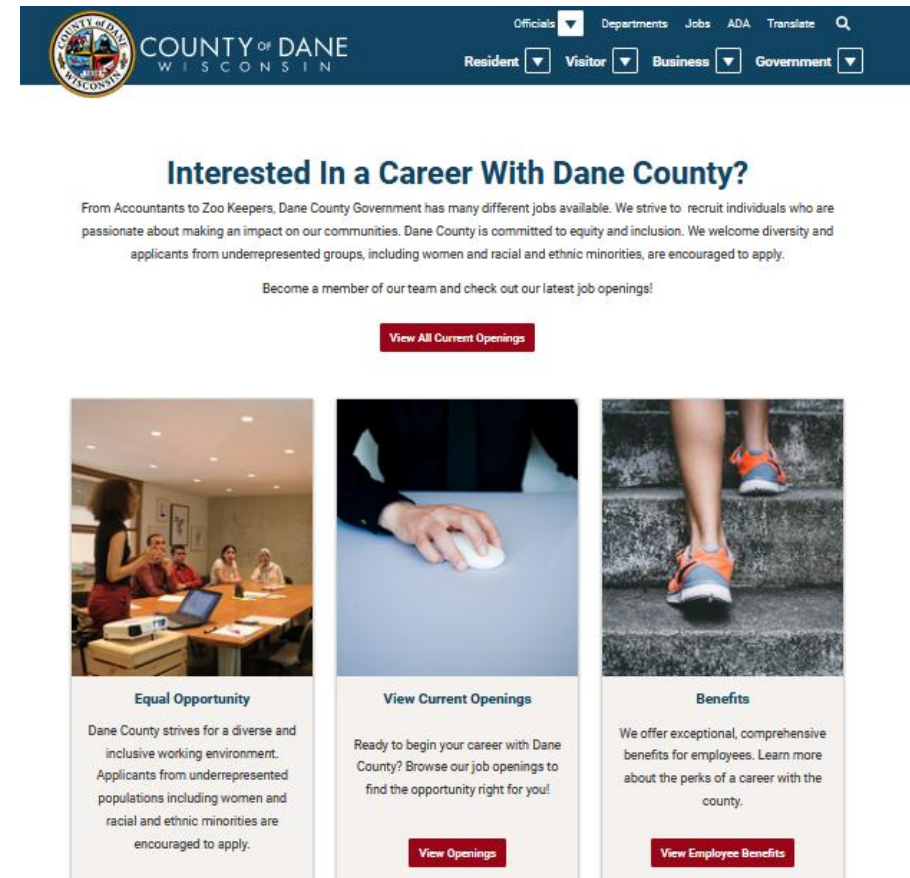
## A. Workforce Policies — Hiring and separations policies

**Interview and hiring**. Once the County has determined an applicant meets the desired qualifications and is eligible per the Chapter 18 Civil Service Ordinance, the supervisor for the position will request an interview. The County's interview policy outlines what information to include in the request for interview as well as guidelines for interview etiquette. The document includes a list of inappropriate and illegal questions to ask and explains why each of these questions is not appropriate (e.g., an interviewer cannot ask about the sex of the applicant because the law prohibits discrimination based on sex and sex is not relevant to the job).

Additionally, the interview policy explains that interview questions should be free from bias and interviewers should take particular care to not inadvertently discourage applicants from historically disadvantaged backgrounds. The policy also highlights the importance of having a diverse interview panel.

**References and background checks**. Candidates under serious consideration are subject to reference checks. The policy on reference checking provides guidelines for contacting references as well as questions to ask references. The policy underscores that people are subject to bias and discrimination, so it is important to use multiple sources if a candidate is given a poor reference.

Some positions within Dane County require a criminal background check, which is regulated by the County's civil service ordinance (previously described). At the time of this report's publication, the County had not banned disclosure of a conviction record.

**Other policies related to hiring.** The County has several policies that outline special circumstances around hiring, including those below.

- Limited term employee hiring. Employees classified as limited term (LTEs) fill temporary needs as seasonal or on-call workers. The related policy discusses working hour restrictions for LTEs and other logistics regarding pay, orientation and extension of duties. Additionally, the policy mentions that alternative selection may be used to fill LTE needs, if applicable, to balance the workforce.

- Reallocation and reclassification. When positions have undergone significant changes in their responsibilities, departments may request a reclassification (documented change in responsibilities) and/or reallocation (change in salary range). The related policy outlines the actions needed to reallocate or reclassify a position and identifies the responsible party for each.

# A. Workforce Policies — Hiring and separations policies

## Separation Policies

When employees leave a department, the County's policy is to conduct an exit interview. These interviews are not compulsory, as the policy indicates that employees may be encouraged to participate. Employee Relations conducts the exit interviews and fills out an Exit Interview Form for each employee following participation in the exit interview. When employees are laid off, they are able to be reinstated into their jobs, should the positions become available again within 24 months. Employees terminated through other means may request reemployment but, if granted, they are not given credit for their prior service and start as if they are a new employee.

## Assessment and Recommendations

The County recognizes and explicitly names historical barriers some groups have faced in employment. Additionally, the County mentions several partnerships that are advantageous in recruiting diverse candidates. Expanding partnerships and recruitment efforts may be beneficial in attracting more diverse candidates. The County may also consider providing more guidelines around exit interviews (as they do in the job applicant interview policy) to ensure that the interviews are conducted in an equitable, consistent manner.

# A. Workforce Policies — Workplace conduct and other workplace policies

## Workplace Policies

Policies designed to regulate workplace conduct establish standards for behavior and can contribute to the overall culture of the workplace. Keen Independent reviewed several workplace conduct policies and summarizes them below.

**Attendance**. The County defines various types of absences and explains the consequences for excessive absenteeism. Employees may provide evidence of extenuating circumstances in the case of a no call no show absence within three days of the absence for the consideration of the supervisor, who may choose to authorize the absence. Additionally, this policy covers tardiness and establishes the consequences for arriving at work late (with and without notifying a supervisor).

**Civil service work rules**. Conduct that is prohibited in the Dane County workplace includes actions that fall under the categories of:

- Work performance;
- Attendance and punctuality;
- Use of property; and
- Personal actions and appearance.

These prohibited activities appear in the Civil Service Handbook and set standards for the County's expectations of its employees.

**Discipline**. All immediate supervisors are responsible for administering discipline when an employee has violated a work rule. The County's policy is to discipline employees in a way that is just, matches the severity of the infraction (to the degree possible) and focuses primarily on rehabilitation.

**Performance evaluation**. Dane County employees are evaluated on a continual basis to ensure that performance meets expectations. Evaluations are conducted by an employee's supervisor and include both a written document and a verbal review of the document between the employee and the supervisor. Evaluations are part of an employee's personnel file.

**Probation periods**. New hires to Dane County are subject to a probationary period during which they must demonstrate that they can perform their job duties satisfactorily. Different positions require probationary periods of different lengths. Supervisors complete initial written evaluations of probationary employees' performance between 30 and 90 days after initial hire and are responsible for determining whether the employee meets their performance expectations.

During a probationary period, employees are not allowed to appeal any disciplinary decisions. However, if an employee believes they were discriminated against during their probationary period, they may contact the Director of the Office of Equal Opportunity to formally file a complaint.

**Prohibition of sexual harassment**. Sexual harassment is explicitly prohibited in Chapter 18 of the Dane County Ordinances. The policy in the Administrative Practices Manual provides examples of conduct that is considered sexual harassment and provides steps for individuals who have experience or witnessed sexual harassment to report it.

# A. Workforce Policies — Workplace conduct and other workplace policies

## Training

Dane County commits to providing employees with training necessary to perform job functions. Additionally, the County encourages employees to pursue continuing education and additional training related to their job functions and has funding to support such outside training.

## Assessment and Recommendations

The workplace conduct policies outline the County's standards in clear language and provide rationales for their contents. The County may consider offering employees in a probationary period an option to appeal a disciplinary decision that is not specifically related to discrimination to reassure employees that the County wants to work with them.

# A. Workforce Policies and Practices — Employment policies

Dane County provides workers with different types of accommodations to make the workplace inclusive and accessible in addition to offering different types of leave.

## Accommodations

To support employees in varying special circumstances, Dane County has several policies related to work accommodations. Examples include the following.

**Breastfeeding**. For employees who are breastfeeding, the County mandates departments provide a sufficient room for expressing breast milk and sufficient breaks to do so. The policy explains the workplace benefits of guaranteeing breastfeeding space and time for employees, which include reduced time off and less turnover. Additionally, the policy outlines the process for requesting breastfeeding accommodations (provide notice to supervisor 2 weeks in advance).

**Employee assistance**. The County provides assistance to employees with substance abuse or addiction issues. Supervisors may offer support services to employees when job performance is affected by substance abuse issues; however, it is the employee's decision to use these services. The County also provides support to employees whose family members are experiencing substance abuse challenges.

**Religious accommodation**. Employees who wish to celebrate or practice their religion in a way that may conflict with their work schedule may submit a written request for a religious accommodation to the Employee Relations Division. The employee and supervisor will meet to discuss the decision regarding the accommodation and the employee has 30 days to appeal the decision, if desired.

**Telecommuting**. County Employees may work remotely for some or all of their workweek if their supervisor agrees they are eligible. Telecommuting employees are responsible for all normal job functions and must report on their telecommuting location. A telecommuting arrangement may be terminated at any time. This policy makes clear that telecommuting is not a benefit, but a management decision, and is thus not subject to the grievance process.

## Leave

Dane County has policies addressing several different types of leave that employees may take.

**Leave of absence**. Any leave, paid or unpaid, exceeding 29 days must be approved by Employee Relations. Employees must report their intention to return to work with 14 days of notice.

**Family medical leave**. The family medical leave (FMLA) policy states that eligible employees may receive up to 12 weeks for unpaid leave for family medical events, such as childbirth or adoption, or serious health conditions of the employee or a direct family member. This leave policy is compliant with Wisconsin State law. If the reason for leave was a serious health condition of the employee, a form must be filled out indicating that the employee can return to work and outlining any applicable restrictions on work duties.

**Caregiver leave**. Dane County employees receive 80 hours (equivalent to two 40-hour work weeks) of leave to care for an immediate family member experiencing a serious medical condition. It is not explicitly stated in this document whether this type of leave is paid or unpaid (however, the document does say that employees on this type of leave will receive compensation on holidays as they would if they were working, which suggests this leave is paid). This type of leave occurs concurrently with FMLA.

## A. Workforce Policies and Practices — Employment policies

**Paid parental leave**. Dane County employees working full time receive 240 hours (equivalent to six 40-hour work weeks) of paid parental leave to care for a newly born or adopted child. The policy outlines what is considered a qualifying event to take this leave and explains the process for requesting it. This type of leave also occurs concurrently with FMLA.

**Community service time off**. Dane County provides eligible employees (i.e., who accrue leave balances and have not been disciplined for abuse of leave) with eight (8) hours of paid time off for community service. Employees are required to submit a request form two weeks in advance of the proposed time off. The County has a list of appropriate organizations for which employees may use this time off and provides examples of appropriate volunteer activities.

### Assessment and Recommendations

The accommodation and leave policies provide justification for their contents, which helps the reader understand why the policy exists and what benefits exist to the policy. This practice supports a positive workplace culture by setting clear standards to which all employees are subject.

# APPENDIX B. Workforce Analysis

To better understand equity and inclusion in the workplace and in County employment practices, Keen Independent analyzed whether there were disparities among the overall workforce and new hires based on data provided by Dane County.

In addition, Keen Independent examined results from similar analyses for Dane County from the 2023 La Follette School of Public Affairs at the University of Wisconsin–Madison (UW) student report prepared for the County. The UW report also reviewed whether there were race or gender disparities in promotions and terminations at the County, which Keen Independent reviewed but did not separately analyze.

This appendix is organized in the following sections:

- Keen Independent methodology

- Workforce results

- Hiring results

- Review of promotion and separation results from the UW study

- Summary

# B. Workforce Analysis — Analysis of racial and gender diversity in Dane County workforce

## Methodology

Keen Independent analyzed the representation of people of color and women in County jobs, for all full-time employees and for hires.

Keen Independent obtained summary data from the County about its employees by type of job and Census Bureau American Community Survey data on workers available for employment within the local labor market. Due to limited data availability, the analyses could not be performed for all disadvantaged groups, such as members of the LGBTQ community.

**County employees.** The County is required to submit a State and Local Government Information Report to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC Form 164 or an EEO-4 Report) every two years.

These reports include the number of employees and the number of new hires for each EEO job category and by race, ethnicity and gender.

To prepare these reports, the County maintains employee data with job categories and racial, ethnic and gender group definitions that match federal requirements.

Job categories include the following:

- Administrators and officials;
- Professionals;
- Technicians;
- Protection service workers;
- Paraprofessionals;
- Administrative support workers;
- Skilled craft workers; and
- Service-maintenance workers.

Federally defined racial and ethnic categories are:

- African American;
- Asian American;
- American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander;
- Hispanic American;
- People identifying as two or more races; and
- Non-Hispanic white.

Keen Independent received information from the County for its workforce as of 2023, as well as hires the County made in 2022 and early 2023 that were organized according to these job categories and demographic groups. The data did not provide information about other personal characteristics.

**Workers in the local labor pool.** Keen Independent obtained data on workers in the labor force that live within the Madison Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) from the American Community Survey (ACS) dataset for 2021. Those data provide information by occupations within each EEO job group, which allowed the study team to weight worker availability to reflect the mix of County jobs.

# B. Workforce Analysis — Analysis of racial and gender diversity in Dane County workforce

**Analytical approaches.** Keen Independent performed the following analyses for County workers. For each type of analysis, Keen Independent compared outcomes with calculated benchmarks.

### County employees in 2023 compared with workers in the local labor market.
Keen Independent compared the demographic characteristics of employees within each EEO-4 job category with the characteristics of workers in those jobs within the Madison area (the geographic area from which local employers such as the County would primarily hire).

The study team weighted the results of the availability analysis for each relevant job category based on the share of County workers that held a job within that group. For example, if individuals in EEO-2 (Professionals) comprised a certain share of County workers, the data for Professionals in the ACS data received that corresponding weight when determing benchmarks for demographic characteristics of workers in the labor market.

### County hiring compared with workers in the local labor market.
Keen Independent compared the demographic characteristics of County hires in 2022 and early 2023 with the local labor force using the same approach as above, except that the weights for the ACS data were based on the share of County hires for each job cateory. If hires in EEO-2 (Professionals) comprised a certain share of County hires, for example, the data for EEO-2 workers in the ACS data for the local area received that weight when calculating overall demographics of potential hires in the labor market.

**Disparity indices and "substantial disparity."** For each type of analysis for each group, Keen Independent calculated disparity indices by dividing the observed outcomes by the benchmark for that group and then multiplying the result by 100.

A value of "100" indicated parity for the race/ethnicity group or women. Keen Independent applied the 80 percent rule when determining whether or not a disparity index indicated a "substantial disparity." Any comparisons with a disparity index of less than 80 in the following tables can be considered substantial.

**Comparison with conclusions from University of Wisconsin La Follette School of Public Affairs workforce analyses.** In 2023, students at the La Follette School of Public Affairs at the University of Wisconsin–Madison submitted a report to Dane County analyzing racial and gender diversity of the Dane County employees as well as employment policies and practices.

Keen Independent focused on whether the following workforce conclusions in the report are supported by information presented in the report (using the numbering system in its Executive Summary):

1. The percentage of females employed by the County is consistently higher than the County's overall female working percentage.

2. Female employees were given more promotions than male employees.

3. Significant disparities exist between white and non-white County employees in professional job roles.

4. Annual terminations peaked in 2022 primarily due to an increase in the number of voluntary terminations by female and/or Black or African American employees.

Some of the other University Wisconsin report analyses and conclusions, especially concerning County Department Equity Plans, appear to be well-developed and supported and are consistent with Keen Independent's analyses. They are not discussed here.

# B. Workforce Analysis — Analysis of racial and gender diversity in Dane County workforce

## Results for County Workforce in 2023

**Disparity analysis.** Column (a) of Figure B-1 shows the number of full-time employees by racial and ethnic group as well as the number of women and men working at the County.

Column (b) shows the share of total full-time employees by group. For example, workers of color comprise 21.5 percent of Dane County employees and women are 53.4 percent of County employees.

Column (c) shows benchmarks from analysis of the local workforce. For example, one might expect workers of color to comprise 18.7 percent of County workers if the demographic characteristics of County full-time employees exactly matched that of the local workforce, after adjusting for the mix of jobs at the County.

Column (d) presents the disparity index to show whether a group was over- or under-represented among County workers compared to what might be expected given the characteristics of workers in those fields in the local area. An index of "100" indicates parity and over 100 suggests that representation exceeds what might be expected given the characteristics of the local workforce. A "substantial disparity" for a group is one where the index is below 80.

Results in Figure B-1 show that there were slightly more employees of color at the County (21.5% of workers) than expected from analysis of available workers in the local labor market in similar jobs (18.7%).

Representation of women (53.4%) was about what might be expected given women's share of those types of in the local labor market (52.1%).

The lower share of County employees reporting two or more races could be due to differences in the two data sources in how questions about race were asked.

B-1. Dane County full-time workers, 2023, and available workforce

| All EEO Groups | (a) Employees | (b) Percent of employees | (c) Availability | (d) Disparity index 100*(b/c) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Race/ethnicity** | | | | |
| African American | 161 | 6.5 % | 5.7 % | 113 |
| Asian American | 130 | 5.3 | 3.2 | 166 |
| American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or other[1] | 21 | 0.8 | 0.5 | 175 |
| Hispanic American | 178 | 7.2 | 6.1 | 118 |
| Two or more races | 43 | 1.7 | 3.2 | 53 |
| **Total people of color** | **533** | **21.5 %** | **18.7 %** | 115 |
| Non-Hispanic white | 1,943 | 78.5 | 81.3 | 97 |
| **Total** | **2,476** | **100.0 %** | **100.0 %** | |
| **Gender** | | | | |
| Women | 1,322 | 53.4 % | 52.1 % | 102 |
| Men | 1,154 | 46.6 | 47.9 | 97 |
| **Total** | **2,476** | **100.0 %** | **100.0 %** | |

Note:  1/ Includes Other Pacific Islander.

Source:  Dane County employee data, Census 2021 ACS data for availability analysis.

**Comparison with results of University of Wisconsin La Follette School of Public Affairs.** The University of Wisconsin report indicated overrepresentation of women among workers at the County, which is inconsistent with Keen Independent's results above. This is due to a simplistic analysis of women in the local workforce in the UW report.

The UW report indicated underrepresentation of people of color in jobs categorized as professional. However, Keen Independent's analysis (not shown here) indicates that people of color comprised about 21 percent of jobs in the professional job category, which exceeds the share of the workforce in this job category in the Madison metropolitan area.

# B. Workforce Analysis — Analysis of racial and gender diversity in Dane County workforce

## Results for County Hiring for 2022–2023

**Disparity analyses.** Keen Independent also examined the race, ethnicity and gender of employees hired by Dane County in 2022 and early 2023 (Figure B-2).

- Column (a) shows the number of County hires in each racial and ethnic group and the number of hires by gender.

- Column (b) shows the share of total hires in each demographic group. For example, workers of color were about 21 percent of total hires. Women were about 52 percent of total hires.

- Column (c) provides the benchmarks for hiring for each demographic if hiring matched the characteristics of the local workforce after adjusting for the relative number of hires in each EEO-4 group. This process for determining benchmarks was the same as described on the previous page, except share of hires by type of job was used to weight the workforce results rather the number of total workers by type of job.

- Column (d) of Figure B-2 shows the disparity index calcuated for hiring for each group (100 indicates parity in hiring).

**Results.** Workers of color comprised a slightly greater share of people hired (20.9%) than what might be expected from analysis of the local workforce in these types of jobs (19.0%). For each minority group, the share of hires was equal to or exceeded what might be expected from analysis of the local workforce, except for African American workers. The share of new hires who were African American (4.5%) was slightly below what might be expected from analysis of the labor force (5.4%).

Women as a share of new hires was about what would be expected from analysis of available workforce in these jobs.

B-2. Dane County hires of workers, 2022–2023, and available workforce

| | (a) Hires | (b) Percent of hires | (c) Availability | (d) Disparity index 100*(b/c) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Race/ethnicity** | | | | |
| African American | 25 | 4.5 % | 5.4 % | 83 |
| Asian American | 29 | 5.2 | 3.2 | 161 |
| American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or other[1] | 6 | 1.1 | 0.5 | 234 |
| Hispanic American | 37 | 6.7 | 6.6 | 102 |
| Two or more races | 19 | 3.4 | 3.3 | 104 |
| **Total people of color** | **116** | **20.9 %** | **19.0 %** | 110 |
| Non-Hispanic white | 322 | 79.1 | 81.0 | 98 |
| **Total** | **554** | **100.0 %** | **100.0 %** | |
| **Gender** | | | | |
| Women | 227 | 52.2 % | 51.6 % | 101 |
| Men | 208 | 47.8 | 48.4 | 99 |
| **Total** | **435** | **100.0 %** | **100.0 %** | |

Note:  1/ Includes Other Pacific Islander.

Source:  Dane County employee data, Census 2021 ACS data for availability analysis.

# B. Workforce Analysis — Review of other UW study conclusions

Keen Independent was unable to verify conclusions reached by the University of Wisconsin La Follette School of Public Affairs report concerning their conclusions #2 and #4:

2. Female employees were given more promotions than male employees. and

4. Annual terminations peaked in 2022 primarily due to an increase in the number of voluntary terminations by female and/or Black or African American employees.

Because the methodology necessary to accurately examine rates of promotions and rates of voluntary separations needs to control for factors including types of jobs held and length of time working for an employer, analyses are quite complex. It did not appear that the methods applied by the University of Wisconsin study team controlled for such factors.

Keen Independent did not examine the rates of promotions or separations for different demographic groups of workers at Dane County, but recommends such analyses for the future.

# B. Workforce Analysis — Future analyses

## Assessment and Recommendations

The County might consider expanding its future analysis of its workforce to include benchmarks based on the local labor force (for both current workforce and for hires).

The County might also analyze rates of promotion and voluntary separation of different groups of employees after controlling for job category and length of time working at the County.

In each of these analyses, the County should consider calculating disparity indices for each group to identify whether there are any substantial disparities in these workforce equity metrics.

# APPENDIX C. Equity and Inclusion Plans — Introduction

In this appendix, Keen Independent reviews the Equity and Inclusion Plans (EIPs) that Dane County provided our study team.

## Introduction

To foster a more equitable and inclusive workplace environment, Dane County has partnered with Keen Independent to assess current efforts and provide recommendations to elevate the County's equity endeavors.

**Review of plans.** Keen Independent conducted a thorough review of Equity and Inclusion Plans (EIPs) for 24 of the County's 31 departments, focusing on aspects of each plan that relate to internal equity and inclusion. The intent of department-level EIPs is to promote diversity, encourage inclusivity, address systemic barriers and reflect the County's commitment to creating a fair and accessible government that serves all Dane County residents equally. We note that the University of Wisconsin-Madison La Follette students also reviewed departmental EIPs as part of a capstone project.[1] Many of our recommendations overlap with those in the students' report.

This appendix provides a concise summary of each EIP.

## Department-level EIPs

Many of the plans reviewed by Keen Independent are structured using concept categories to describe areas of opportunity to improve diversity, equity and inclusion in the department. For purposes of this assessment, this structure is referred to as an "opportunity-area framework." The five most common concept categories used in the EIPs are:

- Organizational commitment;
- Leadership development;
- Program innovation;
- Collaboration; and
- Resource mobilization.

Another commonality worth noting is the method used to measure progress in many of the Dane County departmental EIPs. Many plans use a numbered three-tier system to indicate if a policy or practice is beginning, emerging or advancing. For this analysis, this method of progress tracking is referred to as the "tiered-progress system."

## Assessment and Potential Improvements

This appendix ends with an assessment of current conditions and opportunities for future improvements.

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[1] Yang, K. L., Teniente, L. K., Borowska, N., Schneider, S., Williams, T., & Weigel, W. (2023). *Analysis and equity assessment of Dane County Workforce Development Data, Practices and Policies from 2018-2022*. University of Wisconsin-Madison.

# C. Equity and Inclusion Plans — Department-level EIPs

## Administration

The Department of Administration's (DOA) EIP was released in October 2016. It includes: (a) the strategies chart organized using an opportunity-area framework and tiered-progress system, and (b) implementation steps, benefits and resources for implementation.

**Organizational commitment.** To encourage consistency in EIPs across County departments, DOA has prepared an equity-plan template, "Template for Equity Work," and is developing best methods for sharing it with other departments. DOA is examining policies and developing performance measures to track and measure how well it is meeting its equity goals, as well as increasing the diversity of its hiring panels.

**Leadership development.** DOA has begun researching potential options for a mentoring program to facilitate leadership and professional development and address employee retention. Mentoring will focus on newly hired employees and provide resources to support and retain a diverse group of emerging future leaders.

**Program innovation.** DOA plans to begin using social media to advertise its positions in the hopes of increasing the number of diverse applicants. At the time of the EIP, DOA was also reviewing job requirements and position descriptions to ensure accuracy and remove any unnecessary qualifications. To limit bias in recruitment, DOA redacts candidate names and other identifying information during the hiring process.

