2022 Annual Report

Office of the Employee Ombud

Statistics, Trends, and Recommendations

This report details the most recent updates from the Seattle Office of the Employee Ombud from April 2021-March 2022.

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Executive Summary

With a transition back to physical offices, the implementation of a new City vaccine mandate, and new understandings of the continually changing needs of our City, the OEO continues to partner with all City staff to help deescalate the conflicts that will naturally arise during a time of such rapid change.

Our 2021-2022 Annual Report outlines office structure updates and provides updates on our outreach efforts for the year. We also highlight ongoing efforts to examine our impact and institute accountability measures in order to continually improve our services. Of the 215 cases opened in the last year, we achieved either full or partial resolution of 73%, while 20% had no action requested and 7% did not achieve resolution.

Our top three systemic trends have remained constant year to year, with 34% of cases directly related to issues of discrimination, 25% to lack of clarity in policy and 20% to lack of consistency in policy implementation including disciplinary processes. We have offered recommendations in each of our previous Annual Reports and have distilled those recommendations this year into five solutions. We believe these five actions, if taken by the City, would substantially address the ongoing systemic trends we have seen:

1) Devote substantial resources and energy to collecting Citywide data about disciplinary action and, eventually, develop a consistent citywide guideline for disciplinary action.
2) Develop a comprehensive leadership support structure including training, mentorship programs, and coaching for all people leaders at the City.
3) Develop a transition management model for consistent use throughout the City.
4) Develop reintegration protocols for staff returning from leave.
5) Streamline ADA processes.

We also outline our own capacity building efforts to help address systemic trends and provide updates on our work on the Hate Crimes Executive Order. Our 2022 Priorities will also help guide our work in the coming year. Those priorities are:

1) Develop a Change Manage Protocol for the City.
2) Offer Executive Coaching to City Leaders.
3) Pilot the Trauma Informed Care program.
4) Discipline Data Project.
5) Streamline ADA processes.
6) Pilot Anti-Extremism Training.

Note from the Director

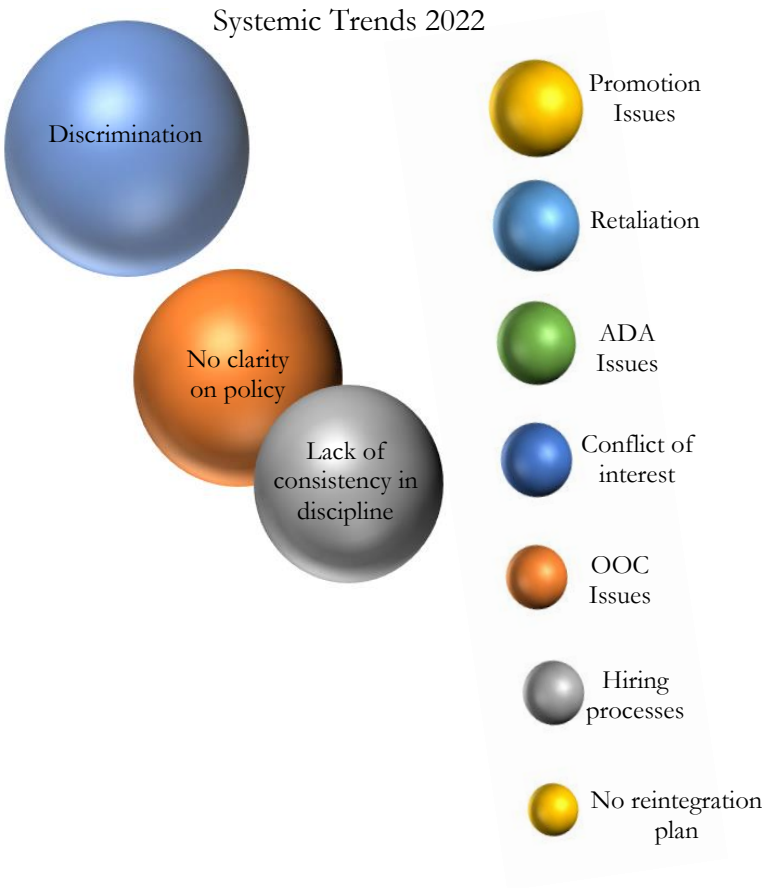
Transition is a word that captures many of our collective experiences this year. Transition through varying pandemic response directives, return to worksite directives, evolving safety protocols, transition through a changing economic outlook, and infrastructure growth forecasts. Continually through the past two years, transition through stages of grief mourning the lives lost to a deadly virus. Closer to home, big changes and transition in City leadership with a new Mayor taking the helm. Within all these transitions are lessons for us to learn as a city, a community and a leading voice for nationwide conversations on equity and justice.

