

OEO Listening Session Questions and Responses from OEO, SDHR, and CBO

1. *There are units which are slated to re-open on May 5th and still haven't heard what the plan is from their department. When will they know what they should expect regarding re-opening from their management?*
This is an operations question that can only be answered by the department. The specific department HR may be able to address this question. For any upcoming opening or transition questions, we recommend first referring to your manager and departmental HR. If you aren't able to get an answer to your question, please contact OEO. Additionally, if you'd like to share feedback about your department's communication during transitions, please contact the OEO.

2. *What provisions have been or will be made for childcare in the event of a gradual return to work before schools reopen?*
Employees currently teleworking will be able to continue to do so. Employees who are asked to come back to work will not be provisioned with childcare at this time. There are childcare resources for first responders and some employees conducting essential work. Employees living in Seattle should contact DEEL for more information. Employees not living in the city should research their county/city specific resources in this matter.

In addition, employees may be able to utilize leave under the Family First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA), which includes expanded leave options available to employees. More information can be found [here](#).

3. *Has the idea of quarantine been reviewed by SDHR against new guidelines from CDC, etc.? Quarantine guidelines appeared to indicate that only those that were symptomatic should be isolated, but not that folks who were exposed but asymptomatic.*
SDHR has reviewed the updates to the CDC guidance and is making the appropriate changes to our current SOPs in partnership with the Mayor's Office.

4. *During the last round of budget cuts, there were pay cuts and/or layoffs by pocket, which meant that seniority didn't apply to the cuts. Does the City have plans to make cuts by pocket if they are needed?*
The City does not have a formal plan for layoffs related to COVID-19; the full scope of budgetary implications from the pandemic are yet unknown. Additionally, layoffs are very context-specific and there are no plans regarding layoffs being reviewed by the Mayor's Office yet.

5. *Can employees opt to give up their COLA this year to help address the shortfall?*
For represented employees, any decision on how to close any budgetary gaps will either need to be bargained with the unions, or we will need to follow appropriate provisions of the bargaining agreements. For non-represented employees, our suggestion would be to contact their manager.

6. *In the event of a layoff, how much notice is required to inform employees?*
As a public employer, the City is not bound to the WARN Act. That said, the City will provide as much notice as necessary to employees impacted by financial decisions.

After the listening sessions where employees raised concerns about notice, the OEO raised their concerns to the Mayor and Cabinet. City-wide, leaders are aware that staff are anxious about their job security and want as much notice as possible if their positions are likely to be impacted. The Mayor has already publicly announced her intent to minimize impacts to City employees.

7. *In the event of a layoff, what will happen with accrued floating holidays and executive leave? What about vacation and sick leave?*

Leave cash outs will occur in accordance with applicable personnel rule and CBA language.

In general, in the event of a layoff, as per Personnel Rule 7.5.3 paragraph F, employees may be paid out in full for vacation leave balances. Sick leave, in general under Personnel Rule 7.7.4 Paragraph G would not be paid out. Personal holidays are not eligible for cash out, as per Personnel Rule 7.6. An employee covered by a CBA may want to check with their Union Rep about CBA provisions directly.

8. *Are OOC assignments at risk during this time?*

No however, additional OOC may be limited during this time.

Employees in an OOC position are encouraged to check in with their managers, departmental HR, or the OEO if they have concerns.

9. *What does the return to normal look like with the turning of the dial as described by the Governor and what mechanisms is the City looking at to turn that dial?*

The City is reviewing ways to adhere to the phased approach on all levels.

The City is considering the implementation of screening, physical distancing, contact tracing, and will provide updates on implementation in regular employee communications.

10. *In the case of reassignment, does seniority travel with the employee? Under what circumstances would it or would it not follow?*

Yes - seniority is maintained.

11. *How will the temporary employee pool be impacted during the hiring freeze?*

In accordance with the hiring freeze memo provided by CBO. You can find the memo [here](#).

While the temp pool itself is not specifically referenced in the memo, there will be no creation of new temporary positions, nor will temps be used to fill vacant positions unless the Department seeks an exemption. Temp positions also may not be extended without an exemption.

12. *Are temporary employees being redeployed? Will they continue to stay in the temp pool?*

Temporary employees may be reassigned within the bounds of their current temporary assignment. Temporary employees in the temp pool will stay in the temp pool and will not be reassigned out of the temp pool.

13. *Can a priority for reassignment or backfills be given for current or past temporary employees because they have the experience and understanding of City functioning?*

No. All temporary employees are given the same priority within the temp pool based on their experience and eligibility for a particular role.

There are provisions for referral and reinstatement programs for permanent employees under Personnel Rule 6.2 that do provide for reinstatement of employees in the same classification in the event of a layoff.

14. *Is there a limit to how long someone stay in a TES position?*

Yes - per the terms of their assignment.

15. *How can we continue to rehire and replace part-time and temporary staff as needed, particularly in understaffed units? What exceptions can be made to the hiring freeze and what it would take for it to be lifted?*

Departments are to follow the requirement of the hiring freeze exception process developed by CBO and SDHR. The CBO issued a memo with instructions on how to request exemptions, which can be found [here](#).

16. *Can employees request redeployment if they think they have skills that can be utilized?*

Employees can speak with their supervisor about interest in the [Talent Redeployment Hub](#). Managers who need a specific skillset in their unit can request employees through the Hub but can also post employees with valuable skillsets. Keeping in touch with your manager about how you can assist other units can be helpful to help your manager assess whether you can be redeployed.

17. *Can SDHR offer some recommendations about how we can show our work and accomplishments?*

We recommend that employees stay in continual communication with their managers in 1:1 meetings or staff meetings, even though many employees are meeting electronically while working from home. Letting your manager know what's been going well is a great practice and can help your manager see your strengths as an employee. You can keep track of kudos that you receive in a folder or forward them directly to your manager to highlight your good work.

18. *How can we demonstrate our value and show the work that we're doing and the impact that we're having?*

You can demonstrate your value using some of the strategies we've described in the previous question. It is also important to remember that the Mayor's broadcasts have emphasized the incredible impact City employees have already had in supporting each other and our City communities. As an employee, looking at how your role serves the mission and vision of your department and tying your accomplishments to that mission and vision can highlight the impact you have serving our City. You can always look at the deliverables or development plan you and your manager developed and discuss how you're meeting those benchmarks. If you're not clear on the benchmarks, we encourage you to have a conversation with your manager directly or seek OEO support in talking with your manager.

The follow thoughts and suggestions were presented to Cabinet and SDHR by the OEO after the Listening Sessions:

- Individuals approaching retirement be given the opportunity to work out their tenure with the City even if there are layoffs/furloughs.

- Staff should be involved and asked to give input and ideas on how to resolve the budget shortfalls.
- Two models raised by staff from the past that might be of value to reconsider now:
 - First, in Parks, where positions were reduced to half-time instead of full-time to keep as many staff as possible on payroll and benefits.
 - Second, in the Library where staff were asked to, and agreed, to take a voluntary 20% cut across the board on their positions in order to avoid layoffs.