**Resource mobilization.** DOA's EIP identifies the need for evaluation of current equity training, as well as the potential for a designated training provider to strengthen equity training across all staff.

## Alliant Energy Center

The May 2023 document provided for review from the Alliant Energy Center (AEC) is not an active EIP but serves as a presentation describing the Center's future diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility plan. The presentation describes the Center's opportunity-area framework but does not apply the tiered-progress system for tracking progress.

The document states that AEC is undergoing a rebuilding process and that the department is assessing and rewriting its policies and procedures. AEC's previous DEI plan has been on hold since Spring 2021. In its place, AEC is creating a forthcoming staff-driven business plan that will include an equity initiative.

**Organizational commitment.** Staff will be included in the development of the new business plan with a designated Employee Engagement Committee seeking input from staff across the Center.

**Staff and leadership development.** AEC plans to reestablish training opportunities and experiences across all levels of the organization to build learning opportunities focusing on diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility.

**Program innovations and initiatives.** AEC plans to emphasize diversity recruiting, improve job descriptions to allow for greater flexibility in experience requirements, diversify recruitment and interview panels, and conduct outreach through communities that advocate for individuals who are socially and economically disadvantaged.

## C. Equity and Inclusion Plans — Department-level EIPs

### Board of Supervisors

The Dane County Board of Supervisors equity workplan includes multiple goals. Each goal is accompanied by key action steps. Each key action step listed includes a timeline for completion, expected outcome, data source and evaluation methodology, staff/area responsible and additional comments. (The EIP does not list a publication date.)

Key internal equity goals include:

- Increase racial equity education;
- Increase staff diversity;
- Increase learning platforms for racial equity for supervisors and the community-at-large;
- Use a racial equity template in committee agendas and budgets; and
- Implement strategies to ensure Dane County is an effective and inclusive government that engages community and is responsive to its needs.

Key action steps to increase internal equity build upon:

- Review of program evaluation and policies;
- Inclusion of an equity statement in job postings;
- Recruitment of interns;
- Practice of internal promotions;
- Equity assessment of current recruitment and hiring practices; and
- Delivery of racial equity resources to supervisors.

This plan primarily focuses on issues of racial equity with limited focus on other diverse groups.

### Clerk of Courts

The 2023 EIP provided by the Clerk of Courts is a chart based on the opportunity-area framework with initiatives listed within each area. Status, target goals and tactics, metrics for evaluation and staff responsibilities are identified for each initiative. Initiatives related to internal equity are discussed below:

**Attract and retain a diverse workforce.** The Clerk of the Courts EIP reports a majority white workforce, with only 7 percent of department employees identifying as racially or ethnically diverse. The department has a goal of increasing diverse staff to at least 16 percent of its workforce.

**Provide training opportunities to staff to increase sensitivity to issues of equity and inclusion, and to enhance cultural competencies.** Currently, staff are encouraged to attend County-provided equity training; however, regularly scheduled County training activities are limited. The department plans to prioritize equity, inclusion and cultural competency training as a part of onboarding, as well as offer annual continuing equity education for all staff.

**Develop a diverse leadership team.** The plan states that the Department "is small and can be considered diverse (1 out of 6)." The department has set an internal goal of leadership-team diversity at or exceeding 16 percent.

# C. Equity and Inclusion Plans — Department-level EIPs

## Corporation Counsel

The Corporation Counsel EIP was published in 2023 and is organized using the opportunity-area framework. Each of the five areas for opportunities include initiatives or goals. For each initiative, the current status, goals, tactics, measures of success and staff responsible for the initiative are listed. The two areas of opportunity relating to internal equity are summarized below.

**Organizational commitment.** Two initiatives in this opportunity area are related to internal equity. The first is to attract and retain diverse staff. Currently, the department meets County guidelines for diversity but has the goal of more closely mirroring the community. To accomplish this, the Counsel plans for improving recruitment and retention efforts, creating a paid internship and providing professional development opportunities for department staff.

The second internal equity initiative is to train current staff to increase sensitivity to issues of equity and inclusion. Available staff training includes department-wide systemic bias training as well as access to a practice manual that highlights the need for staff to consider systemic bias and equity at specific decision points in child protection cases.

**Leadership development.** One initiative discussed in the EIP is to develop diverse leadership. The current status of this initiative states that the "leadership team is diverse" and the goal is to maintain diversity in the leadership team. Another initiative is to train current and future leaders to identify existing issues related to equity and inclusion, which involves identifying appropriate ongoing training for leadership and staff.

## County Clerk

The County Clerk Equity Plan is brief and lists two organizational goals, one focused on internal equity and one with an external focus. The date of this plan is not listed but mentions implications related to the 2020 budget proposal.

**Diversity of workplace.** Out of the two goals listed, developing methods to increase diversity within the workplace through hiring practices is the only goal related to internal equity. To work towards this goal, the department has prioritized cultural competency related to marriage laws in other countries and has successfully added staff from diverse backgrounds, noting that the office is the most diverse it has ever been.

When discussing the future, an explanation of hiring practices is provided including that the County Clerk's hiring practices are dependent on the hiring practices of other departments. The plan states that the current rules do not allow hiring outside of the County Government for transfer positions, which underscores the importance of diverse hiring practices for entry-level positions.

## C. Equity and Inclusion Plans — Department-level EIPs

### Dane County Sheriff's Office

The Dane County Sheriff's Office (DCSO) is one of the few offices to include internal equity in all opportunity areas listed in the EIP. The DCSO EIP uses an opportunity-area framework and a tiered-progress system in chart format. To improve the DCSO's ability to track and measure success, the plan includes a timeline for successful implementation and plans for how to improve data collection and coordination.

**Organizational commitment.** There are several initiatives listed that relate to workplace DEI issues, such as developing a plan to increase and retain a diverse workforce. This initiative involves:

- Developing a retention workgroup to discuss ideas and initiate changes;
- Conducting exit interviews; and
- Creating a Minority Recruiter position within the DCSO.

Other organizational opportunities include offering office-wide racial-equity training, building a racial-equity framework and training, increasing nontraditional recruitment, monitoring personnel decisions made concerning employees who are people of color and actively seeking feedback from them on ways to improve internal equity.

**Leadership development.** Most of the opportunities in this section are focused on internal equity including: (a) adoption of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) Leadership in Police Organizations (LPO) philosophy and training, (b) expansion of mentorship programs, (c) empowerment of leaders to create equity-driven solutions, (d) resources for implicit and/or unconscious bias training to build awareness, development of long-term succession planning to mentor future leaders and create a diverse staff that reflects the diversity of the community.

**Program innovation.** The internal equity-related opportunities include new programs to aid employee retention, an exploration of innovative test and promotion methods to reduce subjectivity and bias with the goal of hiring and retaining more employees of color, creation of an equity task force and an assessment of architectural design to ensure that the DCSO's facility is designed for fair and just access.

**Collaboration.** To help increase DCSO diversity, the EIP discusses partnering with organizations representing communities of color to aid in identifying diverse candidates who are interested in and qualified for work with the DCSO. The plan is to assemble a community oversight committee for input on DCSO policies and procedures.

**Resource mobilization.** The EIP includes steps for mobilizing resources to achieve equity goals (such as equity training), using a racial equity tool to evaluate grants and deployments, seeking grants that support racial equity and reviewing purchasing decisions using the Government Alliance on Race & Equity or GARE principles and tools found at https://www.racialequityalliance.org/.

**Brand and visibility.** To demonstrate DCSO commitment to building a diverse workforce, the EIP commits to improving overall communications regarding diversity recruitment and hiring.

# C. Equity and Inclusion Plans — Department-level EIPs

## County Treasurer

The County Treasurer EIP is organized using the opportunity-area framework and a version of the tiered-progress system used by other departments. (It is unclear when this EIP was published.)

Many of the initiatives listed are external facing. Internal equity initiatives are within the leadership-development opportunity area, including diversity training for staff on how to apply equity and inclusion principles when serving the public.

Accessibility updates are also made part of the EIP but are largely external facing.

## Dane County Regional Airport

The 2017 Dane County Regional Airport (DCRA) EIP applies both the opportunity-area framework and tiered-progress system. Each of the four areas for opportunities includes a summary followed by a list of two- to-four objectives. This narrative section is followed by a matrix of strategies and tactics that includes the opportunity area, tiered progress and metrics to measure implementation progress. Two of the opportunity areas in the plan relate to issues of internal equity, which are described below.

**Organizational engagement.** The strategies in this section are designed to ensure that DCRA continues to evaluate, measure and implement its EIP. The EIP demonstrates leadership oversight of strategies and use of a template for identifying EIP program strategies and tactics. DCRA, at the time of the EIP publication, was in the investigation phase of developing tactics for increasing the diversity of individuals on hiring panels and expanding where jobs are posted to reach a wider and more diverse applicant pool.

**Assessment.** This opportunity area focuses on measuring current equity initiatives and ensuring program goals are met. At time of publication the following items were in the investigation phase:

- Development of a timeline for annual leadership review of EIP program goals, objectives, strategies and tactics;
- Appointment of a senior leadership team member to manage EIP programs;
- Requirement that DCRA policies and procedures incorporate EIP goals/objectives where appropriate; and
- Measurement of employee participation in EIP-related training courses.

# C. Equity and Inclusion Plans — Department-level EIPs

## Dane County Division of Extension

The 2022 Dane County Division of Extension EIP uses the area-of-opportunity framework by listing six major concepts. Within these concepts are related goals and current and proposed strategies to achieve each goal. Furthermore, the status of each strategy is measured using the three-tiered system.

**Organizational commitment.** The organizational-commitment area of opportunity dictates that the:

- Extension staff reflect the diversity of the communities served;
- Equity team members meet regularly, set goals, track progress and focus on accountability; and
- Office environment is welcoming and inclusive.

As reported, strategies to move these initiatives forward have been largely developed and implemented.

**Leadership development.** The goals relating to internal equity in the leadership-development opportunity area are to create educational opportunities for staff and volunteers and provide opportunities for diverse students to gain meaningful work and learning experiences through paid internships. Many of the strategies listed to achieve these goals have been implemented. Practices listed as in the beginning stages are to encourage other departments to take part in Extension training and explore service-learning opportunities.

**Resource Mobilization.** The final internal equity element in this EIP relates to recruiting and retaining diverse volunteers and providing all volunteers with training on cultural competency. The strategies listed in the EIP are mostly in the established-practice phase.

## District Attorney's Office

The District Attorney's Office (DAO) October 2019 EIP uses the area-of-opportunity framework structure and includes goals, actions already taken, future actions and challenges related to each goal. The organizational-commitment opportunity area is used to provide the DAO's mission statement, vision, values and commitments relating to equity and inclusion. Components of the plan relating to internal equity and inclusion are all within the staff-development opportunity area.

**Recruitment and hiring.** The DAO's recruitment and hiring goal is to employ a workforce that both reflects the demographics of the community and values the diversity of Dane County. Actions taken by the DAO include highlighting the office's commitment to a diverse workforce in employment announcements, while requiring new hires to demonstrate awareness of racial disparities and cultural competency and addressing racial disparity issues in interviews. Future steps to achieve this goal include identifying new job-posting locations that will reach marginalized communities and providing a copy of the EIP plan to potential hires and asking them to commit to the listed goals.

**Internal training.** DAO has provided extensive training and staff development opportunities utilizing internal staff, community partner volunteers, book clubs and documentaries. To continue internal training efforts, DAO plans to bring in more outside collaborators for training, provide mandatory implicit bias training, track the number of employees who have participated in trainings and keep a record of how many new training programs were developed to specifically address diversity initiatives in the organization.

**External training.** DAO's goal is to have staff attend external training that can augment its current implicit-bias training.

## C. Equity and Inclusion Plans — Department-level EIPs

### Emergency Management

The Dane County Emergency Management EIP is centered around three goals, discussed below. Each goal is accompanied by three-to-four objectives, along with proposed tactics to achieve each objective. The plan concludes with implementation responsibilities for committing leadership and staff.

**Recruit a diverse and highly capable workforce.** The department's workforce diversity goal is to recruit from a qualified group of diverse potential applicants to build a high performing workforce drawn from a wide range of diverse groups. Objectives to reach this goal include recruiting diverse, qualified individuals, reviewing hiring practices to minimize barriers and biases and strengthening infrastructure and processes to support employment and retention.

**Build a work environment which promotes inclusion.** The workplace-inclusion goal involves creating an environment that values diversity and empowers all employees. This section emphasizes the need to enhance cultural awareness programs and improve agency-wide communication. Objectives to achieve this goal include strengthening employee engagement, fostering an environment that maximizes potential and productivity, ensuring all staff have equal access to career development opportunities and enhancing internal communication.

**Build a sustained leadership commitment to a diverse and inclusive department through data, education, and accountability.** Sustainability in this EIP means establishing and maintaining structures and processes that support a diverse and inclusive workplace. This combines effective leadership, education and evaluation to foster accountability. To ensure the success of this plan, Emergency Management needs clear direction and lines of authority, regular monitoring and reporting of data and progress, and tailored training to enhance diversity and inclusion competencies at all levels.

### Family Court Services

The Dane County Family Court Services EIP uses the opportunity-area framework and tiered-progress system. This plan does not have a date of publication and is in presentation format. Many elements included in the EIP are related to external interactions with the public. Within the leadership development section, there are several actions and goals related to internal equity including:

- Conducting an annual staff training event that includes an equity component;
- Offering implicit-bias training;
- Leading quarterly presentations to educate the staff on equity and diversity topics;
- Incorporating racial equity values into the office culture;
- Evaluating and redesigning recruitment, interviewing and hiring practices; and
- Encouraging staff self-care through staff training.

This plan is one of the few EIPs to mention encouraging self-care of staff as an aspect of workplace equity and inclusion.

# C. Equity and Inclusion Plans — Department-level EIPs

## Henry Vilas Zoo

This EIP is prepared in a five-slide presentation format and is without a publication date.

The EIP divides efforts into three categories:

- External/guest facing initiatives;
- Internal initiatives; and
- Zoo-industry initiatives.

Within the internal EIP initiatives section, the following priority areas are listed:

- Hiring practice;
- Development opportunities;
- Frontline job positions;
- Zookeeper;
- Leadership shadow;
- Contracted services; and
- Strategic planning and metrics, tools and goal setting.

Additional EIP content provides insight into building opportunities for collaboration. For example, one initiative examines ways to provide job opportunities for diverse candidates through its partnership with Friends of the Zoo, which offers employment opportunities in the concessions and gift shop, and the train and carousel.

## Human Services

The Dane County Department of Human Services (DCDHS) EIP is from 2022 and follows the area-of-opportunity framework. Like some other departmental plans that use this framework, aspects relating to internal equity are clustered in the organizational-commitment and leadership-development sections.

**Organizational commitment.** In the organizational-commitment opportunity area, DCDHS plans to embed equity and inclusion in departmental operations through various tactics. These tactics involve conducting a self-assessment on language access, facilitating training and policy discussions to create a Racial Equity Social Justice Toolkit, providing anti-racism education, utilizing the Center for the Study of Social Policy's Race Equity Impact Assessment Tool for policy development, and supporting an internal committee to present DEI topics during heritage months.

**Leadership development.** DCDHS aims to increase racial and ethnic diversity among staff and foster a shared understanding of racial justice.

- Ongoing internal leadership training, supporting staff in external training opportunities;
- Offering educational advancement opportunities, updating hiring practices;
- Promoting employment within specific communities;
- Conducting exit interviews with a focus on developing a better understanding of how to increase retention of employees of color; and
- Sharing annual data reports on staff diversity measures with the public.

# C. Equity and Inclusion Plans — Department-level EIPs

## Juvenile Court Program

The 2019 Dane County Juvenile Court Program (JCP) EIP is organized using the area-of-opportunity framework, with each area identifying a target goal, status and a list of tactics to work towards the goal.

**Organizational commitment.** The goal for this area is to demonstrate equity and inclusion and ensure that all staff, families, stakeholders and community members understand the department's commitment to that practice. The EIP notes that approximately half of the JCP staff are people of color and that there are numerous internal committees related to equity, diversity and disparities.

Tactics to work towards the goal include working on recruitment of Spanish-language speakers, increasing opportunities for staff to participate in equity initiatives and searching for opportunity gaps and developing activities to meet department needs.

**Leadership development.** The target for this area is to demonstrate leadership opportunities for staff. To work towards this goal, JCP proposes to develop formalized leadership plans for staff, develop opportunities for staff to assume greater responsibility for program operations and utilize the Office for Equity and Inclusion for department training on implicit bias and other topics.

## Land and Water Resources

The Dane County Land and Water Resources Department (LWRD) EIP was created in 2018. It is organized using the area-of-opportunity framework, with each area identifying a target and its status, as well as tactics to reach each goal, metrics to measure success, staff responsible for the goal and required resources to reach the goal.

**Organizational commitment.** LWRD states two target goals for this opportunity including establishing a LWRD equity team and creating a clearly stated commitment to equity and inclusion that is integrated into planning and policy documents. At the time of the EIP release, a team had been formed to help develop the EIP.

**Leadership development.** One of LWRD's leadership goals is that department staff reflect the diversity of the communities served. However, the plan states that there was little workplace diversity at the time-of-plan publication. Another leadership development initiative includes a focus on workplace culture and employee retention. Tactics to achieve these goals include fostering a workplace culture of equity and inclusion, setting policies for how to handle issues of discrimination and harassment, examining recruitment and hiring practices, and expanding opportunities for growth.

**Collaboration.** LWRD's EIP includes a goal that commissions and committees staffed by LWRD have adopted their own organizational-commitment statements and have plans that are integrated with the LWRD EIP. Metrics for success include diversity of committee/commission representation, existence of a plan for each group and evidence of plan implementation.

## C. Equity and Inclusion Plans — Department-level EIPs

### Library Services

The Library Services EIP does not include a date or a narrative explanation of the plan. The plan is organized using the area-of-opportunity framework and the three-tier status system. However, it is unclear if all tasks within the tiers were current at the time of publication or if some are goals for the future.

**Organizational commitment.** The EIP indicates several aspects of organizational commitment that relate to internal equity including updating the mission statement, training staff on equity issues and utilizing inclusive hiring practices.

**Leadership development.** The Library Services EIP indicates an opportunity exists to build an internship program. It appears that summer interns were successfully hired, for example, for the summers of 2019, 2021 and 2022.

**Collaboration.** Within the collaboration area of opportunity, the EIP includes the goal of developing diverse hiring practices. The plan notes a collaboration with the Office for Equity and Inclusion to extend employment opportunities across the library system.

### Medical Examiner

The 2019 Medical Examiner's Office EIP is organized using the area-of-opportunity framework around five areas (two of which are related to workforce equity) and a three-tiered status system.

**Organizational commitment.** The Medical Examiner's Office aims to reinforce its commitment to maintaining a diverse workforce and culture by integrating principles related to equity and inclusion into department policies and procedures. This includes conducting an annual review of practices and policies to ensure ongoing adherence to these values.

**Program innovation.** The program-innovation section of the EIP focuses on changing hiring practices and expanding opportunities for young people from diverse backgrounds. During the hiring process, these initiatives involve implementing procedures that prioritize experience over specific qualifications, emphasize candidate abilities and skills during interviews, and participation in a fellowship program through the National Association of Medical Examiners to attract diverse young residents for internships and training opportunities.

# C. Equity and Inclusion Plans — Department-level EIPs

## Planning and Development Department

The Planning and Development Department (PDD) EIP for Racial and Gender Equity and Inclusion (RGEI) was published in March 2020 and is organized using the area-of-opportunity framework, with each area identifying a target goal, the status of the goal, a list of tactics to work towards the goal and resources needed to achieve the goal.

**Organizational commitment.** The goal within this opportunity area is to demonstrate the department's commitment to equity and inclusion through a clear statement that is well understood throughout the organization and by the public. At the time the EIP was published, PDD had completed a draft plan and glossary of terms, but all other strategies to achieve its goals had yet to be launched.

**Leadership development.** The internal goal for this opportunity area is to develop increased awareness of racial equity and inclusion disparities and transgressions of RGEI within PDD. Steps to achieve this goal include learning opportunities for staff and mentoring opportunities.

**Program innovation.** The goal of the program-innovation opportunity area is the integration of an equity and inclusion lens into PDD programs and processes. This goal will be reached when a framework has been developed to review and analyze division programs and processes to be used in annual division and department reports on equity issues.

**Education, outreach, branding visibility.** The goal of the education, outreach and visibility opportunity area is ongoing internal and external education and outreach and increasing visibility of RGEI as a priority of department work. Strategies to achieve this goal include the development of branding that reflects the department's prioritization of equity and inclusion efforts and establishment of an inclusive office and workforce environment, as well as the offer of related training opportunities to department staff.

## Public Health

The Public Health Department of Madison and Dane County (PHMDC) EIP is organized using the area-of-opportunity framework and tiered-status system. The presentation document reviewed for this analysis does not list a publication date. Little detail is provided in the document, but goals are listed for each of four organizing concepts in the framework.

**Organizational commitment.** Within the organizational-commitment area of opportunity, PHMDC indicates that health and racial equity is established as a core value within the department. PHMDC continues to create and expand support for agency-wide integration of health and racial equity principles.

**Leadership development.** PHMDC indicates that the department is in the early phases of building and expanding professional development opportunities to ensure all staff have access to the information necessary to understand and incorporate principles of health and racial equity into their work.

**Program innovation.** The program-innovation area of opportunity includes beginning to make the hiring process more equitable and establishing methods to measure progress towards health and racial equity goals, as well as improving related processes along the way.

**Collaboration**. Like leadership development, collaboration is in the early stages of development for PHMDC. The goal for this area of opportunity centers on developing partnerships with external organizations to expand impact and reach.

# C. Equity and Inclusion Plans — Department-level EIPs

## Public Safety Communications

The Public Safety Communications Department's EIP was last updated in March 2019 and is organized using an opportunity framework. Each opportunity area includes initiatives, current status, goal, tactics to reach the goal, metrics for success and staff responsibilities.

Initiatives related to internal equity include a Racial Equity and Social Justice (RESJ) statement, staff training on equity issues, internal mentoring by supervisors, a peer-support program, IACP's LPO training and internships, as well as employee assistance programs focusing on self-care and defusing stress.

At the time of the last plan update, the department had begun brainstorming its RESJ statement and conducted sporadic classroom training sessions.

The department plans to implement consistent training for all new trainees, as well as all veteran staff. Areas with the most progress towards key goals include:

- Employee assistance program;
- Internships;
- IACP's LPO training; and
- Internal mentorships.

## Register of Deeds

The EIP provided by the Register of Deeds is brief, but contains a goal, objective and plan, and identifies future support needed.

The organizational equity goal is to improve:

- Methods to increase diversity of employees within the department by hiring individuals from diverse backgrounds; and
- Understanding and perspective to clearly represent the community and focus on equity.

To achieve these goals, the department reviewed job requirements to amend the types of experience required, with the expectation of hiring, training and mentoring employees on internal procedure and industry dynamics.

The EIP adds that future support includes a recruiting network to facilitate, inform and assist others regarding filling open positions.

# C. Equity and Inclusion Plans — Department-level EIPs

## Veteran Services

The Dane County Veterans Service Office (CVSO) EIP was revised in October 2019. This plan is structured using the opportunity-area framework around three pillars, two of which contain elements related to internal equity.

**Leadership engagement.** Leadership continues to attract, retain and develop diverse staff reflective of Dane County's veteran population and the community more broadly, while providing demographic statistics of the percentage of staff who identify as veterans, women and persons of color. At the time of the publication, for example, the CVSO anticipated an upcoming staff vacancy and planned to work with the Office for Equity and Inclusion to ensure that the hiring process was equitable, inclusive and accessible.

The EIP indicates that the Director and Deputy Director seek ongoing personal growth opportunities and education in the areas of equity and inclusion, including training on equity and bias.

**Organizational commitment.** The EIP indicates that the department encourages, for all staff, sustained growth in the areas of equity, inclusion and explicit bias. The EIP set the 2020 goal of having all staff members attend formal training in these areas.

## Waste and Renewables

Dane County Department of Waste and Renewables is a relatively new department, formed in early 2019. The EIP for the department was released in September of the same year. This plan uses the area-of-opportunity framework structured around five areas of focus.

**Organizational commitment.** The department aims to enhance its commitment to equity and inclusion by increasing diversity-in-hiring panels, eliminating barriers in the application and hiring processes, and prioritizing equity throughout the department.

**Staff development and workplace culture.** Key goals include:

- Providing in-person equity-and-inclusion staff training; and
- Developing and strengthening a workplace culture that celebrates all employees and recognizes the importance of equity and inclusion.

**Program innovation.** The department seeks to increase training and advancement opportunities through its Commercial Driver's License (CDL) program, which has been successful in training members of communities of color on how to secure CDL licenses and seek full-time employment with the department.

**Collaboration.** The goal related to workforce equity in this section of the EIP is to improve:

- Access to alternative transportation to work sites; and
- Working conditions for contract workers at County facilities.

**Resource mobilization.** The department aims to review signage and other resources to identify opportunities to better support non-English speakers. This goal is in progress but there is still progress to be made.