These pandemic years have further demonstrated the deep ideological and perceptional divisions in our midst. The nature of conflict and workplace issues presented to our office during this period are reflective of that divide. Even though remote working and social distancing helped lessen the number of interpersonal conflicts that occur when people are in proximity to each other, there is no denying that ideological objections to masking and vaccine mandates, restrictions on social gatherings and other pandemic response measures brought about the most serious conflict within our workforce. Our employees are subjected to powerful sources of information, misinformation and influences and it is becoming increasingly evident that we would have to engage with people no matter what their ideological stance is. It is no longer practical to just hand out information that we believe is scientifically well supported, morally above reproach and logically sound. We must make at least an earnest attempt at 'persuasion', the daunting task of offering consistent and reasonable response to the question, "Why?" The Office of the Employee Ombud has attempted to provide that safe space to City employees throughout the pandemic years where they can ask questions about RTO timelines, AWA agreements, PPE equipment, Hazard pay and a multitude of other concerns.

Our approach has been to engage folks, listen, provide context and at times attest to the fact that the majority of decision makers related to these protocols are very cognizant of equity and access needs of our employees. Decisions leading to dismissal or disengagement of a staff member are hard and taken with immense amount of consideration. There are two things that have helped this year as we engaged with often very upset and distraught employees. First, mandate enforcement decisions are deliberative, made over a period of time, and made by more than one person. Second, religious or medical exemption requests are also reviewed by a panel, limiting individual personal bias from getting in the way.

As an accountability function for the city, we are channeling our learning from this year's cases into key priorities for the coming years. Firstly, a city of this size needs a robust Change Management framework, and our office is gearing up to provide this service. We are planning to get involved in a proactive way before major policy or leadership change in a department. Soliciting feedback from staff before new leadership is in place, briefing incoming leaders on the known needs/issues of the group they are to serve, holding listening session before new policy/process is

institutionalized, these are some of the ways we aim to help ease some transition pains. Our second new priority area is Executive Coaching. There are very few leadership and people management solutions available to the average city employee. Leadership continues to present itself as an abstract trait, almost like a lucky draw, some have it aplenty and others lack the fundamentals of it. It is our observation that effective leadership, with the highest standards of transparent communication is key to employee compliance rates, sense of wellbeing, and general acceptance of changing protocols. OEO is gearing up to provide hands on executive coaching to people managers across the city to initiate the process of cultivating consistent standards of stewardship and effective management. Our team will be trained and prepared to coach leaders, management teams and supervisors across divisions, crews and departments to make sound choices and most importantly, learn self-accountability techniques that are essential for preventing repetitive harm. These earnest efforts at correction are only effective if they come accompanied by measurable signs of correction. It is our promise to the City that after coaching leaders on known areas of growth, we will make recommendations to the Mayor for accountability if no signs of improvement are apparent.



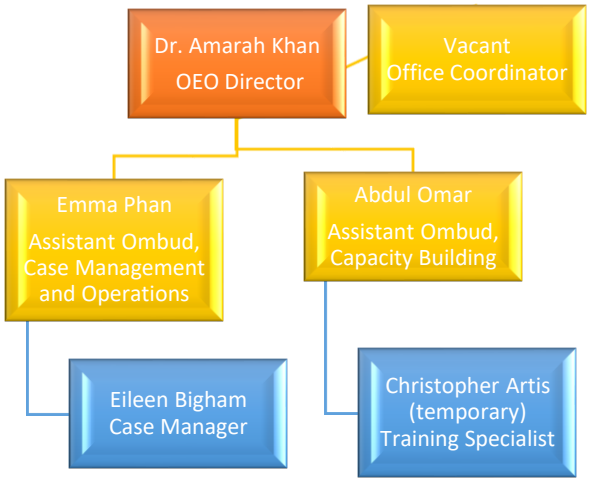
SDHR, in collaboration with many stakeholders, has added a definition of workplace misconduct to the personnel rules. This is a huge step forward for our workforce. There is the opportunity to name and define conduct that previously got lost between one set of rules or the other. OEO wants to build on this effort and identify instances of hate motivated conduct so we can recommend known/expected consequences for such egregious incidents. Our work to prevent Hate Crimes and Crimes of Bias continues this year as we introduce the first of its kind 'Hate and Extremism Prevention' training for city employees during Summer 2022.