# C. Equity and Inclusion Plans — Potential areas for improvement

The majority of Dane County departments have an EIP, which is a strong step towards providing a more equitable workplace for employees.

Our assessment of department DEI plans identified areas where improvements can be made while recognizing existing strengths.

## Level of Detail

The Department of Administration and the Department of Human Services EIPs are examples of detailed department plans with specific, practical strategies. As other departments have opportunities to revisit and strengthen their plans, they should review those two departments' plans as examples.

## Regular Updates

Only six of the plans reviewed (that had dates of publication) were released or updated in the past three years. Additionally, several plans have been in progress for an extended period. Most were in danger of being out of date and a few plans did not include a date.

Departments should more frequently assess and evaluate the effectiveness of their initiatives to ensure they continue to drive positive change and are responsive to current needs. This will often require regular review and updates to their plans.

## Consistency

Departments varied in their adoption of the opportunity framework, indicating room for better alignment and consistency across County departments. There are differences in whether the framework is used and what areas are identified as having opportunity for growth.

Greater clarity on the tiered-ranking system may also contribute to greater consistency among departments. For example, some departments that used the tiered system noted progress under each tier for each initiative, while other departments indicated a single-tier status per initiative.

## Measures of Progress

Nine of the plans reviewed included methods for tracking progress towards goals. Other departments can learn from those examples.

Assigning responsibility to specific staff, positions or groups for each action item can enhance accountability and transparency in the execution of these plans. The departments should consider including this element in their EIPs.

## Dimensions of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Expanding the scope of these plans to encompass a broader spectrum of diversity is needed, as this will better reflect the complexity of modern workplaces and the communities served. For example, racial equity is critically important, but not the only aspect of equity that should be addressed in the plans.

Some EIPS that had well-defined external goals had limited or relatively weak objectives addressing internal equity and inclusion. Each department should include an internal element about how their work climate can be more equitable, inclusive and welcoming.

# APPENDIX D. Employee Virtual Workshop

Keen Independent conducted a virtual workshop that solicited input from Dane County employees regarding workplace climate in the County and any issues experienced in the workplace.

## Methodology

The virtual workshop was customized to obtain County employee insights that inform Keen Independent's recommendations.

**Distribution.** The virtual workshop was delivered to all Dane County employees via email during the late summer of 2023 and was kept open for a period of three weeks. The initial communication sent to County staff requested that each department consider making a computer available on work time for employees who do not routinely access computers as part of their work so they may participate, if desired.

In total, 1,453 employees responded with enough information to include in the analysis, about a 47 percent response rate. We note individual response counts to each question underneath each corresponding figure.

**Anonymity of responses**. Given the strong concern among County employees about confidentiality and anonymity of responses, Keen Independent and the County Board of Supervisors Office weighed the benefits of allowing participation through an anonymous survey link with the concern of participants having the ability to submit multiple survey responses. Ultimately, anonymity was prioritized to encourage honest responses from participants. In other studies with similarly-sized government clients, Keen Independent has not seen an issue with participants submitting multiple responses. The study team routinely conducts quality assurance checks of participant data (e.g., looking for identical response patterns between different responses) to ensure that participants are not submitting multiple responses.

**Analysis.** Keen Independent computed averages and frequencies for the rating scale and demographic questions. Because of the limited number of employees who self-identified as Black or African American, Asian or Asian American, Hispanic or Latino, Pacific Islander and/or Native American, we combined the non-white racial and ethnic groups into one "people of color" group.

To examine differences in ratings between demographic groups (e.g., people of color vs. white), we conducted statistical tests that provide insight into whether differences in mean ratings are likely present in the population of County employees or due to chance. Because the sample of virtual workshop participants was more than 10 percent of the total population of County employees, we adjusted the standard errors using a finite population correction factor of 0.73. We use 0.05 as the threshold for statistical significance, meaning that the probability of the differences in means being due to chance is 5% or less.

For the open-ended responses, Keen Independent reviewed each comment and noted common themes. We then selected a few representative comments pertinent to each theme to include in this appendix. To contextualize quotes that appear throughout this appendix, we include demographic information (e.g., "white male employee"). Please note that many employees share the same demographic identifiers, so these attributions of quotes are to different employees rather than the same speaker each time.

# APPENDIX D. Employee Virtual Workshop

## Questions

The virtual workshop asked County employees questions within the following categories:

- Demographics

- Belonging and support

- Workplace experiences and reporting issues

- What success looks like

- Job satisfaction

- Vision of department as a workplace and Dane County as a whole

- Additional comments

This appendix is organized by each of these categories. The virtual workshop content appears at the end of the appendix.

# D. Employee Virtual Workshop — Demographic characteristics of participants

We begin by describing the demographic characteristics of virtual workshop participants.
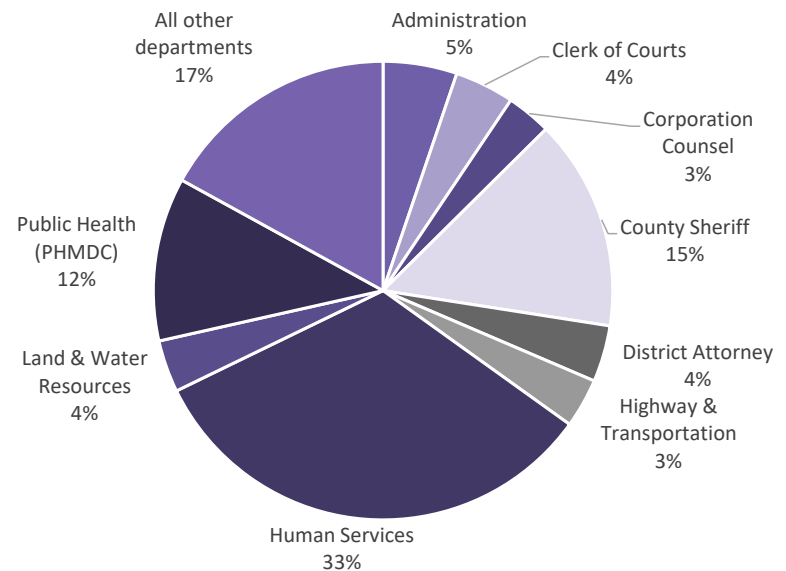
## Employment Demographics

Participants identified the grouping of departments of employment and their employment status.

**Department.** Departments with the highest representation of employee responses in the virtual workshop were Human Services (33%), Dane County Sheriff's Office (15%) and Public Health (12%). Of those who selected Public Health as their department, nearly half worked in the Community Health division and about 20 percent each worked the in Environmental Health and Operations divisions.

Figure D-1 displays the departments of virtual workshop participants, which are roughly representative of the employment across departments in Dane County. Departments with small numbers of participants were grouped into the "All other departments" category. All departments except for Veterans Services had participation in the virtual workshop.

D-1. Departments of virtual workshop participants



Note: n = 979.

Source: Keen Independent Research, Dane County Employee Virtual Workshop.

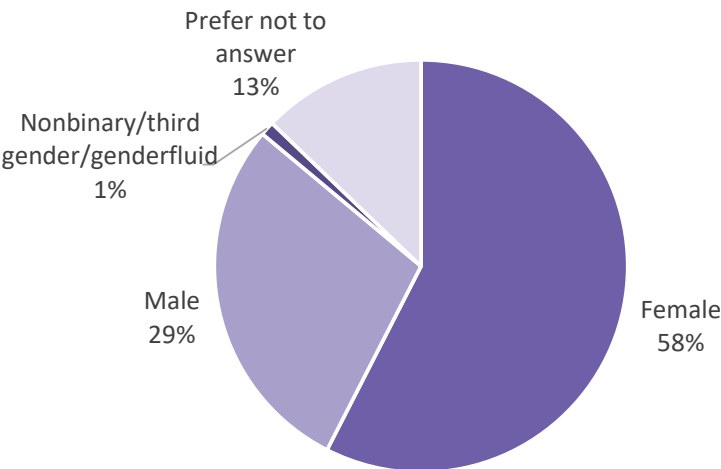# D. Employee Virtual Workshop — Demographic characteristics of participants

## Personal Demographics

Keen Independent also captured demographic information related to participants' gender identity, race/ethnicity, disability status, age, education and family structure.

**Gender identity.** More than half of respondents identified as female with just under 30 percent identifying as male. Several participants indicated that they were nonbinary, third gender or genderfluid.

Females may be slightly overrepresented in the virtual workshop sample compared to the Dane County workforce overall, although the number of respondents who did not provide gender information makes direct comparisons difficult.

D-2. Gender identity of virtual workshop participants
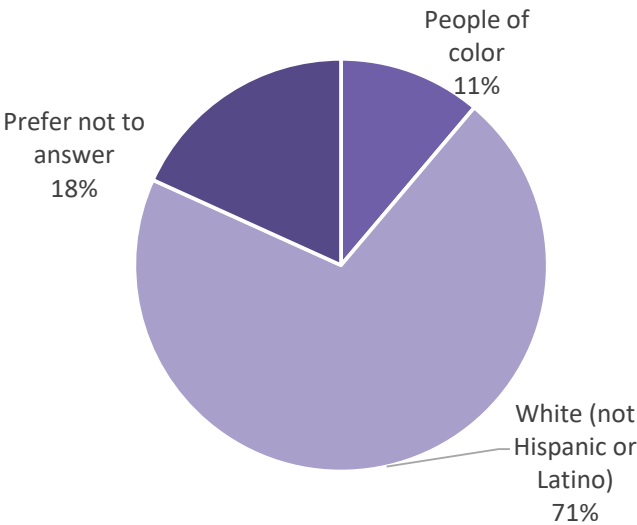


Note:       n = 991.

Source:    Keen Independent Research, Dane County Employee Virtual Workshop.

# D. Employee Virtual Workshop — Demographic characteristics of participants

**Race and ethnicity.** The virtual workshop prompted participants to indicate the primary racial or ethnic group with which they identify. About 11 percent of respondents selected a racially minoritized identity (e.g., American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander). About 18 percent preferred not to share their race or ethnicity.

Because of the number of people preferring not to indicate race, it is difficult to determine how well the race and ethnicity of virtual workshop participants matches the demographic characteristics of County employees.

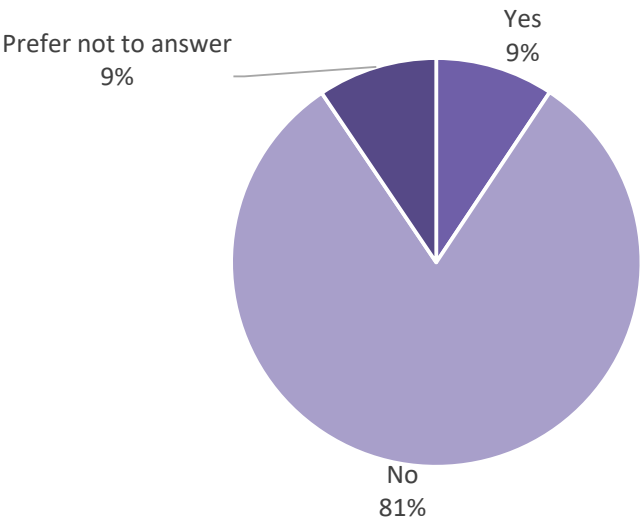D-3. Race and ethnicity of virtual workshop participants



Note:    n = 977.

Source:    Keen Independent Research, Dane County Employee Virtual Workshop.

# D. Employee Virtual Workshop — Demographic characteristics of participants

**Disability status.** About 9 percent of virtual workshop participants identified as having a disability and another 9 percent indicated that they preferred not to answer this question.

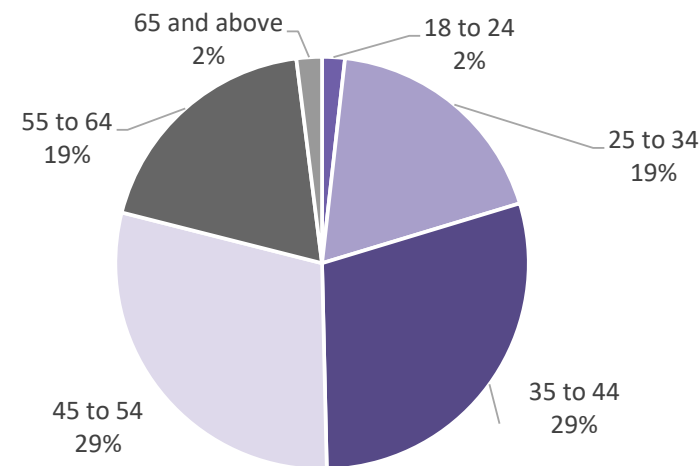D-4. Disability status of virtual workshop participants



Note:     n = 986.

Source:     Keen Independent Research, Dane County Employee Virtual Workshop.

# D. Employee Virtual Workshop — Demographic characteristics of participants

**Age.** The largest shares of respondents fell into the 35 to 44 and 45 to 54 age group categories. Just over 20 percent of respondents were 34 or younger and the same proportion were 55 or older.

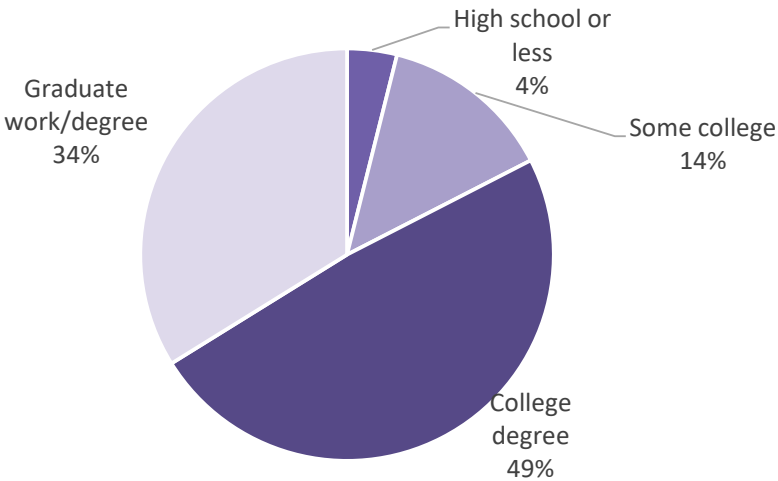D-5. Age of virtual workshop participants



Note: n = 955.

Source: Keen Independent Research, Dane County Employee Virtual Workshop.

# D. Employee Virtual Workshop — Demographic characteristics of participants

**Education.** Over 80 percent of virtual workshop participants indicated that they had a college degree or higher with most of the other participants indicating they had attended some college.

D-6. Highest level of education completed by virtual workshop participants
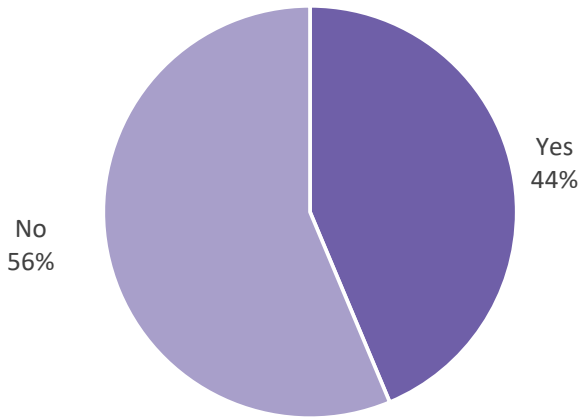


Note:     n = 975.

Source:   Keen Independent Research, Dane County Employee Virtual Workshop.

## D. Employee Virtual Workshop — Demographic characteristics of participants

**Family structure.** About 44 percent of virtual workshop participants indicated that they had children under the age of 18 living in their home.

D-7. Virtual workshop participants' indication of children under 18 living in the home



Yes
44%

No
56%

Note:     n = 968.

Source:     Keen Independent Research, Dane County Employee Virtual Workshop.

# D. Employee Virtual Workshop — Workplace experience and reporting issues

Keen Independent asked virtual workshop participants to reflect on how comfortable individuals feel being themselves at work and how receptive their workplace environment is to new ideas.

## Bringing Whole Self to Work

**Numeric ratings**. On a scale of "1" (strongly disagree) to "7" (strongly agree), about one-half of respondents chose a "6" or "7" to rate their agreement with the statement that they feel comfortable bringing their whole selves to work. Less than a quarter of respondents indicated that they disagreed with that statement.

Keen Independent examined whether key demographic groups of respondents showed statistically significant differences in responses to individual virtual workshop questions compared to other respondents. In the following pages of this appendix, we highlight those that are statistically significant (i.e., unlikely to have occurred by chance).

The key groups that had differences in their responses for the question about comfort bringing your whole self to work were as follows:

- Participants identifying as female provided higher ratings for this question than their male counterparts.

- Participants who indicated they have a disability provided significantly lower ratings than those who indicated that they do not have a disability.

D-8. Virtual workshop participants ratings of how comfortable they feel bringing their whole selves to work
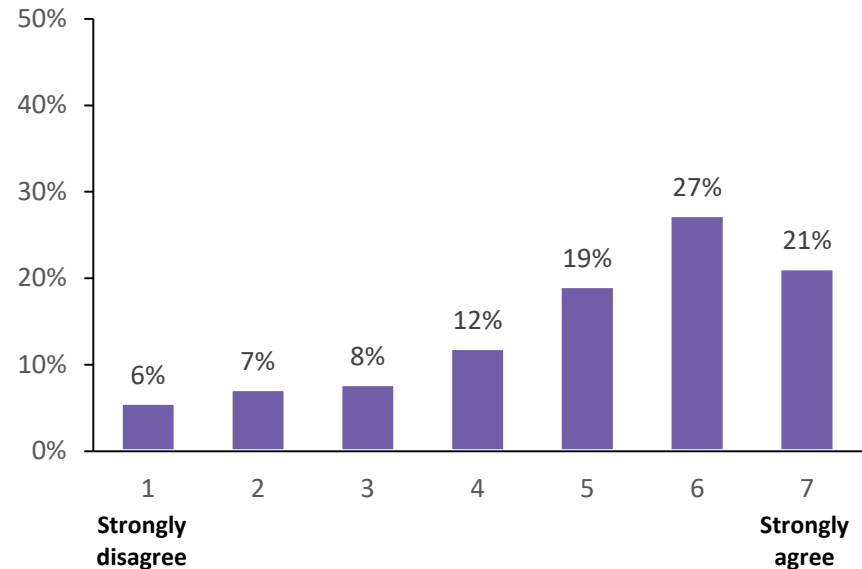


Note:     n = 1,073.

Source:   Keen Independent Research, Dane County Employee Virtual Workshop.

# D. Employee Virtual Workshop — Workplace experience and reporting issues

**Open-ended responses**. Participants elaborated regarding bringing their whole selves to work. Responses varied and are presented to the right and summarized below.

### Accepting and welcoming.
Many Dane County employees commented that they find their respective work environments to be supportive and accepting of who they are.

### Differing levels of support for different people and in different divisions.
Many virtual workshop respondents indicated that support for being oneself at Dane County depends on whether one's political beliefs and background align with those of leadership and management.

Others reported that some divisions or departments have a more supportive environment while others require employees to keep their personalities and opinions to themselves.

### Bullying, intimidation and retaliation.
Some employees reported a toxic environment at Dane County, indicating incidents of bullying and retaliation when employees try to be themselves.

### Balance between work self and authentic self.
Many respondents reported that they have found a balance where they express themselves to some extent but keep other things to themselves in the workplace.

*I consider the way I dress to be a big part of my personality and I have always felt it is accepted (sometimes celebrated) by my colleagues.*

*Male employee of color*

*I feel comfortable at work, but sometimes it depends on who I interact with. As a queer woman in a male-dominated division, I often feel like I can't be my true self around many of my co-workers.*

*White female employee*

*I am conservative and this county is very liberal which makes me often feel like my conservative views are not respected.*

*White female employee*

*There is no growth opportunities if you are a free thinker [and do not conform to management's viewpoint].*

*White male employee*

*If someone is not White, born in America your opinions and input is not valued. It is worst if English is not your primary language. You have to speak, act and behave the way the dominant group behaves in order for your opinions to be valued.*

*Female employee of color*

*Showing up as my full self has not proved to be psychologically safe at [my department]. I have experienced bullying and harassment ….*

*White female employee*

*I feel like there is an appropriate balance between professionalism and self-expression at the office.*

*County employee*

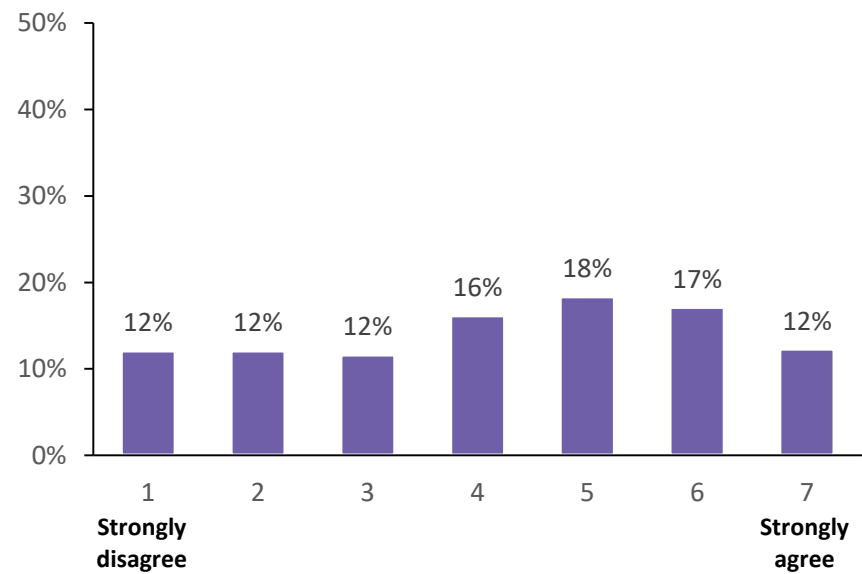# D. Employee Virtual Workshop — Workplace experience and reporting issues

## Expressing Ideas without Negative Consequences

**Numeric ratings.** When asked if they agreed with the statement that employees can express their ideas and views without fear of negative consequences, virtual workshop participants' most frequent answer was a "5." Fewer than one-half of respondents gave a score of 5 or more, and more than one-third of respondents disagreed with that statement.

Participants who identified as having a disability gave scores that were, on average, lower than participants who indicated they did not have a disability.

Additionally, participants living with children under the age of 18 provided lower ratings on this question compared to their counterparts with no children under 18 living in the home.

D-9 Virtual workshop participants ratings of agreement with the statement, "Employees at Dane County can express their ideas and views without fear of negative consequences."



Note:      n = 1,055.

Source:    Keen Independent Research.

# D. Employee Virtual Workshop — Workplace experience and reporting issues

**Open-ended responses**. Dane County employees provided comments regarding whether they can express ideas without fear of negative consequences. Examples of comments are provided on the right and summarized below.

Retaliation is common. Some workshop participants perceived that retaliation is frequently used as a management tool for keeping people from sharing their ideas.

Support varies by person and department. Other employees remarked that in certain circumstances or divisions open dialog is encouraged, while it is discouraged or retaliated against in other situations or for specific people.

Staff are encouraged to share views. Some respondents reported that County staff are encouraged to express themselves and share their ideas.

*In reference to my department, if you aren't one of the "pretty" people or one of the chose[n ones], you go nowhere. If you express different ideas, etc., you are labeled a whiner, complainer, accused of just being angry. This is especially true if you are a woman ....*

*White female employee*

*The fear of negative consequences for simply stating your view or opinion is how [my department] manages the staff. Those who dared to speak in the past have been made examples of through demotion and public shaming .... There is no recourse for staff who are bullied by management in this way.*

*White female employee*

*I have heard of incidents of retaliation that are just plain wrong.*

*White male employee*

*I feel like [fear of retaliation] is far too common here and better systems and procedures would be beneficial ....*

*Female employee of color*

*People of color appear to express more fear of retaliation for being vocal.*

*Female employee of color*

*Within my ... unit I feel very comfortable, but outside of this I am more cautious on how I present an idea or view.*

*White female employee*

*In my experience, employees are encouraged to share their viewpoints and perspectives.*
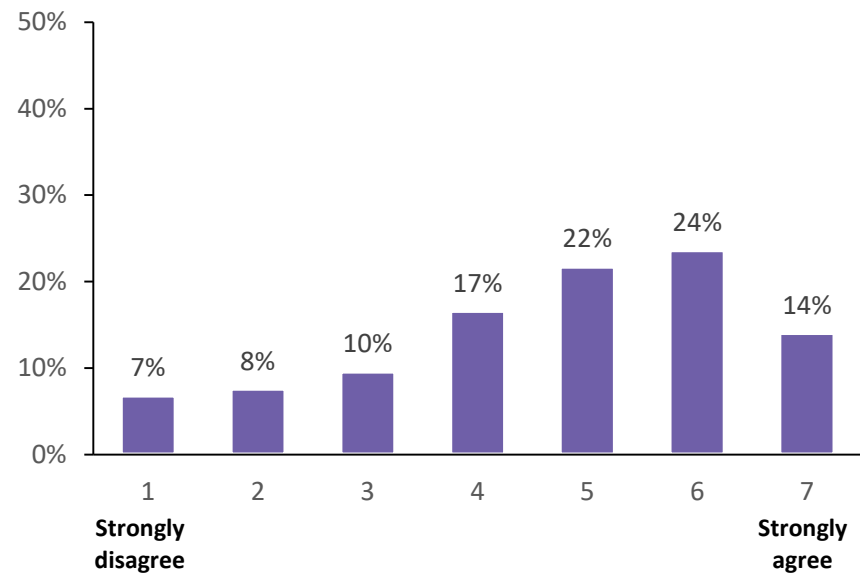
*County employee*

# D. Employee Virtual Workshop — Workplace experience and reporting issues

## Open and Accepting Climate

**Numeric ratings.** Virtual workshop participants were asked to rate their agreement with the statement that people within Dane County government are accepting of different ideas and working styles. The most common rating was a "6." More than half of respondents indicated some level of agreement with the statement. One-quarter of respondents indicated that they disagreed with the statement.