Best Regards,

Dr. Amarah Khan

Office Structure & Updates

In 2021-2022, we continued to provide most of our services remotely, but we have begun to transition back to the office as the telework restrictions have lifted. We were able to add two temporary positions to our office and will be hiring for both a permanent Office Coordinator and Training Program Specialist in early 2022.

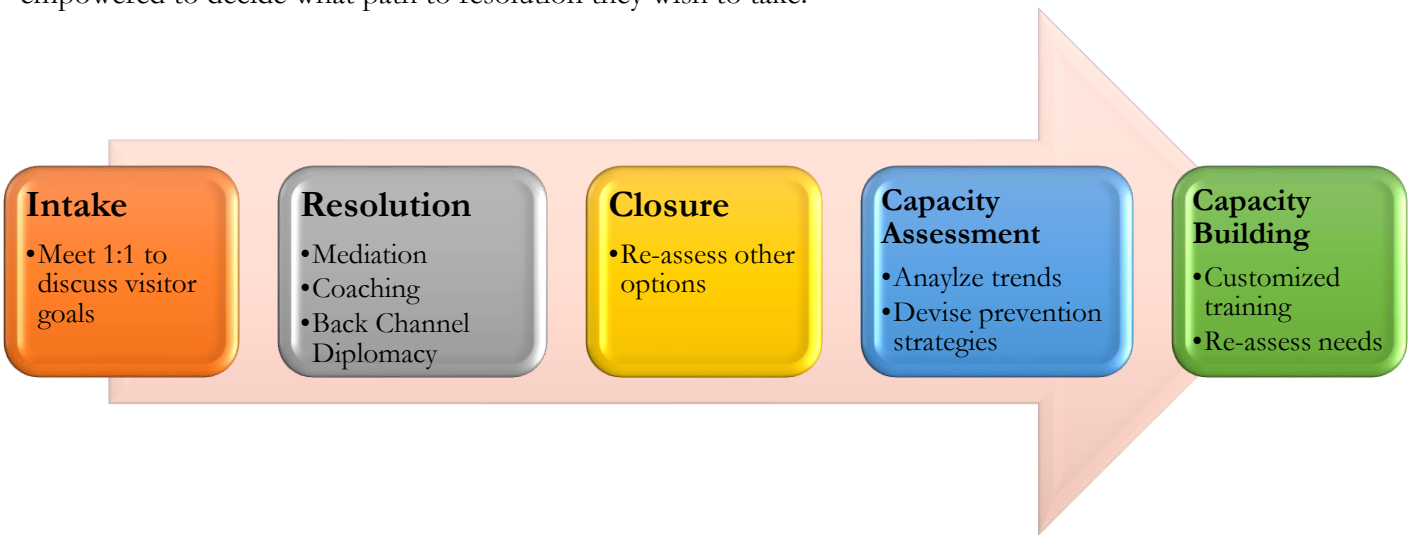


We had temporary support in 2021-2022 for the Training Specialist Position from Christopher Artis. Christopher's career began with a focus on strategic planning, program development and organizational capacity building efforts to remove the personal and professional barriers faced by people living in poverty. He then spent 10 years in a non-secular environment developing leaders, managing creative teams, and coaching individuals through their most challenging seasons of life. We are pleased to welcome him to the team. Christopher spearheaded the Hate Crimes Executive Order workgroup and continued to move our office's Anti-Extremism training to implementation among all City staff.

We have also had staff departures from our team. Abdul Omar, who has served as Assistant Ombud for Capacity Building since 2019, will be leaving the OEO in March of 2022. He was instrumental in developing our Bystander Intervention, Responses to Discrimination, Conflict Management, and Effective Management trainings. We will miss his contributions to the team and work with our office. We hope that we can hire a permanent replacement as soon as possible in 2022 to help continue his important work.

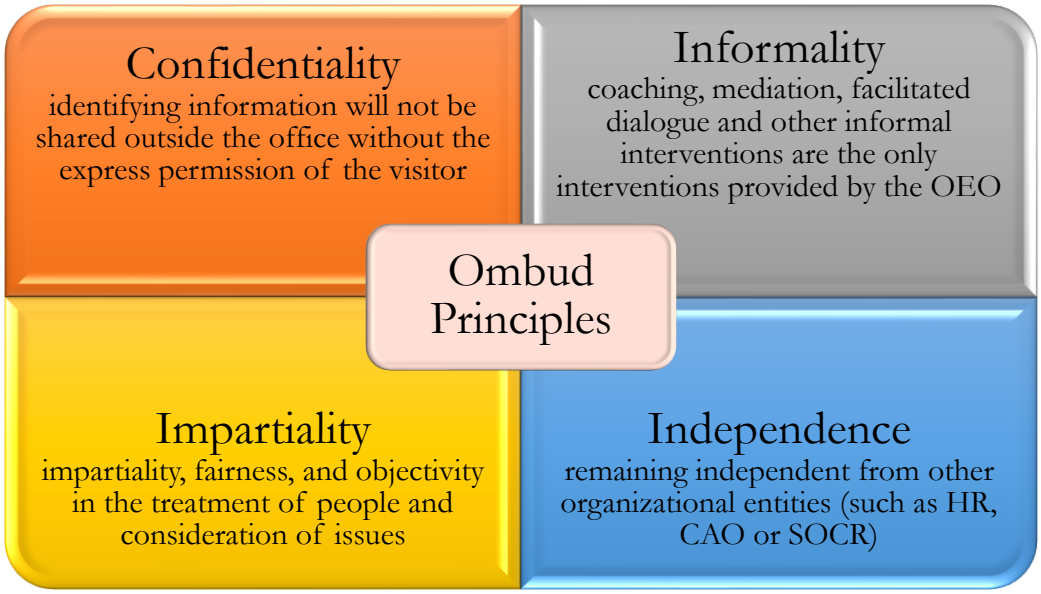
Case Management Process

Below is a graphic designed to help clarify our case management process. Given the complexity of cases, this process, particularly in intake and resolution phases, will vary based on the needs and goals of the visitor. What is always a constant is that City employees reporting concerns to OEO are empowered to decide what path to resolution they wish to take.



Office Tenets

The Office of the Employee Ombud has four main tenets that guide our work – these same tenets govern the working scope of many Ombud offices around the world.



Outreach

Over the past year, the Office of the Employee Ombud has sustained its outreach efforts despite continuing challenges with the COVID-19 Pandemic. To continue building relationships and establish our presence as a new entity within the City of Seattle, OEO has participated on several internal workgroups and committees. We have contributed to the Anti-Harassment and Anti-Discrimination IDT, the Return to Office Interdepartmental Teams and Workforce Equity Strategic Plan; participated in the Learning and Development Community of HR Practice, ADA Community of HR Practice, SDHR Black and HSD White Caucuses, as well as Change Team meetings citywide.

External Professional Groups

Externally, OEO has become a member of and contributed to professional Ombud organizations worldwide. OEO's memberships include the International Ombud Institute, United States Ombud Association, and the International Ombud Association where OEO staff serve on the Executive Board, Finance Committee, and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Taskforce. The International Ombud Association (IOA) is an organization for practicing ombuds that supports professional development, networking, and consistency of practice among organizational ombuds worldwide. The OEO is chartered under the IOA's Charter, and practices according to its established Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics. As members of the International Ombud Association, all the OEO team attended the 2021 Annual Conference. Additionally, our Director, Amarah Khan has been certified as a Certified Ombudsman Practitioner (CO-OP), and Emma Phan also achieved her CO-OP certification in June of 2021.