Participants who identified as having a disability provided lower ratings on this question than their counterparts who did not indicate that they have a disability.

D-10. Virtual workshop participants ratings of agreement with the statement, "At Dane County government, people you work with accept a variety of ideas, perspectives and working styles."



| Rating | Percentage |
|--------|-----------|
| 1 (Strongly disagree) | 7% |
| 2 | 8% |
| 3 | 10% |
| 4 | 17% |
| 5 | 22% |
| 6 | 24% |
| 7 (Strongly agree) | 14% |

Note:     n = 1,054.

Source:     Keen Independent Research.

## D. Employee Virtual Workshop — Workplace experience and reporting issues

**Open-ended responses**. Dane County employees provided varied perspectives regarding whether the County has an open and accepting work environment concerning different work styles and viewpoints.

Remote work and in-person work. Some of the more positive open-ended comments came from employees who are satisfied with their respective abilities to choose where they work.

Conversely, many participants reported wanting more freedom or dialog regarding where they work. Some individuals indicated that their departments' work-from-home policies cater solely to department leadership without considering other employees' needs.

Negative experiences. Some participants reported a working environment that is not conducive to various work styles or perspectives. Some indicated that specific perspectives or needs are not always taken into account or are actively discouraged.

Positive experiences. Other respondents remarked that their respective work groups are tolerant of differing views and even have regular discussions about how to support different employee needs.

*I think the management in our office does not have a very good understanding of the concept of different working styles, leading to the mismanagement [of] certain staff who might otherwise work better under different conditions.*

*White female employee*

*I do worry that some people have not fully embraced the reality of work from home as a viable option. I also worry about larger pressures to force employees back into office buildings because the city has to pay rent on these buildings ….*

*White male employee*

*I appreciate the steps Dane County has taken to support workers who are diverse, but in the mission statement and vision, it does not discuss workers who have a disability or older workers. I do have a disability, and although they have made most of the accommodations I have requested, the "official" process is cumbersome.*

*Female employee*

*Cultural differences can still be scrutinized and not accepted, particularly in departments that are traditionally more homogeneous.*

*Male employee of color*

*In our work group we are always open to new ideas and better ways of doing things. We specifically look for different perspectives during discussions.*

*White male employee*

*We have regular conversations on how to best support others['] learning styles and respect their boundaries.*

*Female employee of color*

# D. Employee Virtual Workshop — Workplace experience and reporting issues

Virtual workshop participants were asked to respond to a few questions regarding their relationship with their manager and comfort level reporting any issues that may arise in the workplace.

## Relationship with Manager

**Numeric ratings.** Nearly one-half of virtual workshop participants chose a "7" to indicate how strongly they agree that their manager treats them with respect and dignity. Fewer than 15 percent of participants disagreed with this statement.

By far, this question elicited the most positive responses of any asked in the virtual workshop.

Participants who indicated they have a disability provided lower ratings on this question compared to their counterparts who did not indicate they have a disability (statistically significant difference).

D-11. Virtual workshop participants ratings of agreement with the statement, "My manager treats me with respect and dignity."
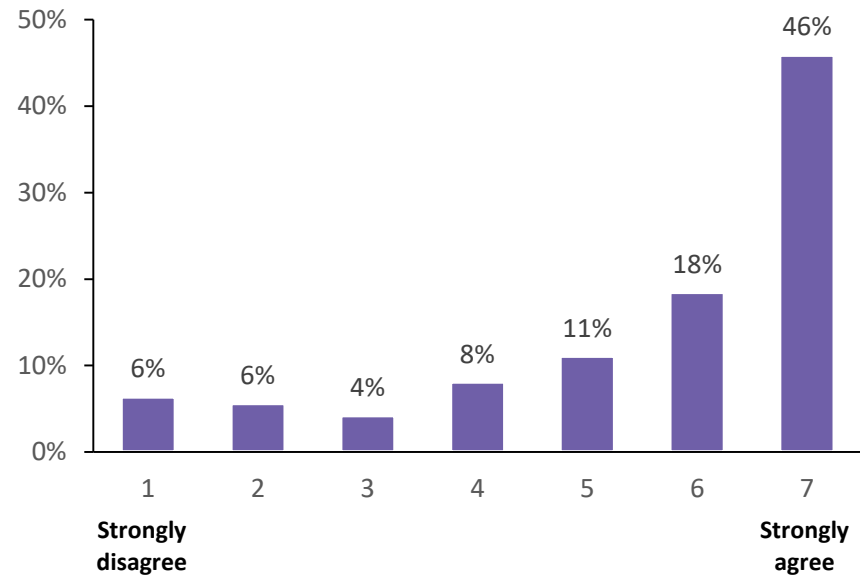


Note:    n = 1,060.

Source:    Keen Independent Research.

# D. Employee Virtual Workshop — Workplace experience and reporting issues

**Open-ended responses**. Employee virtual workshop respondents provided varying perspectives regarding their respective employee/manager relationships. Comments are presented to the right and summarized below.

## Frequently or consistently treated with disrespect. A few respondents reported that they are often treated in a disrespectful manner, including managers or supervisors yelling at them and not experiencing any consequences.

## Respect levels vary. Many respondents indicated that their experience varies and can differ from day to day or based on which management personnel they are interacting with. Some reported that while their direct supervisors do treat them respectfully, higher-ups including managers and division leaders do not show the same level of respect.

Some participants reported that while their supervisors treat them with dignity, other employees are not treated with respect.

## Consistently treated with dignity and respect. Many employees reported that their directors, managers or supervisors consistently treat them courteously and with dignity. Some respondents commented that supervisors' respect extends to understanding the need for a personal life and taking care of oneself.

*… inconsistency, extremes of reaction, and an incongruent sense of acceptance and trust is the norm.*

*County employee*

*The actions of my manager and Department Head have led myself and several coworkers in my department to need long-term FMLA to address mental health issues created by those in power.*

*Male employee of color*

*Management generally treats me with respect but I've seen others not treated the same way.*

*County employee*

*Depends on which manager, I have many supervisors. Some are horrible, some detached, some ignorant or incapable, and some do indeed treat people with respect.*

*Male employee*

*My direct supervisor, I feel, does treat me with respect and dignity. However, I don't feel that the head of my division does.*

*White female employee*

*My director listens, takes time to meet with staff, promotes self-care, understands that family is important and is fair to staff.*

*Female employee of color*

*Luckily, I have a great direct manager ….*

*Multiracial male employee*

# D. Employee Virtual Workshop — Workplace experience and reporting issues

**Comfort addressing incidents**. Virtual workshop participants were also asked to rate their level of comfort addressing an instance of discrimination at Dane County. More than half chose a "5", "6" or "7," indicating some level of comfort addressing an instance of discrimination.

Participants who identified as female and participants who identified as having a disability rated this question lower than their counterparts (male-identifying participants and non-disabled participants, respectively).

D-12. Virtual workshop participants ratings of agreement with the statement, "If it happened, I would feel comfortable reporting a case of workplace discrimination at Dane County."
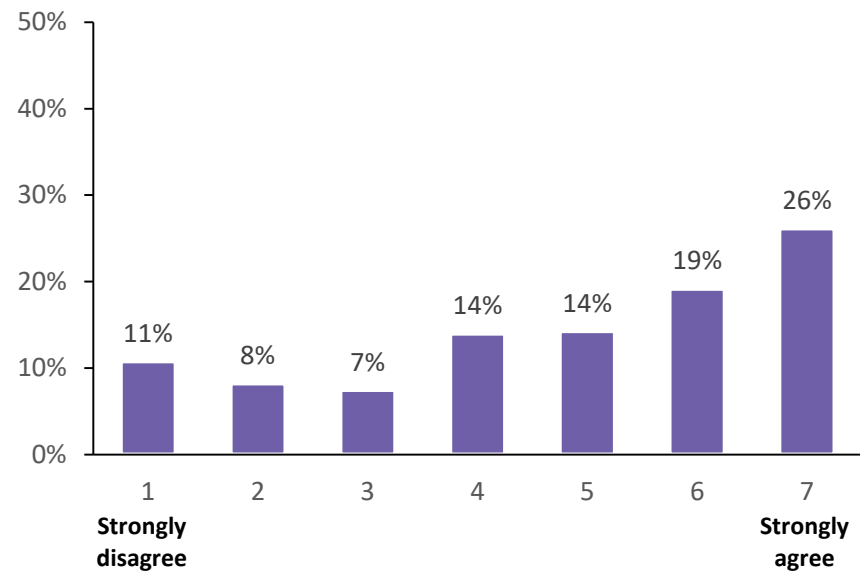


Note.      n = 1,059.

Source:   Keen Independent Research.

# D. Employee Virtual Workshop — Workplace experience and reporting issues

**Open-ended responses**. Participants had the opportunity to elaborate regarding whether they would be comfortable reporting discrimination in the Dane County workplace.

## Fear of retaliation, inaction or victim blaming.
Some workshop respondents indicated that they would be worried that there would be no follow-through if they were to report discrimination in the workplace, and they have reported discrimination in the past and their reports were not taken seriously. Some reported that they would be fearful of being blamed for others' discrimination towards them, or that they have already experienced this type of response. Some respondents also indicated that they would fear retaliation, including possibly losing their jobs, even though they know there are policies in place to prevent such retribution. A few remarked that they do not know where they would start in reporting such a claim.

Many participants who responded "6" or "7" to the previous question, indicating high levels of comfort with reporting a potential incident, also mentioned concerns related to possible difficulty reporting, potential retaliation or inaction if they were to report discrimination.

## It would depend on the circumstances.
Some participants commented that the precise circumstances would impact their comfort level in reporting an instance of discrimination. Willingness to report could be affected by many factors, including whether the perpetrator would be likely to (or would have the power to) retaliate. Others indicated that they would report through an employee group but not directly to the County. Additionally, some participants reported that they would report discrimination by a peer but not by someone above them in the organizational structure.

## Very comfortable reporting.
Some respondents indicated feeling a strong responsibility for reporting discrimination and some indicated that they believe Dane County is strongly in favor of such reporting.

*I have reported workplace discrimination and without any investigation, my Department Head blamed me for being harassed. My direct manager ... takes no action when I continue to report specific acts of discrimination against my protected status.*

*Employee of color*

*I would, but experience has taught me that it's hard to get assistance, especially when all in turn see me as the at-fault person.*

*Female employee of color*

*I've witnessed discrimination by our [manager] on several occasions. Fear of guaranteed retaliation kept me from reporting it.*

*County employee*

*I have no idea even how to start this process. My department does not have a dedicated HR person ....*

*Female employee of color*

*It (how comfortable I would be) would probably depend a lot on the specific situation. But overall I do feel like Dane County is great in terms of being open to reports of discrimination.*

*White female employee*

*Dane County seems committed to avoiding any culture of discrimination.*

*White male employee*

*I can always make a report without feeling guilty or afraid of my employment status.*

*Female employee of color*

# D. Employee Virtual Workshop — Job satisfaction

Virtual workshop participants were asked a few questions relating to success within the workplace.

## Environment that Encourages Success

**Numeric ratings**. More than half of virtual workshop participants indicated they agree that Dane County has an environment that encourages people to succeed. About one-quarter disagreed.

Participants who identified as having a disability provided lower ratings for this question compared to other respondents.

D-13. Virtual workshop participants ratings of agreement with the statement, "Dane County has an environment that encourages you to succeed."
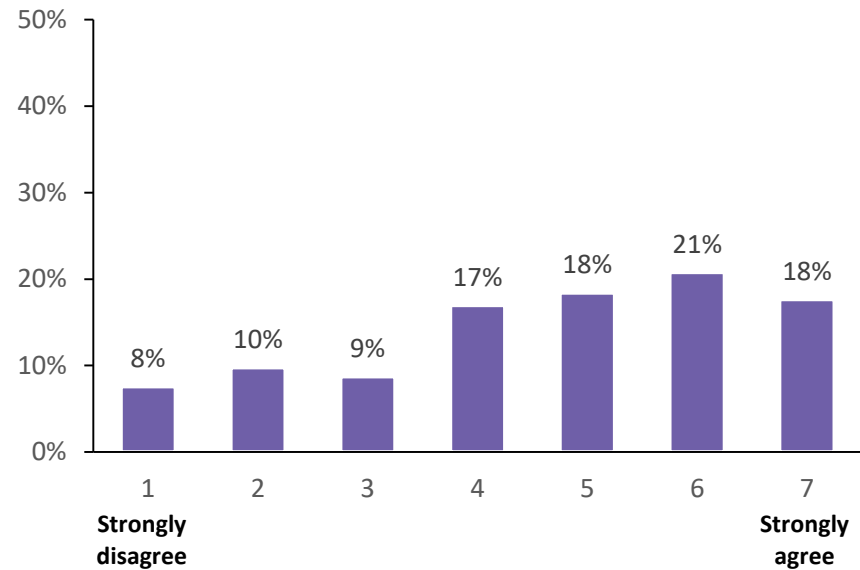


| | |
|---|---|
| Note. | n = 1,053. |
| Source: | Keen Independent Research. |

## D. Employee Virtual Workshop — Job satisfaction

**Open-ended responses**. Respondents provided open-ended responses regarding whether and how Dane County encourages its employees to succeed. Responses are presented to the right and summarized below.

Difficult to learn and improve. Some employees reported a lack of opportunities for continuing education, mentorship and other resources for employee improvement. Some noted the lack of a County-wide training system and some others indicated having to find their own way from the time they started working for Dane County.

Depends on the department or varies from person to person. Some virtual workshop respondents commented that employee support varies between departments and individuals.

Highly supportive and conducive to success. Some employee participants indicated that Dane County supports them well and provides opportunities for improvement and exploration.

*It's a swim or sink mentality, no coaching, encouragement, mentoring.*

*Male employee of color*

*[My department] does not encourage success for its employees in any way, shape, or form.*

*White male employee*

*Any time I have asked my supervisor about trainings … or advancing … answers are not known or given, and I don't feel supported.*

*County employee*

*Training and Development is extremely needed ….*

*Female employee of color*

*Every department is different in its culture and treatment of its employees. I believe my managers/directors do want me to succeed.*

*Male employee of color*

*[It] depends on the supervisor and department[. T]here are still some environments that need a lot of work in this area.*

*White female employee*

*Encourages you to explore the environment and surrounding departments.*

*Male employee of color*

*… nearly everyone I have talked to within Dane County praises how much they appreciate being able to transfer to other positions or even grow within current positions.*

*Employee of color*

## D. Employee Virtual Workshop — Job satisfaction

### Defining Success

Virtual workshop participants were asked to define what success looks like for them and whether this definition differs from what exists within the County as workplace. Responses were provided in an open-ended manner and are summarized below, with specific responses included on the right.

**Work/life balance.** Many respondents commented that success requires a healthy work/life balance. To some this meant working hard but avoiding burnout, and others mentioned the need for adequate pay, benefits and leave to properly take care of themselves and their families. Some reported believing that Dane County provides this, while others indicated the opposite.

**Continuing education and opportunities for improvement or advancement.** Other employees mentioned that opportunities for learning and self-improvement within and related to the work environment are crucial to feeling successful. As with work/life balance, some employees reported that these opportunities are present at Dane County, while others felt that they are not.

**Feel supported by a team in meeting goals.** Some virtual workshop participants reported that success is defined as meeting concrete goals, helping people and feeling supported and celebrated by their team and by superiors as they do so.

*Ability to maintain work/life balance.*

*Female employee of color*

*As an immigrant who came to America with the purpose of continuing my education, I am currently ... pursuing a master's degree ... while working at [Dane County]. It is important for me to know if [Dane County] provides financial support for education ... Education ... opens doors and broadens horizons.*

*Multiracial female employee*

*I would define workplace success as having a fulfilling role within a team led by supportive, collaborative, and respectful leaders. Fortunately, that's exactly what I am experiencing now.*

*Female employee of color*

*Success for me means being able to exceed the expectations placed on me and continue to find ways to make our processes more efficient. That would be completely different than my current situation.*

*Employee of color*

*Having the tools and ability to not only handle what's in front of you(us) currently but being able to use those tools to progress and grow in the future.*

*White male employee*

*Success is the ability to achieve small or long-term goals independently with support from staff and supervisors.*

*Female employee of color*

*Feel valued in my job and be able to ask for help when [I] need it.*

*White female employee*
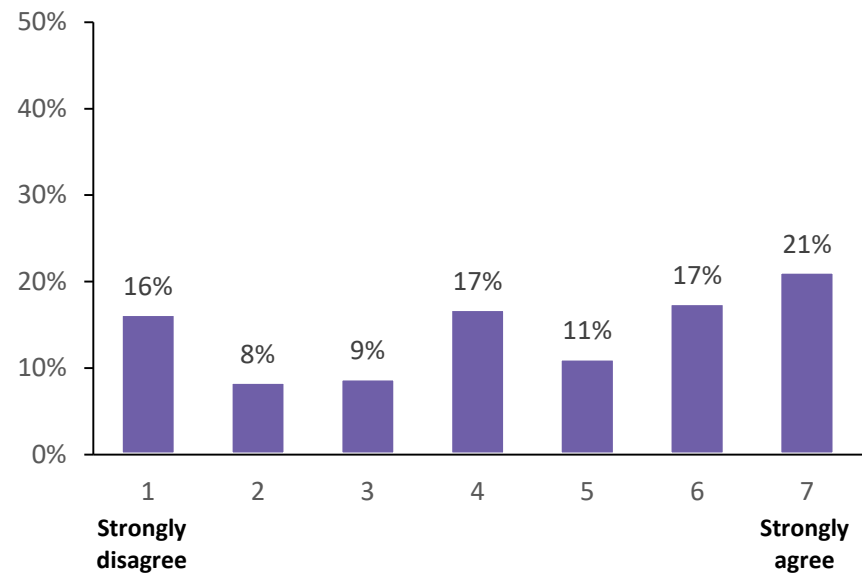
# D. Employee Virtual Workshop — Job satisfaction

Virtual workshop participants provided responses regarding topics relevant to job satisfaction.

## Staying with the County

**Numeric ratings**. About one-half of virtual workshop participants agreed that if they were offered the same pay and benefits elsewhere, they would choose to remain working at Dane County. One-third disagreed with this statement.

Participants who identified as having a disability and participants under the age of 45 rated this question lower than their counterparts.

D-14. Virtual workshop participants ratings of agreement with the statement, "I would choose to stay with Dane County government even if offered the same job, pay and benefits elsewhere."



Note.     n = 1,046.
Source:   Keen Independent Research.

# D. Employee Virtual Workshop — Job satisfaction

## Recommending the County

**Numeric ratings**. About two-thirds of virtual workshop participants agreed that they would recommend Dane County as a place to work, which is larger than the share that agreed they would stay at Dane County if offered the same pay and benefits elsewhere. About 20 percent of respondents indicated they would not recommend the County to others as a place to work.

Female-identifying participants provided higher ratings for this question compared to male-identifying participants.

Consistent with all other questions, participants who identified as having a disability rated this question lower than their counterparts who do not have a disability.

D-15. Virtual workshop participants ratings of agreement with the statement, "I would recommend Dane County government as a place to work."
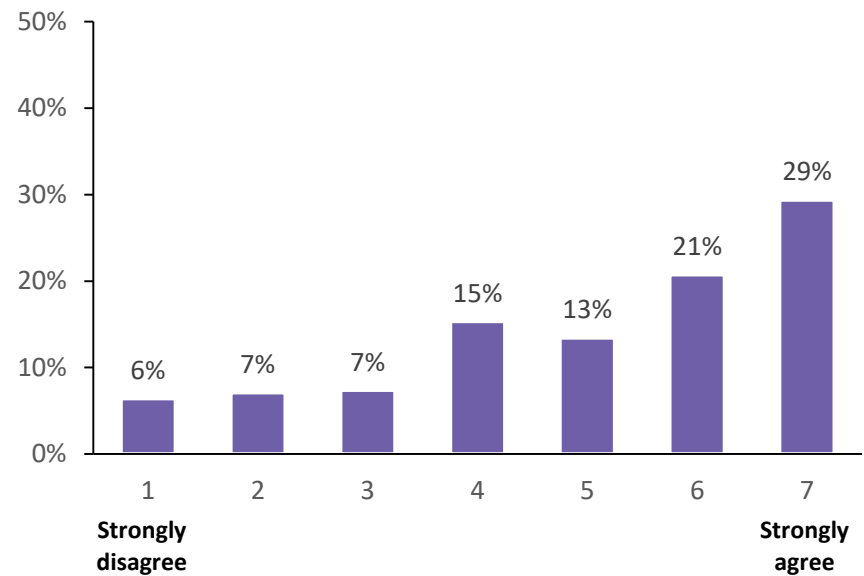


Note.      n = 1,054.

Source:    Keen Independent Research.

## D. Employee Virtual Workshop — Vision of department and Dane County as a whole

The virtual workshop prompted participants to reflect on an ideal workplace environment.

### Vision for a Positive Work Environment

Workshop participants were asked to consider the following: "Imagine a county government that promotes a positive and supportive work environment for its employees, which includes belonging, equity, diversity and inclusion. What would that look like to you?" Responses were provided in an open-ended format and are summarized below and to the right.

**This culture already exists in Dane County**. Some employees commented that Dane County's current culture promotes a supportive work environment with an emphasis on belonging, diversity, equity and inclusion.

**Employees wondered whether true diversity is possible.** Some respondents expressed concerns about Dane County's ability to hire a truly diverse workforce.

**Communication and openness despite differences.** Some employees reported that open communication between employees of all ranks is crucial to a positive work environment.

**Regular trainings including onboarding.** Some respondents emphasized the need for diversity training during onboarding as well as ongoing training on a regular basis, e.g., every six months.

**Diversity throughout the hierarchy.** Many workshop participants indicated that true diversity would require diversity throughout the Dane County hierarchy, including upper management. Some made suggestions for how to do this, including allowing the substitution of experience for education in some hiring situations.

*I think that Dane County does everything they can to promote belonging, equity, diversity and inclusion, and ... rest is up to us ....*

*White male employee*

*Assuming that we can be successful creating a diverse workforce — the key for me is creating an environment where [all] workers ... feel welcomed/free to express themselves.*

*White female employee*

*Knowing that not everyone gets along (personalities are very different), but everyone is treated fairly and has a sense of being listened to and knowing that what I say will be heard.*

*Female employee of color*

*A workforce that closely resembles the overall demographics of Dane County, at all levels, including management.*

*White male employee*

*Allowing people with felonies that have paid their debt to society and have not committed offenses within recent years to have a fair shot at employment ....*

*Female employee of color*

*Have all the staff take classes on DEI every six months.*

*Male employee of color*

*I would say having more diversity for higher-up positions. I understand having someone who's qualified is a very big component to those positions. However ... representation matters, and I would love to see more who look like me in those positions ....*

*Male employee of color*

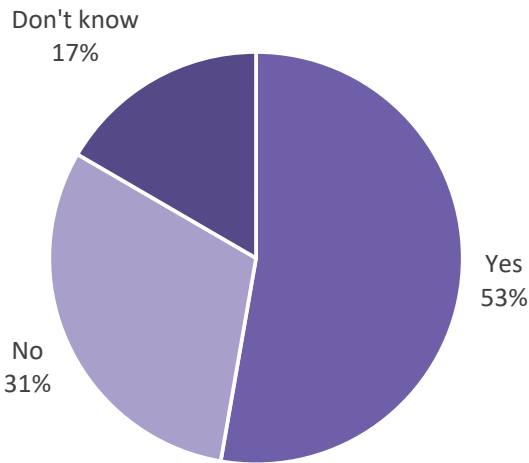# D. Employee Virtual Workshop — Vision of department and Dane County as a whole

## Unit or Division Fitting the Vision

Workshop participants were asked the follow-up question, "Does your Dane County unit or division fit your vision of a positive and supportive work environment for its employees, which includes belonging, equity, diversity and inclusion?"

**Numeric ratings**. About one-half of virtual workshop participants indicated that their department or division fits their vision of a positive, supportive work environment and one-third answered "no."

Participants who identified as having a disability were more likely to respond "no" to this question than participants without disabilities.

D-16. Virtual workshop participants' indication of whether their Dane County unit or division fits their vision of a positive, supportive work environment



Note.     n = 1,060.

Source:   Keen Independent Research.

## D. Employee Virtual Workshop — Vision of department and Dane County as a whole

**Open-ended responses**. Employees were asked to elaborate and explain why they do or do not agree with this.

Yes, my unit or division fits this vision. For workshop participants that responded "yes," many pointed to past and current efforts by their respective departments to focus on issues of belonging and alleviate problems that arise. Others commented on the diverse characteristics that they see in their own departments.