The OEO is also involved with local networks of Ombud colleagues, like the Northwest Ombud Group. We participated in their last quarterly meeting in December of 2021. We continue to expand our network to learn from colleagues in hopes to provide the most informed and standardized service to City of Seattle Employees. Because of our established presence, other jurisdictions, including the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, have reached out to seek OEO support and guidance on how to create their own government Ombud entity. Additionally, National Public Radio's Puget Sound affiliate, KUOW, conducted an interview with Assistant Ombud, Abdul Omar, to learn more about our Bystander Intervention Training, amidst the rise in Anti-Asian hate crimes in Seattle.

Internal Outreach to City staff

When OEO receives a report, the incident may initially be isolated to two people experiencing conflict. However, we realize that there are often others who can offer insight or otherwise contribute to the case. In this respect, OEO does extensive outreach to a broad range of City employees, including executive leadership. Individual cases may also shed light on large-scale issues within a unit or division. When OEO makes this assessment to involve others outside of the initial reporters, there are a variety of ways in which we address those issues: we hold listening sessions to gain broader perspective, conduct trainings to build conflict management skills, or collaborate with leadership to create and distribute inclusivity audits.

Over this past year, OEO has strengthened our relationships with other departments via monthly meetings with designated points of contact. To date, we meet regularly with leadership and HR across 17 units and departments. During these confidential one-on-one meetings, OEO and department designees exchange department-specific information regarding individual cases, trends, and themes. The purpose of these meetings is to better understand each department's needs and strategize ways to facilitate individual and department-wide success. We use the point of contact meetings to serve as stakeholders on the corrective measures needed to resolve a reported concern or to address a larger trend. If an employee reported something anonymously, we address the issue at hand without disclosing who initiated the report to OEO.

The primary focus of our outreach efforts is to listen to and learn from our colleagues. Our internal partners provide us with the most current and up-to-date resources in order to better serve employees. As a growing department we hope to further expand our reach in the coming year. We will continue to participate in citywide discussions, soliciting direct feedback from employees, and identify trends in order to resolve conflict and provide recommendations to improve the workplace.

Accountability & Impact

With each new situation brought to the office, the OEO strives to serve the individual and improve our workplace culture. We do this by resolving concerns for the individual but also by looking at each individual case as a means of learning about larger patterns, trends, and themes throughout the system. That systemic learning then helps our office to advocate for meaningful change and improvement throughout City policies and procedures. As a confidential resource, we cannot share specifics of any case brought to our office, which can sometimes make it difficult to demonstrate the impact of our work. In this section, we detail our efforts to be accountable to the system and the individuals we serve and to hold ourselves to highest ethical and industry standards of practice.

Case Audits

Case audits are an integral part of our system of checks and balances. With 643 cases and growing, we continue to audit every case on our docket for consistency, rate of resolution, impediments to resolution, process improvement, and trends monitoring. The process is time-consuming but imperative to assess our office's impact. We also audit our cases in EthicsPoint, (our case management system) to ensure consistency of case notes, review all open cases for closure or follow-up, and review closure notes to see whether further resolution can be achieved, or additional capacity building efforts can be implemented. Finally, we review race and identity factors in our cases as they are reported by visitors to see how identity is playing a role in the conflicts we are helping to resolve. Case audits are also our primary tool for identifying systemic trends and emerging patterns within the data.

Case Resolutions and Outcomes

As part of our case audits, we discuss and debrief the resolutions achieved in each case. We want to ensure that we used all of the tools and strategies available to us to seek both the desired resolution of the individual who raised a concern, but also to determine whether we helped highlight and provide solutions for any systemic issues that were part of the conflict.

We measure our effectiveness in part based on the number of times we achieve the respectful resolution sought by the visitor. This can be a complex metric to track for several reasons. First, because there are cases where the resolution sought by the employee may not best serve their needs and might lead to continued conflict in the future. We do our best in those cases to provide impartial coaching and guidance to the employee and attempt to explore alternative options. If none of the options are found by the employee to resolve their concerns, we make our best attempt at resolving the matter to their satisfaction while also ensuring that we do not inflict further harm to any party involved. Second, the resolution often changes through the life cycle of a case. In these instances, we do our best to note both the original resolution sought by the visitor, but also update our notes to reflect the eventual resolution sought by the visitor at the time the case was closed.