Don't know. For those who answered, "Don't know" to this question, many respondents indicated that there is still room for improvement or that some employees and supervisors are more supportive than others. Some commented that it is crucial that Dane County keep trying to be more inclusive and supportive.

No, my unit or division does not fit this vision. Among respondents responding "no," some employees commented that they do not find the promotion ladder to be equitable, and others specifically mentioned that their respective supervisors are absent or do not support them in the ways they need.

Some employees of color remarked that they do not believe that they can move up in the organization. Some also indicated feeling that there is a double standard for employees of color.

*I believe the efforts of our department on these topics have been in place for many years, and it is doing a good job to address [this].*

*White male employee*

*Being a person of color, my team has been respectful of my cultural background and different religious [beliefs].*

*Female employee of color*

*I feel like we have created an environment where everyone can be themselves, feel included and comfortable, and bring their best work and ideas to the table every workday.*

*White female employee*

*It's hard to say at this time, I think we have grown a lot in the last few years, and I see an active effort from all parties involved, however I still think we have a ways to go.*

*Female employee of color*

*Our unit currently has LTEs working in a few different positions. One is a woman of color who has worked for our unit for over 4 years …. If her position would be added full-time, other County employees would be offered to transfer to the position before she can even apply, even though she would be most qualified.*

*White female employee*

*When we put in for a position, almost 100% of the time, we will never get it. Most of the time, those positions had already been promised to someone … [but when] it comes to discipline, we are more likely to get written up or disciplined more harshly than other groups.*

*Male employee of color*

# D. Employee Virtual Workshop — Vision of department and Dane County as a whole

## County as a Whole Fitting the Vision

**Numeric ratings**. Figure D-17 shows results for a similar question about whether Dane County government as a whole fits their vision of a positive, supportive work environment. Relatively fewer virtual workshop participants agreed that the County as a whole fits their vision of a positive, supportive work environment (42%) compared to their department or division (53%).

Also, relatively more individuals said they did not know whether the County fit their vision (30%) compared to the same question about their department or division (17%).

Groups that were more likely to respond "no" to this question compared to their counterparts were:

- People of color (compared to white participants);

- Female-identifying (compared to male-identifying);

- Participants identifying as having a disability (compared to participants without disabilities); and

- Participants under 45 years of age (compared to participants aged 45 or older).

D-17. Virtual workshop participants' indication of whether Dane County as a whole fits their vision of a positive, supportive work environment
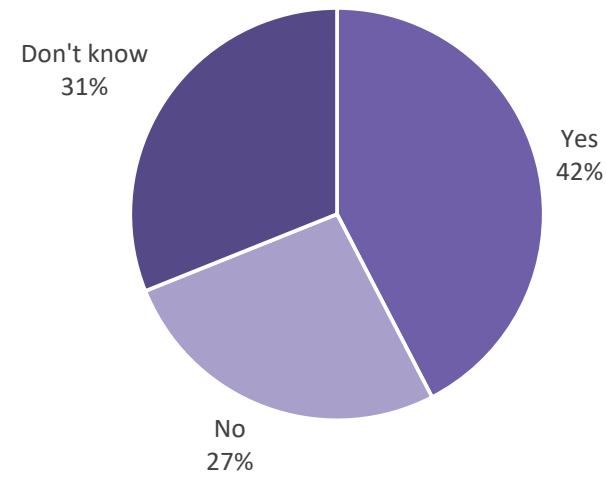


Note.       n = 1,052.
Source:    Keen Independent Research.

## D. Employee Virtual Workshop — Vision of department and Dane County as a whole

**Open-ended responses**. As with the previous question, respondents were offered the option to respond "Yes," "No" or "Don't know" and were then able to provide an open-ended response.

**"Yes," Dane County fits this vision.** Of the respondents who responded "yes" when asked whether the County fits the vision of an equitable, positive working environment, many commented that the various departments are working hard to create this type of workplace culture. Others mentioned that the implementation could be improved, and that the results do not always line up with the intentions, but that the goal of a culture of inclusiveness and belonging is clearly important at Dane County overall.

**"Don't know."** Most respondents who replied "don't know" to this question indicated that they do not have enough interaction with other departments to form an opinion on this topic.

**"No."** Of respondents that replied "no" to this question, many mentioned problems related to employee groups and the Department of Administration (DOA). Some reported that the DOA does not communicate properly with or meet with the employee groups. Others commented that employee groups protect their members rather than working for the good of Dane County overall, and some indicated that difficulties between employee groups and management can promote divisiveness.

Some respondents commented on specific attitudes that make it difficult for employees of color to feel supported in the Dane County work environment.

Examples of comments are presented on the right.

*County leadership and elected officials are serious and striving to implement the best workplace climate.*

*Female employee of color*

*I think that we are aiming for equity in our workplace. We do a good job in my opinion once people are [employed by] the county. However, we lack the ability to hire a diverse workforce. This is due to the job requirements of opening positions and the lack of recruitment from diverse communities.*

*White male employee.*

*Asian and Hispanic only get appreciate[ed] when others need them to translate. Any other times, they are being look[ed] at as second-class workers.*

*Male employee of color*

*I think people may not know they are stuck in their own bias that hurt others and may not know how to check themselves or look at things from other perspectives.*

*Female employee of color*

*My comments apply to the leadership, elected officials, and the employee groups. Instead of promoting a positive work environment, the recent leadership within all 3 groups seems to have lost the fact that we work for the community.*

*Male employee of color*

*It appears there is a lot of disagreement and fighting between administration and the employee groups. A lot of pointing of fingers.*

*White female employee*

# D. Employee Virtual Workshop — Additional comments

## Impressions of Workplace Climate for Diverse Employees

Dane County workshop participants were also asked to provide insights regarding the County's workplace climate with a particular emphasis on the experiences of diverse employees. Comments were provided in an open-ended format.

Many responses indicated that employees of color have historically not been as successful at winning promotions at Dane County. Some posited that though this is changing, it can still be difficult and that current, qualified employees of color may be overlooked in favor of external hiring of a white employee.

Some virtual workshop participants mentioned that a measurable plan needs to be in place to assist diverse employees, and others commented on the need for active DEI training, affinity groups and other support. Other employees reported that Dane County does not always excel at retaining diverse employees.

*My department is making active coordinated effort for training and programming for DEI (yay!) but don't know if others are (boo!).*

*Multiracial male employee*

*If any, they are trying to meet quotas.*

*Male employee of color*

*The retention of diverse employees is not tracked and therefore not measured adequately. I think the results would find that diverse employees do not feel as welcomed … [and that] … diverse employees are leaving at a higher rate. In some departments, they are continuously harassed.*

*Male employee of color*

*More people of color in leadership positions, specifically black.*

*Female employee of color*

*I believe there is a huge need for ongoing mentorship and support. I worry about the quiet, subtle ways that people are made to feel unwelcome, unsupported, isolated, or resented.*

*White female employee*

*I have never worked under a non-white supervisor in the positions I have held.*

*White male employee*

*Space has to be deliberately made for BIPOC people to show up as themselves.  In an agency with such white dominant ways of being, there has to be support through affinity spaces at all levels--not just for line workers ….*

*Female employee of color*

# D. Employee Virtual Workshop — Additional comments

Virtual workshop participants could provide any final comments regarding the Dane County workplace climate.

## Impressions of Dane County Workplace Overall

Employees were asked to provide additional open-ended responses regarding their perceptions of whether Dane County is a positive and supportive work environment.

Overall, responses to this question were positive or optimistic. A large portion of employees across different demographics simply commented that they typically feel supported by their respective work groups and that they have always felt welcomed in the County. Many also provided positive remarks related to pay, benefits, schedule flexibility and remote work options.

Some employees remarked that improvements continue to be needed, and some employees provided specific suggestions for how to improve.

*My colleagues are high quality and supportive. They always help out when I ask for it.*

*Male employee of color*

*I feel Dane Co. is trying hard to change with the times. Change takes time and effort with support.*

*Female employee of color*

*Dane County has worked hard to promote an environment that is inclusive and supportive. Diversity training and creation of the Office [for] Equity and Inclusion are examples of the County's efforts to make the workplace a welcoming place.*

*White male employee*

*I think many want to do better but don't know how or are scared to try … I am speaking on the racial and cultural levels … or they are scared to be seen as a bigot or ignorant … so some sit idle and allow things to go on because they are not in the crossfire … so I think hard conversations [are needed].*

*Female employee of color*

*Dane County could improve the support of LGBTQ+ individuals by signage in public spaces, such as gender-neutral bathrooms.*

*Female employee*

*I am not aware of any employee support groups for LGBTQ individuals nor disabled individuals. Furthermore, I had to navigate accessibility changes and questions as one of the first employees to do so, and have not heard of additional support or resources for others to help navigate these processes.*

*White male employee*

# D. Employee Virtual Workshop — Virtual workshop instrument

In this final section of the appendix, we present the virtual workshop instrument content. Please note that the instrument was delivered online with a user-friendly, mobile responsive interface. For open-ended responses, participants were not restricted by word or character count and could provide as much feedback as they wished.

## Introduction

The Office of the Dane County Board engaged Keen Independent Research to conduct a workplace climate assessment. Keen Independent is asking Dane County employees to provide input. Visit the study website:
https://keenindependent.com/danecountyworkplace

Everyone's voice matters! Results will be reported in aggregate.

You may also reach out to Lisa MacKinnon, Sustainability and Program Evaluation Coordinator, MacKinnon@countyofdane.com

## Questions

Please respond to each question using a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 is strongly disagree and 7 is strongly agree. Please answer to the best of your knowledge, even if you don't know for sure.

**Q1a**. On a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 is strongly disagree and 7 is strongly agree, please indicate how strongly you agree with the statement, "I personally can bring my whole self to work (be my true self), as a Dane County employee."

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | don't know |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|------------|
| *strongly disagree* | | | | | | *strongly agree* | |

**Q1b**. Any comments or insights as to why you responded the way you did?

_____

**Q2a**. On a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 is strongly disagree and 7 is strongly agree, please indicate how strongly you agree with the statement, "Employees at Dane County can express their ideas and views without fear of negative consequences."

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | don't know |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|------------|
| *strongly disagree* | | | | | | *strongly agree* | |

**Q2b**. Any comments or insights as to why you responded the way you did?

_____

## D. Employee Virtual Workshop — Virtual workshop instrument

**Q3a**. On a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 is strongly disagree and 7 is strongly agree, please indicate how strongly you agree with the statement, "At Dane County government, people you work with accept a variety of ideas, perspectives and working styles."

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | don't know |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *strongly* | | | | | | *strongly* | |
| *disagree* | | | | | | *agree* | |

**Q3b**. Any comments or insights as to why you responded the way you did?

_____

**Q4a**. On a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 is strongly disagree and 7 is strongly agree, please indicate how strongly you agree with the statement, "My manager treats me with respect and dignity."

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | don't know |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *strongly* | | | | | | *strongly* | |
| *disagree* | | | | | | *agree* | |

**Q4b**. Any comments or insights as to why you responded the way you did?

_____

**Q5a**. On a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 is strongly disagree and 7 is strongly agree, please indicate how strongly you agree with the statement, "If it happened, I would feel comfortable reporting a case of workplace discrimination at Dane County."

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | don't know |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *strongly* | | | | | | *strongly* | |
| *disagree* | | | | | | *agree* | |

**Q5b**. Any comments or insights as to why you responded the way you did?

_____

**Q6a**. On a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 is strongly disagree and 7 is strongly agree, please indicate how strongly you agree with the statement, "Dane County has an environment that encourages you to succeed."

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | don't know |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *strongly* | | | | | | *strongly* | |
| *disagree* | | | | | | *agree* | |

**Q6b**. Any comments or insights as to why you responded the way you did?

_____

**Q6c**. Now, how would you define "success" for you? How would it be different, if at all, from what already exists?

_____

## D. Employee Virtual Workshop — Virtual workshop instrument

**Q7**. On a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 is strongly disagree and 7 is strongly agree, please indicate how strongly you agree with the statement, "I would choose to stay with Dane County government even if offered the same job, pay and benefits elsewhere."

*1     2     3     4     5     6     7     don't know*
*strongly                       strongly*
*disagree                       agree*

**Q8**. On a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 is strongly disagree and 7 is strongly agree, please indicate how strongly you agree with the statement, "I would recommend Dane County government as a place to work."

*1     2     3     4     5     6     7     don't know*
*strongly                       strongly*
*disagree                       agree*

**Q9**. Imagine a county government that promotes a positive and supportive work environment for its employees, which includes belonging, equity, diversity and inclusion. What would that look like to you?

_____

**Q10a**. Does your Dane County unit or division fit your vision of a positive and supportive work environment for its employees, which includes belonging, equity, diversity and inclusion?

   ☐ Yes

   ☐ No

   ☐ Don't know

**Q10b**. Why/why not?

_____

**Q11a**. Does the Dane County workplace overall, including all other departments, offices, employee groups, County leadership and elected officials, promote a positive and supportive work environment for employees, which includes belonging, equity, diversity and inclusion?

   ☐ Yes

   ☐ No

   ☐ Don't know

**Q11b**. Why/why not? In your response, please identify which groups your comments apply to (e.g., other departments, offices, employee groups, County leadership and/or elected officials).

_____

## Other Insights

**Q12**. Please provide any additional insights regarding your impressions of Dane County as a positive and supportive work environment.

_____

**Q13**. Please provide any additional insights specifically regarding equity in workplace climate for
diverse employees.

_____

## D. Employee Virtual Workshop — Virtual workshop instrument

### Demographics

**Q14**. Department

- ☐ Administration
- ☐ Airport
- ☐ Alliant Energy Center
- ☐ Clerk of Courts
- ☐ Corporation Counsel
- ☐ County Clerk
- ☐ County Executive
- ☐ County Sheriff
- ☐ County Treasurer
- ☐ Dane County Board of Supervisors
- ☐ District Attorney
- ☐ Emergency Management
- ☐ Family Court Services
- ☐ Highway & Transportation
- ☐ Human Services
- ☐ Justice Reform

- ☐ Juvenile Court Program
- ☐ Land Information Office
- ☐ Land & Water Services
- ☐ Library Services
- ☐ Medical Examiner
- ☐ Office for Equity and Inclusion
- ☐ Planning & Development
- ☐ Pretrial Services
- ☐ Public Health (PHMDC)
- ☐ Public Safety Communications/911
- ☐ Public Works
- ☐ Register of Deeds
- ☐ UW Extension
- ☐ Veterans' Services
- ☐ Waste & Renewables
- ☐ Henry Villas Zoo

## D. Employee Virtual Workshop — Virtual workshop instrument

**Q15PH**. [If Public Health is selected] Which Public Health division do you work for?

- ☐ Community Health
- ☐ COVID Response/Recovery
- ☐ Environmental Health
- ☐ Epidemiology and Data Science
- ☐ Operations
- ☐ Policy, Planning and Evaluation

**Q15O**. [If department other than Public Health is selected] Which division do you work for?

_____

**Q16**. Please select one:

- ☐ Hourly
- ☐ Salary

**Q17**. Select one:

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Non-binary/third gender
- ☐ Not represented here (please specify):
  _____
- ☐ Prefer not to say

**Q18**. Please select age group:

- ☐ Under 18
- ☐ 18-24
- ☐ 25-34
- ☐ 35-44
- ☐ 45-54
- ☐ 55-64
- ☐ 65 and above

## D. Employee Virtual Workshop — Virtual workshop instrument

**Q19**.   What is your primary racial or ethnic group? (Select one.)

☐ Black or African American

☐ American Indian or Alaska Native

☐ Asian

☐ Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander

☐ Hispanic or Latino

☐ White (not Hispanic or Latino)

☐ Not represented here {please specify):
_____

☐ Prefer not to say

**Q20**. Highest level of education. (Select one)

☐ High school or less

☐ Some college

☐ College degree

☐ Graduate work/degree

**Q21**. Do you identify as a person with a disability?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Prefer not to answer

**Q22**. Any children 18 and under living at home (full-time or part-time):

☐ Yes

☐ No

# APPENDIX E. Internal Complaints — Process

In this section, Keen Independent provides an overview of the complaints process and the content of the complaints we analyzed. We reviewed the written complaints policy and conducted interviews with County personnel with knowledge on the process. We use the term "complainant" to refer to the person who filed the complaint.

## Summary of Dane County Complaints Process

The County has a process by which employees can file complaints related to their workplace experiences.

**Initial submission and direction**. County employees have several options in terms of where they may submit complaints (which can be verbal or written, but the policy encourages written complaints). Individuals and entities who receive complaints include, but are not limited to:

- Direct supervisors;
- Office for Equity and Inclusion;
- Employee Relations;
- Director of Administration;
- County Executive's Office; and
- Employee group representatives.

Managers handle complaints between staff in their departments in consultation with the Employee Relations Department. Other complaints are funneled through the following avenues:

- The Human Resources Manager investigates violations committed by all levels of employees, including violations of civil service work rules, County ordinances, policies and procedures, and federal or state statutes applicable to County operations.

- The Manager of Equal Employment Opportunity handles complaints related to various forms of equal employment.
- The Employee Advocate Manager handles complaints for which mediation between employees is appropriate.

**Investigation**. Once a complaint is assigned to the appropriate individual, an investigation occurs. All complaints are investigated. During an investigation, the complainant and the person about whom the complaint was filed are contacted to address the allegations. If the allegations are valid, the County's Progressive Discipline process is followed in accordance with the relevant Administrative Practices Manual.

If the allegations are denied, more information is collected to determine the complaint's validity. Other staff with direct knowledge of the allegations may be contacted as needed for additional information. When managers are conducting investigations, they will often consult with Employee Relations or the Office for Equity and Inclusion to ensure they are properly performing their investigations.

**Findings and disciplinary action**. The investigator documents the findings from the investigation and determines the merit of the allegations. Findings are shared with the division administrator (unless they are the person being complained about) and the Director of Administration. The investigator shares the decision regarding the complaint with the involved parties.

In situations where disciplinary action is appropriate, the Human Resources Director is contacted to assist (unless the Human Resources Director is the person named in a complaint, in which case the Director of Administration is contacted). Corporate Counsel is also consulted. Disciplinary actions taken against employees are not shared with complainants at any time for confidentiality purposes.

# E. Internal Complaints — Process

Figure E-1 summarizes Dane County internal complaints process.

E-1. Current Dane County internal complaints process

**Employee complaint**

**File with:**
- Direct supervisor
- Office for Equity and Inclusion
- Employee Relations
- Director of Administration
- County Executive's Office
- Employee group representatives

**Investigation**
- Complainant contacted
- Person about whom complaint was filed contacted
- Additional staff contacted as needed
- Document reviewed

**Disciplinary action (if applicable)**
- Human Resources Director contacted
- Director of Administration contacted
- Corporation Counsel contacted

**Report of findings**
- Provided to Director of Administration and division administrator
- Decision shared with complainant

**Determination of merit of allegations**
- If no merit: No further actions taken, report issued
- If merit, disciplinary action will be assessed

Source:    Dane County, Keen Independent Research.

# E. Internal Complaints — Themes from a sample of complaints

As part of this workplace climate analysis, Dane County provided Keen Independent with an overview of emerging themes from 36 internally focused complaints. To protect all parties involved, the County provided complaints examples, without identifying any complainant, employee representative or other individuals and departments, or any specific remedies.

## Content of Complaints

The allegations within the summarized complaints Keen Independent reviewed for this analysis varied in their severity. Many of the complaints were broad in scope, whereas some were relatively narrow and referenced specific incidents.

**Hostile work environment.** Several complaints focused on allegations of a "hostile work environment." A number of employees reported that segregation, sexism, hazing, gossiping and slander affect the County's workplace environment. Some employees referred to specific incidents, including new employees being teased, locations for social interaction that differ among white employees and people of color, insubordinate behavior of male workers when working with female colleagues, employee favoritism and fear of retaliation. Some examples follow.

One complainant described an instance of management and staff communicating in a manner that was perceived as aggressive by others. This complaint indicated that, "[Shouting] causes recipients and observers of such outbursts to feel disrespected, demoralized and/or uncomfortable."

Another complainant alleged that when Spanish-speaking employees converse together in Spanish when non-Spanish speakers are present, those who do not speak the language perceive it as gossiping.

**Lack of training and development.** Some employees gave examples of marginalization at work. There were reports that, for fear that they might be outperformed, supervisors and other knowledgeable individuals did not consistently train or cross-train employees. One complaint reported shaming during training when mistakes were made by trainees. Others reported a lack of growth opportunities.

**Recruitment and retention.** One complaint suggested there should be more efforts to recruit and retain people of color. Other comments indicated that insufficient staffing results in workers feeling overworked or overloaded.

**Leadership and transparency.** Many complaints were focused on ineffective leadership and lack of transparency. Several complaints indicated that leadership is unprofessional and unapproachable. Other complaints indicated that the behavior of leadership and their treatment of employees is based on a "buddy system" and favoritism. Some complaints alleged that policies and procedures are confusing at times when leadership speaks about certain policies and procedures without documenting them in a written document. Some reported that policies are not uniformly applied, with disciplinary measures being inequitably applied or not transparent.

**Other workplace climate allegations**. One complaint indicated divisive Employee Group with ineffective representation: "Divisive, disrespectful, disparaging, [using] acrimonious tone and manner of the communications towards Management in written and verbal communications."

Other complaints alleged long work hours, unfair work coverage, poor work-life balance, limited resources for safety improvements, employee abuse of sick leave and attendance policies, and undefined employee dress code.

# E. Internal Complaints — Assessment and potential improvements

As part of this assessment, we provide strategies that further support an equitable complaints process.

## Recommendations

The County's complaints process is robust but has room for improvement. The following recommendations are designed to make the complaints process more transparent and accessible such that employees are informed and feel supported.

- **Document the entire complaints process in writing**. The complaints process managers follow to address issues between employees within a department is outlined in the County's Administrative Practices Manual. However, the detail provided in this appendix regarding the involvement of other investigators for complaints that go beyond this does not appear in the written policy. The County should consider revising this policy such that it includes as much detail as possible regarding the complaints process.

- **Document processes for investigations**. Additionally, many complaints suggested that employees are unclear about the process for conducting investigations. This may mean a more robust documentation system for investigation is needed; however, management simply improving communications around how investigations are conducted may dispel some of the concerns among employees.

- **Consider adding language regarding recourse for unsatisfactory decisions**. Although County employees may inquire if they are unsure of the process, the complaints process document as currently written does not explicitly describe what complainants should do if they are unsatisfied with the results of the investigation. The County's Grievance Process, which deals with complaints related specifically to employee benefits, outlines how complainants may escalate and appeal decisions made. The County may consider including similar language in this complaints policy. Given the practice of not sharing disciplinary actions, it is possible that complainants may feel their complaints were not sufficiently addressed. The County may consider ways to increase transparency around other areas of the process so complainants feel comfortable with the decision made.

- **Explore other avenues for addressing complaints**. Many complaints mentioned gossip, slander, mockery and a general disconnect or lack of respect between employees. This information is valuable in combination with other study results (e.g., comments from the employee virtual workshop) to continue to improve the workplace climate. The fact that these instances resulted in formal complaints indicates the need to better understand whether informal processes were utilized and failed, or whether the informal processes could or should have been used. (See Appendix F that discusses alternative employee complaint processes.)

# APPENDIX F. Employee Complaints Resolution — Introduction

Leaders of all organizations, public and private, must contend with informal complaints and formal grievances from employees. Issues described in such situations run the gamut: from workplace annoyances and physical discomfort to charges of racism or discrimination.

Employees are legally protected from harmful behaviors in the workplace by state and federal laws. The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), for example, guards job applicants, current employees and retired employees who engage in the following "protected activities:"

- "Filing or being a witness in a [protected activity], complaint, investigation, or lawsuit;
- Communicating with a supervisor or manager about employment discrimination, including harassment;
- Answering questions during an employer investigation of alleged harassment;
- Refusing to follow orders that would result in discrimination;
- Resisting sexual advances, or intervening to protect others;
- Requesting accommodation of a disability or for a religious practice; and
- Asking managers or co-workers about salary information to uncover potentially discriminatory wages."[1]

Thus, when faced with an adverse situation, employees can make claims to their employer to demand change or resolution of conflicts.

## Benefits of Complaints

While seemingly individualized, complaints may be indicative of larger, systemic issues within the workplace,[2] the "tip of the iceberg," so to speak. For example, a staff complaint about a supervisor's predatory behavior may reveal broader issues concerning workplace culture. Therefore, complaints can create opportunities for organizational growth and improvement.

Some organizations have strengthened employee complaints processes to increase accessibility, expedite resolution and reduce fears of retribution. Research has found that doing so creates a more equitable, safe and inclusive work environment. Organizations with efficient internal complaints systems benefit from higher employee retention.[3]

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[1] EEOC. (n.d.). "Facts about retaliation." U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Retrieved July 26, 2022, from https://www.eeoc.gov/facts-about-retaliation

[2] Davidhizar, R. (2012). "The employee who complains." *Hospital Topics* 69(4): 16-19.

[3] Taha, O. & Esenyel, I. (2019). "Internal complaints systems on employee turnover intention." *Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure* 8(2): online.

# F. Employee Complaints Resolution — Introduction

## Overview

Appendix F provides an in-depth summary of literature, academic and non-academic, regarding employee complaints best practices. It is organized in the following sections:

- Complaints processes (informal and formal);
- Common barriers to complaints; and
- General recommendations.

*Note that recommendations discussed in this appendix come from general literature without further assessment of applicability to Dane County. Specific comments for Dane County based on our review of the complaints process and complaint themes can be found in Appendix E of this assessment.*

It should also be noted that the processes discussed in this document may not apply to represented (i.e., Employee Group) employees. Employee Group agreements may constrain any changes to complaints and grievances processes that have been previously negotiated.

# F. Employee Complaints Resolution — Complaints processes

How organizational leaders react to employee complaints is context specific. Handbooks and policies may include information on informal conflict resolution processes and formal grievance procedures. This section explores these two pathways.

## Informal Complaints Processes

Informal complaints processes are streamlined methods to manage employee issues in a fast, less bureaucratic manner (in comparison to formal complaints). A study by MIT found that after incorporating informal practices into policy in 1980, 90 percent of employees preferred informal complaint options over the formal approach due to ease of use.[4]

It should be noted that not all employee complaints can, or should be, resolved informally. Some claims may carry legal implications, such as sexual harassment and/or assault, and must be handled through formal channels per state and federal law (described in the Formal Complaints Processes section).[5]

**Informal approaches.[6]** The first step to informal complaints resolution is a voluntary agreement by all parties to utilize the informal process. Parties must also agree to the creation of a "resolution agreement" (if applicable), a written document which outlines terms and conditions reached during the process.[7] These documents hold the same weight as those created through the formal complaints process described in the next section.

Next, the individuals involved must select an approach. Informal complaints processes can come in many forms; however, the primary options are as follows:

- Direct approach. In this option, the employee directly approaches the individual causing the issue to resolve the issue. This approach can be done verbally or in writing. If the latter is chosen, a memo details the facts of the situation, the complainant's concerns and desired next steps.

- Third-party facilitation. Also known as "shuttle diplomacy," a third-party facilitator reaches a resolution by working individually with the complainant and the person alleged to be causing the issue. This process does not require a meeting between the involved parties. Rather, the facilitator navigates conversations and attempts to bring a conflict to a close.

- Mediation. Mediation involves a trained mediator to help involved parties come to an agreement. Mediation usually includes discussions between parties.

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[4] Zheng, L. (2020). "Do your employees feel safe reporting abuse and discrimination?" Harvard Business Review. Retrieved August 4, 2022, from https://hbr.org/2020/10/do-your-employees-feel-safe-reporting-abuse-and-discrimination

[5] Ibid.

[6] Note that much of the information included in this section comes from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Human Resources department. This was done so strategically, as MIT's complaints systems are progressive, time-tested and — because the university receives public funding — subject to the same federal laws as most other public agencies.

MIT Human Resources. (n.d.). "Informal options for addressing a concern." MIT Human Resources. Retrieved July 26, 2022, from https://hr.mit.edu/complaint/informal

[7] Ibid.

# F. Employee Complaints Resolution — Complaints processes

- **Generic approach.** The generic approach gives notice to a workforce as a whole to halt the offending behavior of an individual. This can include a talk at a departmental meeting, distribution of a workplace policy and other methods.

- **Anonymous reporting.** An anonymous hotline or email inbox where complaints can be shared by anyone. These outlets do not require the complainant's personal information, thereby maintaining confidentiality while still addressing concerns.

## Formal Complaints Processes

Formal grievances tend to result from clear violations of an organization's policy wherein the complainant desires a full investigation and formal acknowledgement of the violation. Due to the many stages within this process, formal complaints typically:

- Take longer to resolve;
- Involve more individuals; and
- Can be more disruptive to the working environment and collegial relationships.[8]

Due to these factors, many Employee Relations and managerial staff tend to advocate for the use of informal complaints resolution first (if applicable and appropriate).

**Steps of formal complaints process.** Formal processes differ by organization. However, most utilize some variation of the following process.[9]

Step 1. Informal meeting with manager or supervisor. The complainant meets with a manager or supervisor to discuss the issue, as well as to determine what process — formal or informal — is most appropriate. This meeting can be set up in person or via the telephone or email. During this step, complainants are also informed of their rights and possible next steps. Typically, this is performed verbally, however some complainants may wish to communicate in written form as a means of maintaining records of their grievance.

Step 2. Written formal complaint. The complainant submits a written summary of their complaint to the necessary department (or personnel). Some organizations have pre-set forms, and some have staff to guide complainants through the writing process.

Typically, written complaints require significant information, such as employee names, contact information, description of issue and more. Therefore, it is imperative that the organization maintains the confidentiality of written reports.

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[8] MIT Human Resources. (n.d.). "Informal options for addressing a concern." MIT Human Resources. Retrieved July 26, 2022, from https://hr.mit.edu/complaint/informal

[9] This process is drawn from the following source:

Indeed. (n.d.). "Handling employee grievances: Grievance procedures for your workplace." Indeed for Employers. Retrieved July 27, 2022, from https://www.indeed.com/hire/c/info/grievance-procedures-for-a-workplace

## F. Employee Complaints Resolution — Complaints processes

Step 3. Evaluation of the complaint. An evaluation group (typically comprised of Employee Relations staff accompanied by the organization's Affirmative Action and/or Equal Employment Opportunity specialist) assess the written complaint to determine whether it rises to the status of requiring a formal investigation. If it does not, the group recommends resolution by other means (e.g., informal complaints approaches).

Step 4. Formal investigation. If it is determined by the evaluation group that the complaint requires a formal investigation, the organization proceeds with one. Formal investigations focus on the collection and evaluation of evidence and tend to utilize an independent investigator to prevent bias and unfair findings.

Properly conducted formal investigations have many benefits. These include:

- Determining the facts of the situation;
- Addressing workforce issues early;
- Enforcing organizational policies;
- Encouraging future reporting of issues by other staff;
- Avoiding or countering negative public sentiment; and
- Protecting the organization from legal claims.[10]

However, if investigations are performed poorly, in a biased manner or hastily rushed, the opposite effect can result. Consequently, the organization as a whole suffers.[11]

Step 5. Complaint resolution. Upon receiving the findings of the formal assessment, the evaluation group determines how to best resolve the complaint. Resolutions can come in the form of disciplinary actions, mediation/conferencing and more.

The decision is shared with all pertinent parties via a final and binding written decision (kept in organizational records).[12]

Step 6. Appeals. If a party does not agree with the decision, individuals can follow the appeals process. Appeals result in a reevaluation of related evidence by a different investigator or evaluative body, essentially repeating Steps 3 through 5.

Step 7. Review of process. It is best practice for organizations to periodically review how a formal grievance was processed. Doing so pinpoints any problems and can identify new ways to improve future complaints resolution.

Federal, state and local considerations. There are many legal elements that can impact an organization's formal complaints system, including federal, state and local laws, Employee Group contracts and more. Therefore, leaders must be flexible in their complaints processes and take such restrictions into account.

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[10] Guerin, L. (2022). *The Essential Guide to Workplace Investigations.* Berkeley, CA: Nolo Press.

[11] Ibid.

[12] McCabe, D. & Lewin, D. (1992). "Employee voice." *California Management Review* 34(3): 112-123

# F. Employee Complaints Resolution — Common barriers

## Common Barriers to Complaints Process

Numerous barriers can impact complaints processes at any stage of resolution. Some common obstacles are outlined in this section.

**Uncalculated and immediate action.** In a bid to respond quickly to a complaint, some responses may be hasty, uncalculated and/or not follow policy. These actions may include:

- Quickly taking a side in a conflict;
- Immediately firing or demoting the complainant or alleged perpetrator;
- Making jokes about the incident;
- Assuming the complaint is "bogus"; and
- Ignoring or downplaying the complaint and complainant.[13]

Leaders must, therefore, take the needed time and thought to respond appropriately to complaints. This can be achieved by notifying the complainant that addressing or investigating the issue will require a set amount of time, and officially responding only after full consideration by pertinent parties.

It should be noted that some employee conflicts may include threats of physical (and other) violence, as well as actual acts of violence. These circumstances must be handled immediately (per organizational policy and state law) to prevent further danger or harm. Conflicts of this sort are outside of the scope of this document.

**Lack of confidentiality.** Confidentiality is a key dimension of most Employee Relations operations. For example, employee information (e.g., social security numbers and health status) are commonly safeguarded Employee Relations items.

It can be difficult to maintain confidentiality throughout the complaints process, primarily because the process involves many individuals, such as the complainant, investigator, manager, alleged perpetrator and possibly others. Each person must be given enough information to properly review, discuss and resolve the issue, which expands access to complaints information. Additionally, according to state law, certain public organizations are subject to the Freedom of Information Act and open-records regulations, which may open complaints to the public.[14]

To protect the complainant, as well as show other employees a sensitivity to confidentiality, an organization must protect privacy surrounding complaints as much as possible. Doing so can also preempt complainant claims of coercion, pressure and other undue behaviors.

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[13] Hastings, R. (2011, Jan. 26). "What not to do with employee complaints." SHRM. Retrieved July 25, 2022, from https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/employee-relations/pages/whatnottodo.aspx

[14] SHRM. (n.d.). "Why is confidentiality critical to human resources?" SHRM. Retrieved July 26, 2022, from https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and-samples/hr-qa/pages/cms_017789.aspx

# F. Employee Complaints Resolution — Common barriers

Organizations attempt to protect confidentiality through steps such as:

- Anonymizing a complaint after it is filed (i.e., removing identifying information from the logged case)[15];
- Limiting the number of individuals involved in the investigation and resolution process;
- Reminding all parties involved to maintain confidentiality and the benefits of doing so;
- Instilling formal rules and penalties regarding maintaining confidentiality; and
- Enforcing rules and penalties for disclosing confidential information regarding complaints.

**Potential for retaliation.** Retaliation is one of the primary worries of employees when it comes to airing grievances. Studies by the EEOC have found that fear of retaliation is the primary reason for low employee complaint rates.[16] And, a 2018 study of 500 full-time employees across the nation found that 46 percent of employees did not report a complaint out of fear of retribution.[17]

Retaliation is defined by the EEOC as "when an employer takes a materially adverse action because an applicant or employee asserts rights" that are protected by federal and state laws. The EEOC describes "materially adverse" as, "any action that *might* deter a reasonable person from engaging in protected activity."[18] It should be noted that a materially adverse action does not need to result in direct harm or prevention of an employee from making claims for it to be deemed a "materially adverse action." The intent of the action, rather than the result, is important.

Research has found that 50 to 70 percent of cases of retaliation from complaints are perpetrated by supervisors, indicating a top-down pattern of behavior. In general, managerial staff typically have leverage over other employees regarding pay, chances of promotion, methods of discipline and overall workplace climate.[19]

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[15] EEOC. (n.d.). "Confidentiality." U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Retrieved July 26, 2022, from https://www.eeoc.gov/confidentiality

[16] Zheng, L. (2020). "Do your employees feel safe reporting abuse and discrimination?" Harvard Business Review. Retrieved August 4, 2022, from https://hbr.org/2020/10/do-your-employees-feel-safe-reporting-abuse-and-discrimination

[17] Hiscox. (2018). "2018 Hiscox workplace harassment study." Retrieved August 4, 2022, from https://www.hiscox.com/documents/2018-Hiscox-Workplace-Harassment-Study.pdf

[18] EEOC. (n.d.). "Questions and Answers: Enforcement guidance on retaliation and related issues." U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Retrieved July 26, 2022, from https://www.eeoc.gov/laws/guidance/questions-and-answers-enforcement-guidance-retaliation-and-related-issues

[19] EmpowerWork. (2021, Jan. 12). "What is workplace retaliation and how to address it." EmpowerWork. Retrieved July 26, 2022, from https://www.empowerwork.org/blog/what-is-workplace-retaliation-and-how-to-address-it?

# F. Employee Complaints Resolution — Common barriers

Who is protected from retaliation? Federal laws dictate that all employees are protected from retaliation when asserting rights and/or making complaints, including:

- Job applicants;
- Current employees (i.e., full-time, part-time, seasonal, probationary and temporary); and
- Former employees.[20]

Proving retaliation. Under federal regulations, it is the responsibility of the complainant to show evidence of retaliation.[21] According to EEOC regulations, proof of retaliation requires three elements:

1. An individual engaged in prior protected activity;

2. The employer took a materially adverse action; and

3. Desire to retaliate was the cause of the employer's action.[22]

These three steps must be substantiated with some form of evidence. Examples of federally recommended evidence include:

- "Suspiciously close timing between [a protected] activity and the materially adverse action;

- Verbal or written statements demonstrating a retaliatory motive, comparative evidence (e.g., the individual was disciplined for an infraction that regularly goes undisciplined in that workplace, or that another employee who did not engage in [a protected] activity committed and was not disciplined as severely);

- Demonstrated falsity of the employer's proffered reason for the adverse action; or

- Any other pieces of evidence which, viewed alone or in combination with other facts, may support an inference of retaliatory intent."[23]

However, each organization may handle substantive materials regarding retaliation differently.

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[20] EEOC. (n.d.). "Questions and Answers: Enforcement guidance on retaliation and related issues." U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Retrieved July 26, 2022, from https://www.eeoc.gov/laws/guidance/questions-and-answers-enforcement-guidance-retaliation-and-related-issues

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid.

# F. Employee Complaints Resolution — Common barriers

Many types of retaliation. Retaliation can come in several forms. Some may be covert and go undetected by others, while others are overt and blatant. The EEOC provides several examples of retaliation:

- Reprimanding an employee or giving a performance evaluation that is lower than it should be;
- Transferring the employee to a less desirable position;
- Engaging in verbal bullying or physical abuse;
- Increasing scrutiny of the employee;
- Spreading false rumors;
- Making the person's work more difficult;[24]
- Making work-related threats, warnings or reprimands;
- Filing a civil action against the employee;
- Scrutinizing work or attendance more closely than that of other employees without justification;
- Removing responsibilities;
- Requiring re-verification of work status, making threats of deportation or initiating other action with immigration authorities; and
- Terminating a grievance process or other action to block access to informal complaints processes.[25]

In addition to EEOC's-identified behaviors, other forms of retaliation include:

- Publicizing the complaint to those outside and inside of the organization, leading to social pressures, altered perceptions of the complainant and more; and
- Discussing the complaint with the complainant in non-formal spaces (i.e., coercion).[26]

Impact of retaliation. Retaliation is, unfortunately, common. Charges of retaliation are consistently the most filed allegations with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) since 2008, comprising roughly half of all charges annually.[27]

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[24] EEOC. (n.d.). "Facts about retaliation." U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Retrieved July 26, 2022, from https://www.eeoc.gov/facts-about-retaliation

[25] EEOC. (n.d.). "Questions and Answers: Enforcement guidance on retaliation and related issues." U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Retrieved July 26, 2022, from https://www.eeoc.gov/laws/guidance/questions-and-answers-enforcement-guidance-retaliation-and-related-issues

[26] Hastings, R. (2011, Jan. 26). "What not to do with employee complaints." SHRM. Retrieved July 25, 2022, from https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/employee-relations/pages/whatnottodo.aspx

[27] El Kharzazi, R., Siwatu, M., & Brooks, D. (n.d.). "Retaliation – Making it personal." U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Retrieved July 25, 2022, from https://www.eeoc.gov/retaliation-making-it-personal

# F. Employee Complaints Resolution — General recommendations

The following best practices emerge from the literature for both informal and formal claims processes.

## Promptly Respond to Claims

Thorough assessment of complaints requires time. However, organizations must be conscious of employees' urgency and expectations. Responses must be prompt, and complainants should be notified periodically about the status of their investigation. If not, they may feel ignored, and that the complaint has fallen by the wayside.[28]

## Use Employee-focused Language

Complaints processes are developed for the protection of and use by employees. Policies outlining the processes must be employee-focused, and utilize language that is:

- Clear, understandable and designed not to alienate any employee; and
- Unquestionably protective of employees (rather than favoring the employer).

## Provide Clear Definitions and Examples of Key Terms

To ensure that employees understand what constitutes a viable complaint, as well as what behaviors are protected in the workplace, provide clear definitions and examples of the following key terms in the employee handbook and during training sessions:

- **Complaint.** A statement outlining discrimination, bias, predatory behavior and other harmful practices that detract from the workplace and general safety. For instance, an employee files a complaint after a colleague continues using inappropriate language and slurs, despite many requests to stop.

- **Protected activity.** Behavior that is protected by local, state and federal law, as well as organizational policy. For example, requesting reasonable accommodation for a disability or working in a space that is respectful and safe.

- **Retaliation.** When an employer takes an action that may deter a reasonable person from engaging in a protected activity after an employee asserts his or her rights. For instance, a manager reassigns an employee to a less desirable position after the employee files a complaint alleging discrimination.

- **Confidentiality.** Maintaining the privacy of information concerning an employee and their complaint.

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[28] El Kharzazi, R., Siwatu, M., & Brooks, D. (n.d.). "Retaliation – Making it personal." U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Retrieved July 25, 2022, from https://www.eeoc.gov/retaliation-making-it-personal

# F. Employee Complaints Resolution — General recommendations

## Proactively Monitor the Workforce

Organizations that wait and retroactively respond to employee complaints fair worse than those that preemptively monitor workplace climate. Research has found that candid communication between all levels of an organization can be achieved through constant engagement between leadership and the workforce; use of regular check-ins and an open-door policy for supervisors and leaders; and by making an effort to understand the culture (and microcultures) of a workspace.[29] If done consistently, an organization can address small problems before they develop into larger issues, as well as display to employees an organizational focus on prosocial workplace climate.

Proactively monitoring the workforce comes in several forms, including:

- Regular leadership and managerial check-ins with staff;
- An open-door office policy among leadership and managers, so staff can communicate without barriers;
- A public, upper-level focus on improving/preventing workplace issues; and
- Physical relocation of leadership offices from executive suites to spaces where workplace climate issues have been identified.[30]

## Ensure Objectivity and Fairness

Organizational leaders must ensure that complaints are handled in an objective and fair manner. Therefore, regular assessment of the process and the resolution of recent complaints must be performed by an impartial party. The assessment should include:

- Tracking of the length of time needed to process and resolve complaints;
- Reevaluation of evidence and final decisions;
- Analysis of investigation findings (if applicable);
- Notation of all individuals involved; and
- Interviews with pertinent parties.

Such information should be stored in a living, confidential spreadsheet, which can be analyzed over time for patterns within the workplace and may reveal root causes of harmful behavior.

## Create an Informal Complaints Process

If an organization does not have an informal complaints process in place, leaders should implement one (or several, if feasible). Informal options provide employees with outlets to voice concerns without fear of bureaucratic red tape or formality. Additionally, informal processes utilize fewer resources in comparison to formal procedures while producing just as effective resolutions.

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[29] Grese, J. (2017, Dec. 5). "Viewpoint: Reaction to sexual harassment claims must be 'prompt and proportionate.'" SHRM. Retrieved July 26, 2022, from https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/employee-relations/pages/viewpoint-reaction-to-sexual-harassment-claims-must-be-prompt-and-proportionate.aspx

[30] Ibid.

# F. Employee Complaints Resolution — General recommendations

## Regularly Review Complaints Processes with Staff

It is critical for an organization to regularly revisit its complaints process with employees to ensure clarity and understanding of the system. This should be done annually or more frequently.[31]

## Simplify Filing Procedures

Convoluted or obscure procedures to file a complaint or grievance can discourage employees from voicing concerns. Therefore, evaluate the accessibility and ease of the filing process, as well as where information on how to file a complaint is located. Such information should be found:

- In the employee handbook;
- Posted in the workplace (e.g., at the Employee Relations office); and
- Available online on the organization's website (internet or intranet).

Online, anonymous forms can be one way to do this. Not only are such forms simple to use, but they allow for flexibility in when the employee can file the complaint, as well as with the information a complainant shares with the organization.

Additionally, forms can be programmed so information is automatically transferred to a spreadsheet for data tracking purposes. Research has found that anonymous virtual reporting tools increase employee faith in complaints processes, as well as actual claims filed (by roughly 30%).[32]

However, it should be noted that some employees may not have access to the technology needed for this or may still feel uncomfortable with the approach. Therefore, a hardcopy form may also be helpful.

## Revise Complaints Processes as Needed

Grievance policies can be seen as a "living, breathing document embodied within the company's core values and part and parcel of the corporate culture." Therefore, policies should be revised as needed to reflect the progressing culture of an organization,[33] yet continue to follow federal, state and local regulations.

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[31] Grese, J. (2017, Dec. 5). "Viewpoint: Reaction to sexual harassment claims must be 'prompt and proportionate.'" SHRM. Retrieved July 26, 2022, from https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/employee-relations/pages/viewpoint-reaction-to-sexual-harassment-claims-must-be-prompt-and-proportionate.aspx

[32] Zheng, L. (2020). "Do your employees feel safe reporting abuse and discrimination?" Harvard Business Review. Retrieved August 4, 2022, from https://hbr.org/2020/10/do-your-employees-feel-safe-reporting-abuse-and-discrimination

[33] Grese, J. (2017, Dec. 5). "Viewpoint: Reaction to sexual harassment claims must be 'prompt and proportionate.'" SHRM. Retrieved July 26, 2022, from https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/employee-relations/pages/viewpoint-reaction-to-sexual-harassment-claims-must-be-prompt-and-proportionate.aspx

# F. Employee Complaints Resolution — General recommendations

## Prevent Retaliation

To prevent retaliation against complainants, leaders can utilize the following means[34][35]:

- Take claims of retaliation seriously.

- Ensure the organization has a formal anti-retaliation policy in place and is noted in the employee handbook. Such policy must abide by federal, state and local laws.

- Ensure employees are informed of the anti-retaliation policy and federal and state protections through training and regular reminders.

- Cultivate a culture of openness and receptivity by championing the usefulness of complaints process and anti-retaliation methods.

- Create a method to assess employee fear of retaliation for complaints (e.g., pulse survey, case studies of past complaints and claims, employee exit interviews, etc.).

- Train leaders, supervisors and Human Relations managers on fair enforcement of anti-retaliation policies.

- Appropriately discipline staff who engage in retaliation.

- Check in with staff regarding fears or concerns about retaliation.

- Use feedback from employees, Employee Group representatives and supervisors to periodically assess complaints processes for retaliation, as well as effectiveness of anti-retaliation practices.

- Maintain confidentiality throughout the complaints process to restrict information to only need-to-know individuals.

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[34] EmpowerWork. (2021, Jan. 12). "What is workplace retaliation and how to address it." EmpowerWork. Retrieved July 26, 2022, from https://www.empowerwork.org/blog/what-is-workplace-retaliation-and-how-to-address-it?

[35] OSHA. (n.d.). "Recommended practices for anti-retaliation programs." OHSA. Retrieved August 4, 2022, from https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/publications/OSHA3905.pdf

# APPENDIX G. Literature Review — Introduction

This document provides a summary of academic and non-academic literature related to work environment in government agencies. Using the culture cascade framework,[1] the focus is on best practices for maintaining a positive workplace climate.

The sections of this appendix include:

- Introduction providing an overview of benefits and barriers to maintaining a positive workplace climate in governments;

- Overview of the culture cascade framework, which describes how to promote a positive workplace environment; and

- Metrics for evaluating climate in government workplaces.

Dane County already applies practices that are consistent with those reviewed in this appendix (details on many of which may be found in Appendix I). This appendix provides a framework for promoting positive workplace culture through organizational change and may be useful to the County as it considers future programs and initiatives.

The success of an organization is dependent on its employees as they realize the organization's goals and mission. Therefore, the wellbeing of employees is essential to an organization and its leaders. Studies have found that a supportive work environment can significantly impact employee engagement and wellbeing.[2] A positive working climate creates a feeling of belonging and sustainability for employees, which impacts employee retention.[3]

The benefits of a positive workplace climate include employee:

- Empowerment and autonomy;
- Productivity and innovation;
- Collaboration and teamwork;
- Resiliency and adaptability;
- Sense of belonging; and
- Development and growth.[4]

To achieve and sustain a positive work environment, employers must identify and remove barriers that impact employee morale and job satisfaction.

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[1] Kleiman, N., & Shermansong, A. (2022). City Leader Guide on Organizational Culture Change: Creating Conditions for Innovation, Collaboration, and High Performance in City Hall.

[2] Shahidan, A. N., Hamid, S. N. A., Kamil, B. A. M., Rani, S. H. A., Aziz, A., & Hassan, H. (2016). Linking work environment, team and co-worker relationship and organization well-being in increasing employee engagement. Journal of Business and Social Review in Emerging Economies, 2(1), 21-30.

[3] Yusliza, M. Y., Faezah, J. N., Muhammad, J. S. Z., Ramayah, T., Ali, N., & Noor, N. M. (2021). Analyzing the Relationship Between Supportive Work Environment and Employee Retention. In Proceedings of the 11th Annual International Conference on Industrial Engineering and Operations Management.

[4] Radu, C. (2023). Fostering a Positive Workplace Culture: Impacts on Performance and Agility.

# G. Literature Review — Barriers to a positive workplace environment

Creating and maintaining a positive work environment can be challenging for many organizations, especially government agencies. Government leaders face the external constraints of public opinion and elections that affect internal policies, procedures and programs, as well as staffing and fiscal priorities.

The literature provides examples of other hinderances to creating a positive work environment, including:

- Clashes due to personality differences;
- Poor working conditions;
- Opposition to change and progress;
- Lack of leadership engagement;
- Shortage of resources;
- Absence of a clearly articulated mission and vision; and
- Adverse psychological variables, such as a low tolerance for change and fear of the unknown.[5]

To overcome these and other barriers, some governments are employing a three-phased, culture-based framework, as explained on the next page of this appendix.

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[5] Hella, O. J. (2021). What are the factors that hinder or help the employees to succeed in a change process?

# G. Literature Review — Culture cascade framework and best practices

## Culture Cascade Framework

The "culture cascade framework" [6] described below was initially created for city-level organizational change. It provides an overall structure for producing change for local governments seeking to build positive workplace climates.

This framework (displayed in Figure G-1) advances a positive work environment in three phases:

1. Leadership alignment (setting the stage).
2. Communications and decisions (walking the talk).
3. Human resources and data systems (making it stick).

The culture cascade framework supports the vitality of organizational culture, assesses current conditions and addresses resource deficits to promote organizational change. Applying this framework, a public sector entity can more successfully embark on organizational change by:

- Developing and utilizing tools to assess present circumstances;
- Articulating key objectives; and
- Designing strategies that foster a positive work environment. [7]

Figure G-1 on the following page portrays the three phases. Keen Independent describes each phase in greater detail starting on page 4.
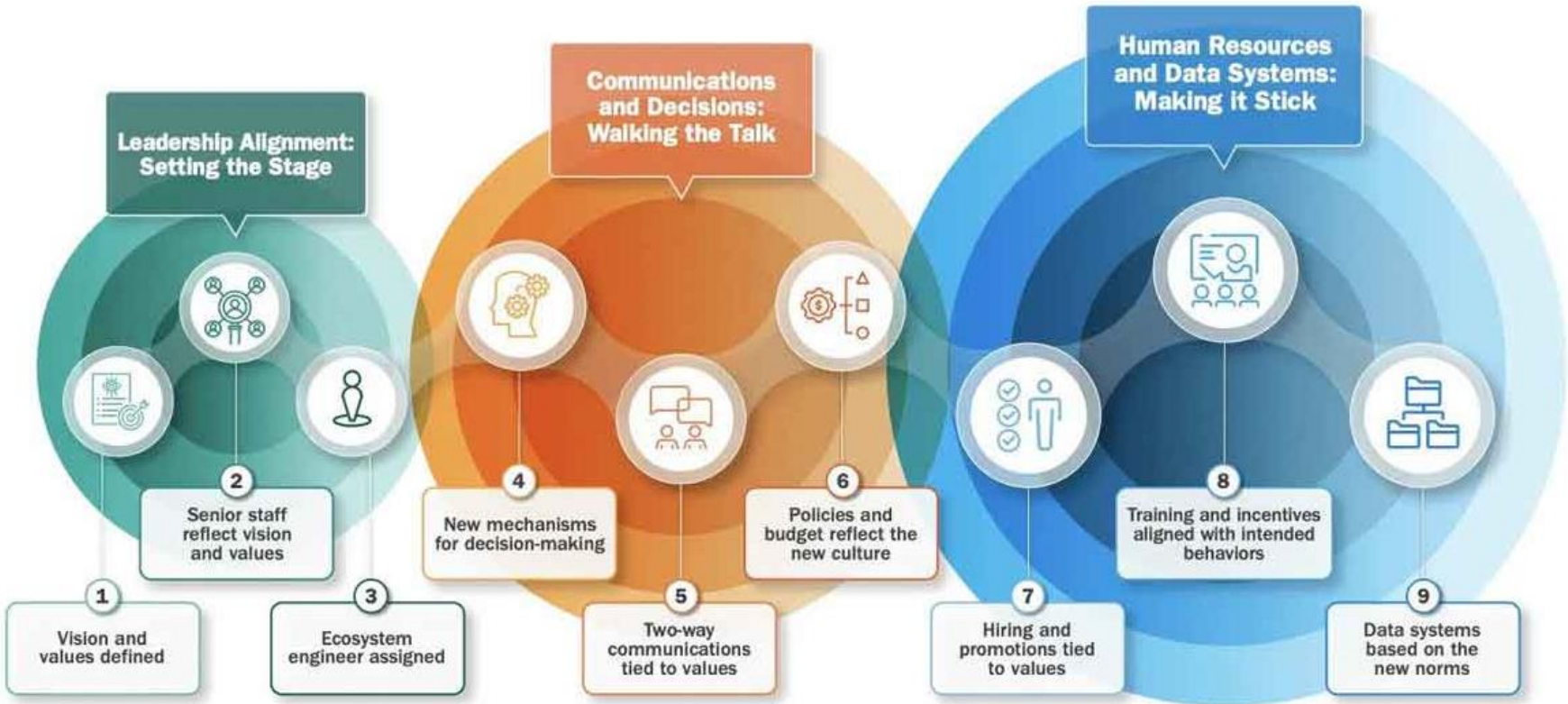
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[6] Kleiman, N., & Shermansong, A. (2022). City Leader Guide on Organizational Culture Change: Creating Conditions for Innovation, Collaboration, and High Performance in City Hall.

[7] Ibid.

# G. Literature Review — Culture cascade framework and best practices

G-1. The culture cascade framework



Source:    Kleiman, N., & Shermansong, A. (2022). City Leader Guide on Organizational Culture Change: Creating Conditions for Innovation, Collaboration, and High Performance in City Hall.

# G. Literature Review — Culture cascade framework and best practices

This section of Appendix G details each of the three culture-cascade-framework phases, beginning with Phase 1.

## Phase 1. Leadership Alignment

Phase 1 sets the stage for change in a public sector workplace environment. In this phase, government leaders purposefully create and embed visions (sometimes called, "missions") that foster a positive environment and ensure inclusivity.

**Well-defined vision and values.** A thriving work environment starts with clear vision and values. Kleiman & Shermansong (2022) explain that cultural impact begins at the top with a forward-facing vision and articulated values to define "behaviors and norms that will enable those outcomes," as well as provide staff with intent and reasons for why key decisions are made.

The vision should "represent the specific idiosyncrasies," as well as the "unique culture of the organization."[8] The Dane County Office for Equity and Inclusion includes the following vision statement:

"Dane County as a community with equal access to opportunity and a County organizational structure that is rooted in equity and inclusion, revealed through hiring, contracting, and service delivery."[9]

Keen Independent identified the vision statements of Adams County, Colorado; Sonoma County, California; and Polk County, Iowa as examples that are primarily focused on workplace climate. Below, we provide these vision statements:

*A positive work environment: We are committed to providing a respectful, professional work environment that will attract, retain and motivate a workforce that effectively and efficiently serves the Adams County community.* [10]

*Adams County, Colorado*

*Show respect for all employees. Ensure that all employees know and understand their job, responsibility and authority. Solicit staff input for operational decisions. Acknowledge and reward employees for their successes, creativity, and innovation, [and] hire employees who are committed to the mission, values and goals of the department.* [11]

*County of Sonoma, California*

*The County's greatest asset — its employees — will understand their individual value to the organization, and be provided with the encouragement, opportunities and resources to reach their maximum potential.* [12]

*Polk County, Iowa*

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[8] Jacob, B. (2020, Dec.). "Governing for Equity: Implementing an equity lens in local governments." ICMA Leading Edge Research.

[9] https://equity.countyofdane.com/

[10] Mission, vision, values and goals. Mission, Vision, Values and Goals | Adams County Government. (n.d.). https://adcogov.org/mission-vision-values-and-goals

[11] Mission vision goals and values. County Of Sonoma. (n.d.). https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/administrative-support-and-fiscal-services/sonoma-public-infrastructure-(formerly-gs)/mission-vision-goals-and-values

[12] County mission &amp; values. County Mission &amp; Values - Polk County Iowa. (n.d.). https://www.polkcountyiowa.gov/board-of-supervisors/county-mission-values/

# G. Literature Review — Culture cascade framework and best practices

**Senior staff embed vision and values.** Once the vision and values are established, culture change starts with senior leadership. The vision and values can be communicated and disseminated in internal publications to reinforce its messaging. To embed the vision across the organization, senior staff should lead by example and:

- Articulate personal support for policies and programs that align with the agency's values and mission;
- Maintain composure in crisis situations;
- Build a culture that promotes transparency by ensuring that decision-making models reflect integrity, honesty, and openness;
- Provide team with a sense of direction and purpose;
- Prioritize cooperation and collaboration to create a shared sense of success, respect and professionalism; and
- Keep current on trends in human resources management.[13]

Senior staff embodying the vision and values can boost employee morale. A study by the American Psychology Association found that employees are less likely to recommend their workplace when they feel like leadership does not value their wellbeing.[14]

Many departments within Dane County have engaged in department-specific visioning sessions helmed by senior leadership, which are described in Appendix I.

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[13] Kleiman, N., & Shermansong, A. (2022). City Leader Guide on Organizational Culture Change: Creating Conditions for Innovation, Collaboration, and High Performance in City Hall.

[14] American Psychological Association. (2016, June 1). Workplace well-being linked to senior leadership support, new survey finds [Press release]. https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2016/06/workplace-well-being

# G. Literature Review — Culture cascade framework and best practices

**Assign champion.** Designating a champion ("ecosystem engineer") to help ensure that vision and values are prioritized can help leadership build and sustain a positive workplace climate.[15] A single person or authorized committee can serve in the champion role with responsibilities being, for example:

- Communicating the vision and associated reasons why the vision is important.

- Driving measures, goals and plans including equity and inclusion within the organization.

- Understanding and championing sustainable support mechanisms such as mentoring programs, cultural celebrations and cohort groups.

- Educating the organization on common behaviors that advance inclusive efforts and address implicit biases.

- Acknowledging culturally significant events and holy days for employees and community members.

- Creating opportunities for employees and community members to share cultural interests and build relationships through empathy and understanding. [16]

G-2. Multnomah County, Oregon, workforce equity resolution that centers employee experiences



Source:    Martinez, M. (2017, December 11). Government Alliance on Race and Equity.

**Multnomah County example.** Actions by the County of Multnomah, Oregon, can serve as an example of leveraging an existing committee or group to own workplace culture initiatives. Following receipt of input that the marginalized employees within the County were systematically having negative workplace experiences, employee resource groups (ERGs) worked with the Office of Diversity and Equity to create a workforce equity strategy. ERGs owning this initiative helped the County expand its equity strategy to focus more on internal equity.[17]

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[15] Kleiman, N., & Shermansong, A. (2022). City Leader Guide on Organizational Culture Change: Creating Conditions for Innovation, Collaboration, and High Performance in City Hall.

[16] Practices for effective local government management and leadership. icma.org. (n.d.). https://icma.org/page/practices-effective-local-government-management-and-leadership

[17] Martinez, M. (2017, December 11). Multnomah County, or, creates a workforce equity resolution that centers employee experiences. Government Alliance on Race and Equity. https://www.racialequityalliance.org/2017/12/11/multnomah-county-creates-workforce-equity-resolution-centers-employee-experiences/

# G. Literature Review — Culture cascade framework and best practices

## Phase 2. Communication and Decisions

When information is clearly articulated and employees have a sense of direction, there are fewer human errors and staff turnover, which can increase job satisfaction and workplace efficiency.[18]

A positive work environment is based on strong communication and decision-making. As change is inevitable in the public sector due to new elected leaders, evolving economic conditions and other factors, strong, clear decision-making and communications from leadership can contribute to higher job satisfaction. One study of 7,000 local government workers found that communication and decision-making were ranked as the least favored aspect of a government job, so focusing on that weakness can yield substantial benefits to workplace environment.[19]

**Transparent decision-making**. Visible and well-articulated decision-making can positively impact employee morale. Benefits of a transparent and team-driven decision-making process include increased employee engagement, collaboration and high job satisfaction.[20] To use decision-making to promote a positive work environment:

- Ensure the process is participatory across departments and employees; and
- Build an integrated planning system that is supported by employees.[21]

Communication and transparent decision-making have the following benefits in the workplace including:

- Building motivation and trust;
- Creating common identities;
- Strengthening employee sense of responsibility; and
- Overcoming internal conflicts and crises.[22]

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[18] Handley, E., &amp; here, P. enter your name. (2022, September 14). Redefining communication in local government and public sectors. Open Access Government. https://www.openaccessgovernment.org/local-government-public-sector/141023/

[19] Local government employees reveal what makes for job satisfaction. Polco News &amp; Knowledge. (n.d.). https://blog.polco.us/local-government-employees-reveal-what-makes-for-job-satisfaction

[20] Landry, L. (2020). Why managers should involve their team in the decision-making process. Harvard Business School: Business Insights.

[21] For example, former New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio used decision memos to communicate reasons behind certain actions as discussed in Goodman, J. D. (2016, March 17). Memos play central role in decision-making at De Blasio's City Hall. The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/18/nyregion/decision-making-via-memo-at-mayor-de-blasios-city-hall.html

[22] Landry, L. (2020). Why managers should involve their team in the decision-making process. Harvard Business School: Business Insights.

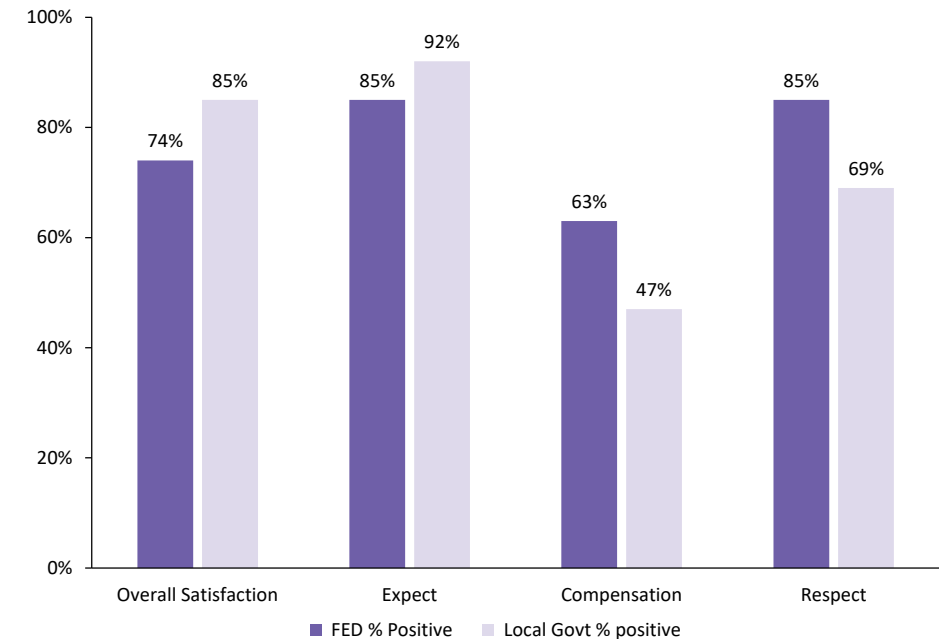# G. Literature Review — Culture cascade framework and best practices

**Two-way communications tied to values.** Kleiman and Shermansong (2022) stress the importance of telling employees both the "why" and the "how" behind decisions ("not just telling people what to do but also enabling them to believe why it is the right thing to do and the steps they can take to accomplish it" (p. 16)). County governments are already skilled at providing rationales to their employees. A study comparing local and federal government employees demonstrated that local government employees (lighter shade in Figure G-3) were clearer on their job expectations and had higher overall job satisfaction than federal employees (darker shade in Figure G-3), despite being less satisfied with compensation and feeling respected.[23]

Research suggests several components of effective communications that can lead to a positive work environment:

- Information should be shared respectfully and credibly.

- Staff and leadership should select effective communication methods including prioritizing efforts to understand, appreciate and interact with people from cultures or belief systems other than one's own.

- Leadership should disseminate communications to staff in a timely fashion.

- Leadership should train employees on how to communicate appropriately and effectively.[24]

G-3. Federal and local government employee response to job satisfaction and expectations



Source: The National Employee Survey ™ (The NES) and Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey

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[23] Local Government should care about employee engagement as much as the Feds. Polco News &amp; Knowledge. (n.d.-c). https://blog.polco.us/local-governments-should-care-about-employee-engagement-as-much-as-the-feds

[24] Kleiman, N., & Shermansong, A. (2022). City Leader Guide on Organizational Culture Change: Creating Conditions for Innovation, Collaboration, and High Performance in City Hall.

## Phase 3. Human Resources and Data Systems

The third phase, Human Resources and Data Systems, focuses on embedding and sustaining a positive organizational culture. Keen Independent does not provide an exhaustive review of best practices for hiring, promotion and retention here. The following discussion should be viewed as examples of practices that can have positive impacts on workplace culture.

**Hiring and promotions**. A positive organizational culture is dependent on shared beliefs and values, which impacts employee behaviors and attitudes.[25] Sound and equitable hiring and promotions are important.

Hiring. As it is best practice to employ workers who genuinely want to work for the government,[26] employers can impact culture through the hiring and promotion process. The following are recommendations by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) on best hiring practices to ensure cultural fit and boost employee morale.

- Look at each piece of the organization's vision, mission and values statements;
- Conduct a cultural fit interview;
- Leave discussion of company culture for later; and
- Include at least three people in the hiring process.[27]

Promotions. How leaders handle promotions can impact the culture of the organizations. A Harvard Business Review study of over 400,000 United States workers found that when "people believe promotions are managed effectively [elevating employees and underscoring the type of results, behaviors and attitudes that the organization values], they're more than twice as likely to give extra effort at work and to plan a long-term future with their company" (Rohman et al., 2018, para.1).[28]

SHRM recommendations on promotion practices include:

- Understand your workforce composition: Set up quarterly meetings with employees to learn their aspirations.
- Establish clear criteria and adhere to those criteria: Lack of clarity may cause confusion and wrong assumptions.
- Communicate opportunities: Post opportunities based on entity policy and procedures.
- Evaluate candidates: Assess all qualified candidates.
- Make the announcement: Ensure that the selected candidate accepts the position. Make the announcement strategically. Debrief internal candidates who applied but did not get the promotion.[29]

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[25] Organizational culture. SHRM. (2022, September 26). https://www.shrm.org/ResourcesAndTools/Pages/Organizational-Culture.aspx

[26] Kleiman, N., & Shermansong, A. (2022). City Leader Guide on Organizational Culture Change: Creating Conditions for Innovation, Collaboration, and High Performance in City Hall.

[27] Organizational culture. SHRM. (2022, September 26). https://www.shrm.org/ResourcesAndTools/Pages/Organizational-Culture.aspx

[28] How you promote people can make or break company culture. Harvard Business Review. (2023, April 13). https://hbr.org/2018/01/how-you-promote-people-can-make-or-break-company-culture

[29] Maurer, R. (2019, August 16). Review promotion practices to avoid turnover, lawsuits. SHRM. https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/talent-acquisition/pages/review-promotion-practices-avoid-turnover-lawsuits.aspx

# G. Literature Review — Culture cascade framework and best practices

**Training and incentives aligned with intended behaviors.** Training and incentives are one of the most common strategies organizations use to promote positive workplace climates. To foster a sense of belonging, employers train and incentivize employees based on the entities' vision and values. Learning and development programs can show leadership commitment to creating an organizational culture where employees feel welcome.[30]

However, the public sector and private sector differ in terms of training and incentives. Kleiman and Shermansong (2022) explain that "when it comes to training, municipal governments typically do the bare minimum to comply with the law and thereby provide few, if any, soft-skill or mind-shift training opportunities to their employees" (p.17).

Impactful training and incentives require buy-in from employees. Training that is mandatory, outdated and/or contains negative messaging (e.g., threats of lawsuits) can result in employee backlash, minimal improvement regarding diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) and loss of employees with historically marginalized identities.[31]

Therefore, for trainings to be effective, they must:

- Have a workforce that is ready for it;
- Be context- and topic-specific;
- Be held on a regular basis;
- Be offered in mandatory and non-mandatory forms;
- Contain positive messaging; and
- Be evidence-based and relevant to the demographics of the organization.[32]

County governments can train and incentivize employees through non-monetary incentives. These include, but are not limited to:

- Public recognition;
- Professional development;
- Task assignments that employees find engaging;
- Flexible work schedule for qualified positions; and
- Wellness programs like health and wellness workshops.[33]

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[30] Rockwood, K. (2022, July 18). How learning and development can attract-and retain-talent. SHRM. https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/all-things-work/pages/how-learning-and-development-can-attract-and-retain-talent.aspx

[31] Dobbin, F. & Kalev, A. (2016, July). "Why Diversity Programs Fail." Harvard Business Review. Retrieved May 11, 2022, from https://hbr.org/2016/07/why-diversity-programs-fail

[32] Ibid.

[33] Kleiman, N., & Shermansong, A. (2022). City Leader Guide on Organizational Culture Change: Creating Conditions for Innovation, Collaboration, and High Performance in City Hall.

# G. Literature Review — Culture cascade framework and best practices

Training format. Training can be held in-person, online, through written form and via other means. When possible, leadership can foster a positive workplace climate by allowing employees to choose the training format that best aligns with their learning needs and styles. Offering multiple training formats help employees feel more engaged and receptive to training.[34] Additionally, supporting different learning styles and preferences can increase inclusivity and feelings of belonging among employees.

For instance, e-learning has become a popular training tool for its low-cost and easy dissemination. E-learning can provide customized and focused micro-learning to fit a wide range of employee needs through, for example:

- Neurodivergent friendly fonts;
- Use of images, videos and subtitles;
- Voiceover recordings; and
- Self-paced learning.[35]

Ongoing training. A study based on spreading training over time instead of a one-off session found that regular spacing of training sessions was effective in skill and knowledge retention.[36] Single DEI online trainings, for example, are "unlikely to be stand-alone solutions for promoting equality in the workplace," as they do not produce significant attitudinal or behavioral changes in individuals who are resistant to organizational change.[37]

Training topics. Too often, workforce measures focus solely on skills training, which "obscures the structural character of the problem" within workforce management, namely that marginalized populations experience life-long barriers that result in disadvantaged skills and knowledge in the workplace.[38] While ensuring that employees have up-to-date job skills is critical, trainers should develop broad curriculums that address social aspects as well as workforce skills development.

Part of the success of companies like JetBlue and Disney that have successful organizational cultures comes from training that not only develops technical skills but also a "mindset that reflects the new organizational values of the company" (Kleiman & Shermansong, 2022, p. 17).

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[34] Rockwood, K. (2022, July 18). How learning and development can attract-and retain-talent. SHRM. https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/all-things-work/pages/how-learning-and-development-can-attract-and-retain-talent.aspx

[35] Mehta, N. (2022, February 3). How to design elearning for neurodiverse people? eLearning Industry. https://elearningindustry.com/how-to-design-elearning-for-neurodiverse-people#:~:text=Neurodiverse%20students%20often%20have%20a,they%20have%20trouble%20reading%20it.

[36] Cecilio-Fernandes, D., Cnossen, F., Jaarsma, D. A., & Tio, R. A. (2018). Avoiding surgical skill decay: a systematic review on the spacing of training sessions. Journal of surgical education, 75(2), 471-480.

[37] Chang, E., Milkman, K., Gromet, D., Rebele, R., Massey, C., Duckworth, A. & Grant, A. (2019, April 16). The Mixed Effects of Online Diversity Training. *PNAS* 116(16): 7778-7783. https://www.pnas.org/cgi/doi/10.1073/pnas.1816076116

[38] Lam, L. (2019, Oc. 16). "A Design for Workforce Equity." Center for American Progress. Retrieved May 11, 2022, from https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/economy/reports/2019/10/16/475875/design-workforce-equity/

# G. Literature Review — Metrics and evaluation of workplace climate

## Measuring Success

Evaluating work environments is nuanced because organizations are measuring subjective concepts, like "sense of belonging." This is one reason why many government organizations have not developed metrics for organizational culture.[39]

The column on the right lists common evaluation tools. Dane County departments already collect most of this information and leverage it to make decisions. The County may consider which additional data points may enhance the decision-making process.

**Key indicators.** To assess workplace climate, government entities should collect, analyze and track information through:

- Workforce demographic data
- Employee feedback on training
- Employee satisfaction surveys
- Exit surveys;
- Staff performance ratings
- Staff productivity ratings
- Employee presenteeism[40] or absenteeism
- Online workplace reviews (Glassdoor, others)
- Profitability, including by department and/or worksite;
- Number of candidates placed through hiring, education or opportunity pipelines
- Annual budgets and funding opportunities
- Event tracking (e.g., training sessions, internal group meetings, job fairs, resource outreach events, health fairs, etc.) including number of attendees
- Task-based achievements (e.g., creating a shared event calendar, generating an equity resource list, etc.)[41]

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[39] Kleiman, N., & Shermansong, A. (2022). City Leader Guide on Organizational Culture Change: Creating Conditions for Innovation, Collaboration, and High Performance in City Hall.

[40] "Presenteeism" is when employees go to work despite being sick.

[41] Sull, D., Sull, C., & Chamberlain, A. (2019, June). "Measuring Culture in Leading Companies." MIT Sloan Management Review.

# G. Literature Review — Metrics and evaluation of workplace climate

**Metrics and assessments.** Measurement is a key step to fostering and sustaining an improved workplace climate. Metrics should be implemented to track and address issues in the workplace, assess new and current policies, structures and practices and test new initiatives. Some useful approaches are:

- Examination of workforce demographics, including pay equity;
- Administration of employee surveys, interviews and climate assessments;
- Facilitation of stakeholder focus groups with leadership, management and general staff;
- Practice of workplace observation;
- Development of performance ratings;
- Analysis of policies, procedures and practices;
- Review of past employee complaints to Human Resources and/or the Ethics Office; and
- Assessment of past instances of organizational bias, discrimination and harassment to identify patterns in individual and organizational behavior.

**Setting a baseline.** Once an organization collects initial data through quantitative or qualitative methods, it can determine a baseline or starting point for future assessments and comparison.



**Goal setting.** Goals can be set annually or over multiple years (e.g., short-, medium- and long-term). The achievement of a goal or measurable improvement toward achieving a goal are metrics for progress and set the stage for future goal setting. Goals can also be aspirational, but they should remain realistic and use industry standards.

**Data systems.** Effective tools for a positive work environment rely on evidence-based decisions. Organizations should prepare and maintain proper data management infrastructure to securely collect, organize and store data.[42]

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[42] Jacob, B. (2020, Dec.). "Governing for Equity: Implementing an equity lens in local governments." ICMA Leading Edge Research.

# APPENDIX H. Comparative Research — Workplace climate initiatives

This appendix examines initiatives some other county governments have taken to foster a positive workplace culture for employees. Keen Independent evaluated policies, plans and activities designed to improve the workplace climate within three county governments selected for proximity and other similarities to Dane County.

## Case Study Counties

**Ingham County, Michigan.** Ingham County is the location of Lansing, the state capital. The county has a similar demographic profile to Dane County. The County employs about 1,500 staff members.[1]

**Milwaukee County, Wisconsin.** Although much larger than Dane County, Milwaukee County is included as a case study as it provides an example of another large county government in the state. Milwaukee County employs more than 4,000 staff.[2]

**Ramsey County, Minnesota.** Ramsey County is home to St. Paul and is comparable in size and demographic profile to Dane County. Ramsey County has more than 4,000 employees.[3]

## Key Themes

Starting with Ingham County on page 2 of this appendix, the study team examines the initiatives other county governments have taken to cultivate a positive workplace climate for employees.

Key actions and common themes from the case studies are:

- Strategic planning goals that focus on improving the experience of employees in the workplace;
- Ongoing training for leadership and staff;
- Designated committees to advance inclusion and belonging;
- Clearly defined advocacy roles for employee assistance;
- Flexible workplace policies to give employees the ability to work on-site or remotely;
- Embedded diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives across all departments and functions; and
- Tools for measuring success.

We note that Dane County has many programs and initiatives in place that support positive workplace climate similar to those reviewed in this appendix (many are detailed in Appendix I).

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[1]Ingham County. (n.d.). "Innovation and Technology." Ingham County. Retrieved November 16, 2023, from https://it.ingham.org/departments_and_officials/innovation_and_technology/index.php.

[2] Milwaukee County Human Resources (n.d.). "Human Resources: Your Career Starts Here." Milwaukee County. Retrieved November 28, 2023, from https://county.milwaukee.gov/EN/Human-Resources.

[3] Ramsey County (n.d.). "Ramsey County." LinkedIn. Retrieved November 16, 2023, from https://www.linkedin.com/company/ramsey-county/.

# H. Comparative Research — Ingham County, Michigan

## Ingham County's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan

Ingham County's 2018–2022 Strategic Plan includes key implementation tasks for County leadership to help foster a positive workplace climate. (An updated Strategic Plan is now underway.)

The County's goal of building and retaining a satisfied workforce focuses on four key strategies:

- Attract and retain employees who value public service;
- Regularly solicit employee feedback and suggestions for workflow improvements;
- Encourage employee creativity and innovation; and
- Support employee and professional development.

The four strategies above prioritize the value of the employee experience within the County workplace as a whole as well as within departments. Each strategy defines the department lead, implementation timeline and updates needed for ongoing evaluation (e.g., an update was made in December 2019).[4]

## Employee-focused Committees

The County maintains two employee committees: the Cultural Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee and the Safe Space Advocates Program. Each has the goal of improving workplace climate by ensuring a sense of belonging for all employees.

**Ingham County Cultural Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee.** The County's Cultural Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee was established in 1999 as a luncheon for the recognition of Black History and Cultural Diversity Month. The Committee's goal is to ensure alignment with Ingham County's strategic plan and that the County is inclusive across all functions. The Committee's efforts to date include the following:

- Annual Diversity Luncheon to honor various cultural groups through celebration and education;
- Monthly meeting to provide education and professional resources for employees; and
- Annual County externally focused unity event for employees and community members to convene and celebrate the County's diverse populations.

The Committee is composed of managers, employees, elected officials and department heads, totaling over 30 members.[5]

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[4] Ingham County (Updated December 2019). "Ingham County Strategic Plan – Implementation Action Plan." Ingham County. Retrieved November 29, 2023, from https://docs.ingham.org/Department/controller/budgets%20and%20Reports/2020%20Adopted%20Budget/Strategic%20Planning.pdf.

[5] Ingham County. (n.d.). "Ingham County Cultural Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee: History of the Ingham County Cultural Diversity and Inclusion Committee." Ingham County. Retrieved November 16, 2023, from https://dei.ingham.org/departments_and_officials/dei/iccdeic_members.php.

# H. Comparative Research — Ingham County, Michigan

**Safe Space Advocates Program.** The Safe Space Advocates Program — a segment of the Ingham County Cultural Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee — provides Ingham County employees with a forum for discussing workplace equity and inclusion issues and topics, and the support of an advocate when needed. The goal of the program is to increase employee morale and support employee retention.

County employees volunteer their own workspaces as "safe spaces" for other employees to have workplace culture-related conversations. Discussions that occur within the safe spaces are private and confidential unless comments or allegations are made that do not align with the County's policies and procedures regarding nondiscrimination. The Safe Space Advocates Program is not a regulatory group and does not substitute for reporting specific grievances or other employee concerns to Human Resources, however.

County employees who are interested in the program can find a directory of Safe Space volunteer advocates on the County's webpage.

The Safe Space Advocates Program Steering Committee assists with guidance and implementation.[6]

## Engaged Learning Series

Under its Engaged Learning Series, the County has guest speakers make presentations on a variety of workplace climate and equity topics. This series is organized by the County's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Office. Since March 2023, the County has hosted four presentations (occurring approximately every other month), which covered training challenges, gender-related topics, selfcare and neurodivergence.[7]

## Alternate Work Site Policy

Ingham County developed a remote work policy to support work-life balance and address factors such as commuting costs.

Employees who prefer to work remotely may submit an "Alternative Work Site" application. Those approved may work a fully remote schedule or a hybrid model that includes both in-office and remote work at an alternative work site such as their home. Based on job duties, supervisors determine whether an alternate work site is appropriate for each employee requesting the accommodation.[8]

Such a policy, similar to one that Dane County has in place, allows for greater flexibility in work accommodations. The flexibility associated with remote work is perceived positively by employees and can lead to improved morale and higher retention rates.[9]

[6] Ingham County. (n.d.). "Safe Space Advocates Program." Ingham County. Retrieved November 16, 2023, from https://dei.ingham.org/departments_and_officials/dei/safe_space_advocates.php.

[7] Ingham County (n.d.). "Ingham County Engaged Learning Series." Ingham County. Retrieved November 16, 2023, from https://dei.ingham.org/departments_and_officials/dei/new_page.php.

[8] Ingham County (2022, April 26). "Alternate Work Site Policy No. 225." Ingham County. Retrieved November 29, 2023, from https://docs.ingham.org/Department/controller/policy%20manual%20index/225%20Alternate%20Work%20Site%20Policy.pdf.

[9] "State of Remote Work 2023." (2023). https://buffer.com/state-of-remote-work/2023

# H. Comparative Research — Milwaukee County, Wisconsin

## Diversity and Inclusion Taskforce

Milwaukee County established a Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Taskforce in 2019 to help increase diversity among County workforce and within leadership.

**Creation of the D&I Taskforce.** The creation of the D&I Taskforce was in response to the County's statement identifying racism as a "public health crisis." The D&I Taskforce is composed of seven Facilities and Management employees.

**Diversity & Inclusion Framework.** In 2019, the D&I Taskforce conducted interviews with County employees and community leaders to assess successes and struggles regarding past diversity and inclusion initiatives. Interview results and recommendations, as well as case studies of other counties, are reported in the County's Diversity & Inclusion Framework.[10]

The Framework provides tools and suggestions for leadership to improve workforce climate.

The D&I Taskforce provided recommendations that include examples of actions, projected timeframe, designated initiative leaders and potential partners, and any additional support.

The six D&I Taskforce recommendations were:

- Create the team;
- Make the commitment;
- Educate and engage;
- Go for diversity;
- Widen the circle; and
- Evaluate progress.[11]

An example of one recommendation, with identification of lead, partners and timeline, is shown below.

### Recommendation #6: Evaluate Progress

Measure and report progress toward improving D&I. Supports Keys for Success #5. These actions support Keys for Success #5 (identify, evaluate, and communicate goals and priorities):

| # | Action | Primary Lead(s) | Possible Partner(s) | Timeframe |
|---|--------|----------------|---------------------|-----------|
| 6.1 | Annually survey employees' awareness and views of D&I (include new employees). | D&I Committee | OAAA Human Resources FMD Director FMD Managers | Near-term |
| 6.2 | Annually compile and report workplace demographics. | D&I Committee | Human Resources FMD Director FMD Managers | Near-term |

Source: https://county.milwaukee.gov/files/county/administrative services/Facilities1/FMDDIFramework20200121.pdf (p. 15.

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[10]Milwaukee County (n.d.). "Diversity and Inclusion: Our Plan." Milwaukee County. Retrieved November 16, 2023, from https://county.milwaukee.gov/EN/Administrative-Services/Facilities-Management/Diversity-Inclusion.

[11]Milwaukee County (2020, Jan. 21). "Facilities Management Division: Diversity & Inclusion Framework." Retrieved November 16, 2023, from https://county.milwaukee.gov/files/county/administrative-services/Facilities1/FMDDIFramework20200121.pdf.

# H. Comparative Research — Milwaukee County, Wisconsin

## Milwaukee County 2020–2025 Department of Health and Human Services Strategic Plan

As one example of a department-focused strategic plan, the *Milwaukee County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Strategic Plan: Creating Healthy Communities* includes initiatives that align with the County's vision to achieve racial equity to become the healthiest county in Wisconsin.[12]

Theme #2 of the DHHS Strategic Plan places focus on improving the lives of its employees by making decisions through a racial equity lens. For example, the County plans to:

- Address pay inequities; and
- Cultivate working environments that are accessible and inclusive to ensure a sense of belonging and wellbeing among its workforce.[13]

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[12] Milwaukee County Department of Health and Human Services. (n.d.). "Strategic Plan: Creating Healthy Communities." Page 3. Milwaukee County. Retrieved November 29, 2023, from https://county.milwaukee.gov/files/county/DHHS/About/DHHS_StrPln_R4_FINAL.pdf

[13] Ibid., 23-35.

## Workforce Training and Development

Milwaukee County's Workforce Training and Development (WTD) division, working through DHHS, provides skill-based, regulatory, onboarding, mindset and other trainings for department employees, students, interns and community-based providers.[14]

**Training development.** DHHS provides training related to:

- Skills building;
- Employee health and safety; and
- Career development (designed to assist leadership).

The Department developed the WTD Team to offer effective training sessions that provide positive methods for improving employee satisfaction and workplace climate. Those interested in creating a training session may make a request. Each trainer is given guidelines for developing an approved training session.

Past training sessions are recorded and available via the DHHS webpage.[15]

**WTD DEI training.** Hosted by external consultants and other groups, the WTD division offers on-site, in-person training sessions for all DHHS employees. These sessions cover inclusive language, building effective strategic initiatives and other workplace climate-related topics.

Interested employees may sign up for these training sessions on the County DHHS webpage.[16]

**DHHS new employee orientation.** DHHS hosts a mandatory orientation twice per month for all new Department employees. The orientation covers the Department's Strategic Plan and Work Guide, among other topics. New employees may access the agendas and orientation outline on the County's DHHS webpage.[17]

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[14] Milwaukee County Health & Human Services (n.d.). "Workforce Training and Development: DHHS New Employee Orientation, HealthStream and DEI." Milwaukee County. Retrieved November 16, 2023, from https://county.milwaukee.gov/EN/DHHS/About/Workforce-Training-and-Development.

[15] Milwaukee County Health & Human Services (n.d.). "How Do I Develop a Training?" Milwaukee County. Retrieved November 29, 2023, from https://county.milwaukee.gov/EN/DHHS/About/Workforce-Training-and-Development.

[16] Milwaukee County Health & Human Services (n.d.). "DEI In Person Training." Milwaukee County. Retrieved November 29, from https://county.milwaukee.gov/EN/DHHS/About/Workforce-Training-and-Development.

[17] Milwaukee County Health & Human Services (n.d.). "DHHS New Employee Orientation." Milwaukee County. Retrieved November 29, 2023, from https://county.milwaukee.gov/EN/DHHS/About/Workforce-Training-and-Development.

## H. Comparative Research — Milwaukee County, Wisconsin

### Change Champions

Change Champions are employees who work to improve and maintain a positive workplace environment and culture. The role of Change Champions can include the following:

- Learning to prepare, plan and implement activities that foster a positive workplace culture;

- Researching department goals related to positive workplace culture and integrating those goals into their daily tasks; and

- Assessing results of department efforts and determining level of success.

Change Champions must assume the role for 12 months and devote four to six hours per week to role duties, meetings and training sessions per week. Interested employees may submit an interest form to participate in the program.[18]

### Telework Policy

In 2021, Milwaukee County introduced the Telework Policy. The Telework Policy was designed to improve employee work-life balance and increase employee retention. The policy also helps assess employee performance. The policy allows for the use of shared workspaces for employees who choose to work remotely.[19]

The County's Telework Decision-Making Guide provides leadership with a framework to make consistent decisions regarding telework.[20]

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[18]Milwaukee County Health & Human Services (n.d.). "Workforce Training and Development: DHHS New Employee Orientation, HealthStream and DEI." Milwaukee County. Retrieved November 16, 2023, from https://county.milwaukee.gov/EN/DHHS/About/Workforce-Training-and-Development.

[19] Milwaukee County (2021, July). "Milwaukee County Telework Policy (PowerPoint)." Milwaukee County. Retrieved November 29, 2023.

[20] https://county.milwaukee.gov/files/county/administrative-services/AMOP/Chapter-2-Human-Resources/02.20TeleworkPolicy.pdf

# H. Comparative Research — Milwaukee County, Wisconsin

## Workplace Climate through an Equity Lens

To ensure a positive workplace climate for all employees, Milwaukee County has invested in strengthening racial equity across its departments and functions.

**Embedding equity.** The Milwaukee County Office of Equity (OOE) serves as a County-wide source for guidance and recommendations regarding racial equity initiatives to leadership, divisions, boards and commissions, and others.[21]

**Racial Equity Toolkit.** To ensure all decisions align with the County strategic plan, Milwaukee County employs its Racial Equity Toolkit informed by the Government Alliance on Racial Equity (GARE) Racial Equity Toolkit.[22]

The County's Racial Equity Toolkit helps leadership ensure that equity is embedded in each new or existing internally or externally focused policy, program or initiative. This tool consists of seven sections including key questions and a reflective assessment tool that can be accessed online. The tool is designed to be used by a variety of teams, departments and staff members. Users receive a PDF report following completion of each assessment.[23]

## Health and Equity Framework

Milwaukee County's Health & Equity Framework is a visual resource that demonstrates the relationship between institutional practices and policies and the sources of inequities.

The Health & Equity Framework can be used as a tool for assessing internal and external County policies and practices, as the County recognizes that the health of the community impacts employees and vice versa. (See Figure H-1.)[24]

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[21] Milwaukee County (n.d.). "Office of Equity: Making the County's Health & Racial Equity Vision a Reality." Milwaukee County. Retrieved November 16, 2023, from https://county.milwaukee.gov/EN/Office-of-Equity.

[22] Local and Regional Government Alliance on Race and Equity (2016, December). "Racial Equity Toolkit: An Opportunity to Operationalize Equity." Government Alliance on Race and Equity. Retrieved December 5, 2023, from https://racialequityalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/GARE-Racial_Equity_Toolkit.pdf.

[23] Milwaukee County Office of Equity (n.d.). "Racial Equity Tool: A Tool for Applying Racial Equity to New Programs, Policies, and Initiatives." Milwaukee County. Retrieved November 16, 2023, from https://app.agolix.com/assessment/20548.

[24] Milwaukee County (n.d.). "Health and Equity Framework." Milwaukee County. Retrieved November 16, 2023, from https://county.milwaukee.gov/EN/Vision/Strategy-Dashboard#health_and_equity_framework.

# H. Comparative Research — Milwaukee County, Wisconsin

H-1. Milwaukee County Health & Equity Framework

Source: https://county.milwaukee.gov/EN/Vision/Strategy-Dashboard#health_and_equity_framework

# H. Comparative Research — Ramsey County, Minnesota

## Ramsey County 2022–2023 Strategic Plan

In 2022, Ramsey County released its Strategic Plan to strengthen workplace climate and advance other goals. The County established an 18-month timeline to address the priorities outlined in the Strategic Plan.[25]

**Talent attraction, retention and promotion.** One of the initiatives included in the Strategic Plan, "Aligning talent attraction, retention and promotion," focuses on employee retention and attracting a talented and diverse workforce that is representative of the Ramsey County community.

**Values and operations.** Ramsey County collaborated with staff to define organizational values. The Ramsey County Human Resources department developed teams to ensure improvements to its hiring and promotion processes, as well.

**Pathway programs.** To foster a positive workplace climate, the County implemented a public sector pathways program to "diversify our workforce, align and streamline internship, fellowship and pathway programs across the organization, and develop advancement or lateral opportunities for key classifications within the county for leveraging staff talent, broadening skills and promoting development."

## Progress Metrics

Ramsey County Human Resources produces an annual workforce statistics report to measure progress and improve or augment strategies and performance metrics, as necessary.[26] Metrics in these reports include race, ethnicity and gender of all employees, employees by EEO-4 category, leadership only (i.e., directors, managers, supervisors), new hires, promotions and separations.

## Flexible Workplace Policy

Established in 2022, Ramsey County's Flexible Workplace Policy allowed employees whose job functions are deemed mobile or hybrid to work offsite for a portion of the work week. The policy emphasizes workplace culture and employee satisfaction, with the intent to:

- Improve work-life balance for employees while allowing for employee growth and team interaction;
- Attract and retain a talented workforce; and
- Reduce employee travel time and Ramsey County's carbon footprint.

The policy began as the Ad Hoc Telecommuting Policy following the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021, the County created a Flexible Workplace Policy Team to develop the 2022 policy.[27]

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[25] Ramsey County (n.d.). "Strategic Priorities for a Vibrant Community." Ramsey County. Retrieved November 23, 2023, from https://www.ramseycounty.us/2022-23-strategic-plan.

[26] Ramsey County (n.d.). "Talent Attraction, Retention and Promotion." Ramsey County. Retrieved November 27, 2023, from https://www.ramseycounty.us/your-government/projects-initiatives/strategic-priorities/talent-attraction-retention-and-promotion.

[27] Ramsey County (2022, May 9). "Flexible Workplace Policy (p. 1-2)." Ramsey County. Retrieved November 16, 2023 from https://www.ramseycounty.us/sites/default/files/Departments/Policy%20and%20Planning/Flexible%20Workplace%20Policy%20May%202022.pdf.

# APPENDIX I. Dane County Department Initiatives and Opportunities — Introduction

To help the County better understand its own strengths and areas for improvement in terms of workplace climate and culture, Keen Independent conducted additional interviews with staff from several County departments. This deeper dive into Dane County departments occurred as a later phase of the assessment.

## Introduction

Dane County departments already follow many best practices to support a positive work environment. Keen Independent collected qualitative information about some of the initiatives and actions departments have taken that relate to workplace climate.

Additionally, the County recognizes that some departments have room for workplace climate improvements. Our interviews also prompted participants to share where their department is challenged in terms of workplace climate.

We identified departments to contact based on recurring themes from comments received in the virtual workshop. Individuals we spoke to for these insights included:

- Department heads;
- Division heads;
- Managers; and
- Staff.

## Initiatives

Many departments reported engaging in similar workplace initiatives and actions designed to support a positive workplace climate. Figure I-1 lists these initiatives and actions, along with the resources that were required for implementation and to achieve desired outcomes.

## Opportunities

We also identified many common challenges departments face in terms of maintaining a positive workplace climate. In Figure I-2, we list these challenges and provide associated opportunities to address each.

As a note, we do not specifically identify any departments nor individuals we engaged for this part of the assessment. The goal of this section is to provide all County departments, many of which are experiencing similar challenges and opportunities, with examples of how positive workplace climate is supported.

# I. Dane County Department Initiatives and Opportunities — Initiatives

I-1. Current department-level initiatives and activities that support positive workplace climate

| Action or initiative | Resources required | Outcome |
|---|---|---|
| Developing a department-specific strategic plan | Staff time<br><br>External stakeholder time<br><br>Budget for outside consultants | Department has a customized document informed by staff and stakeholders that guides their work and sets the tone for department culture. |
| Administering and analyzing a department-wide survey | Staff time<br><br>Budget for outside consultants (if survey is not administered/analyzed in-house) | Staff have regular opportunities to provide input and departments can set benchmarks to track the impact of workplace initiatives. |
| Hosting regular leadership training | Staff time<br><br>Budget for external facilitator<br><br>Partnerships with nonprofit organizations offering training | Managers and supervisors are supported with up-to-date management techniques and staff benefit from improved relationships with managers and supervisors. |
| Hiring a trauma coordinator or bringing in a trauma counselor | Budget for hiring new position<br><br>Budget for hiring outside counselor<br><br>Training time (for new hire) | Staff receive support in processing difficult aspects of their job. |
| Hosting open webinars where department heads share updates directly with staff | Staff time | Department heads promote transparency and can build rapport with staff. |
| Planning and hosting mandatory all-staff social outings (during work hours) | Staff time | Staff have the opportunity to connect with one another and department demonstrates that it cares about these relationships. |

Source:     Keen Independent Research.

# I. Dane County Department Initiatives and Opportunities — Initiatives

I-1. Current department initiatives and activities that support positive workplace climate (continued)

| Action or initiative | Resources required | Outcome |
|---|---|---|
| Establishing a workforce climate committee | Staff time<br><br>Budget for workplace initiatives (if applicable) | Department receives recommendations on workplace climate initiatives from an internal group with firsthand knowledge of the culture. |
| Hiring a workforce climate coordinator | Budget for new hire and associated resources<br><br>Training time for new hire | Department has a dedicated staff person to own workplace climate initiatives and ensure that their impact is tracked. |
| Having open-door policies so staff may easily access department leadership | Staff time<br><br>Physical office space | Department heads build relationships with staff and staff feel more comfortable with leadership. |
| Updating department Equity and Inclusion Plan (EIP) regularly and coordinating EIP with other workplace initiatives | Staff time | Staff have more opportunity to take ownership of EIP and equity and inclusion are better integrated into all aspects of the department's operations. |

Source:    Keen Independent Research.

# I. Department Initiatives and Opportunities — Potential areas for improvement

I-2. Challenges to and opportunities for improving workplace culture

| Challenge | Opportunity |
|---|---|
| Small groups of employees may be particularly vocal about workplace challenges and focus on the negative (may be dwelling on past experiences rather than looking forward). | Department and division heads may meet with these individuals to discuss their needs or encourage forward-thinking participation on a workforce climate committee to ensure that their voices are heard. |
| Staff of larger departments are spread out across buildings and do not all interact, which can make building a positive workplace culture difficult. | Department and division heads may consider visiting various offices where their staff are physically located on a routine basis (if in-person meetings are held, the location of the meetings may be rotated, if appropriate space exists in multiple buildings). |
| Many staff work remotely, thus limiting in-person opportunities to organically build relationships. | Supervisors, managers and division leads may implement virtual team-building measures (e.g., individual virtual coffee chats, virtual meetings during which a game is played) or annual or semiannual in-person outings to allow people to meet in person. |
| Staff who wish to support workplace initiatives (e.g., planning department outings, serving on a committee) have limited time to devote to these activities. | Departments may consider hiring a staff person who spends at least 50 percent of their time coordinating workplace initiatives including leading a committee and ensuring that workplace climate is advancing; managers and supervisors may restructure their direct reports' workload to allow adequate time to support workplace initiatives. |
| For staff in some departments, high or taxing workloads can lead to disengagement in workplace climate initiatives. | Managers and supervisors can monitor the workload of their direct reports and advocate for additional resources (e.g., new hires) when needed; some events designed to promote positive workplace culture can be scheduled during dedicated work hours. |

Source:    Keen Independent Research.