We also measure our effectiveness in a case based on the type of intervention we do as an office – whether through direct or indirect intervention, or referral to formal processes. Tracking the type of

intervention ensures that we are attempting to do something as an office, even when we cannot reach the desired resolution sought by our visitors.

Training Evaluations

As part of our office's case management cycle, as noted above, we assess each case to determine whether there could be some intervention in the form of training, or other capacity building initiative to prevent future conflicts of a similar nature. Discussed in more detail in our Capacity Building section below, we have developed a number of trainings and interventions. Each training and intervention are followed by an evaluation to help us assess whether the information provided is helpful, germane, and usable by the participants. As we receive that feedback, we continually change and update our capacity building initiatives based on the data we collect. We also monitor each case and continue to assess where our training efforts need to change and grow to meet the changing needs of City staff.

2021 Statistics

Systemic Trends:

Discrimination

No clarity on policy

Lack of consistency in discipline

Promotion Issues

Retaliation

ADA Issues

Conflict of Interest

Hiring Processes

No reintegration plan

Conflicts of Interest

215 Cases

Backlog: 0

78% Closed

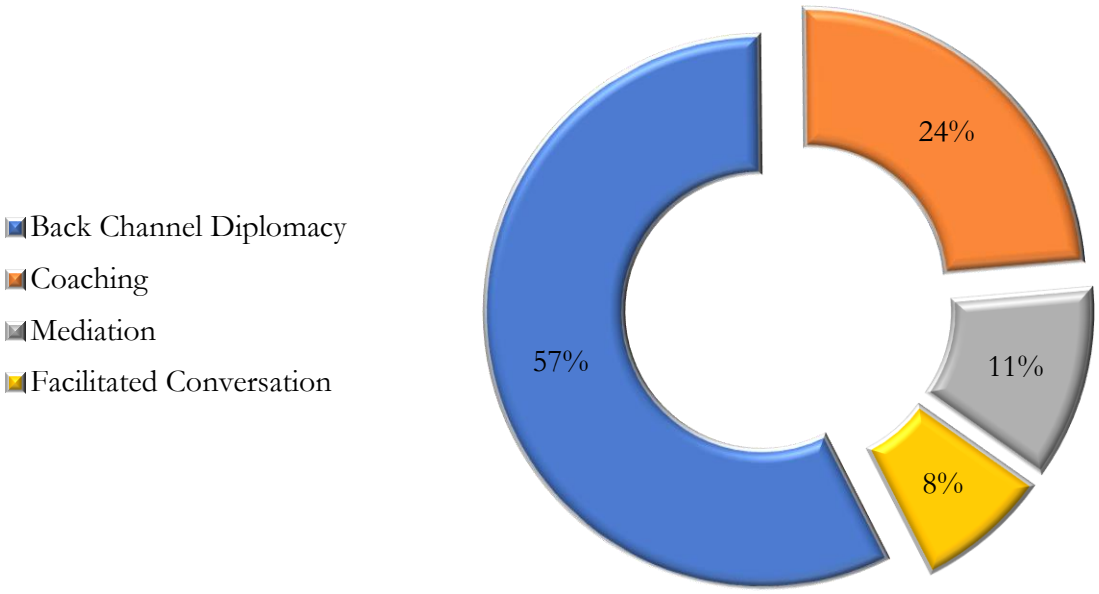
28 workdays: average time case remains open

2021 Cases: 201

Case Resolution

As in the previous year, we have continued to review our 215 cases to review whether a case was resolved, partially resolved, not resolved, or no action was requested. **In the 2022 year, we achieved either partial or full resolution on 73% of our cases, while 20% had no action requested, and 7% did not achieve resolution.**

As mentioned above, our process is highly customized to meet the needs of the visitors to our office. In 2021, our office engaged in the following intervention strategies:



Definitions:

Back Channel Diplomacy: Raising a concern to leadership without identifying the visitor who raised the concern. The goal is to work with leadership to provide information such that they can address and resolve concerns within their units.

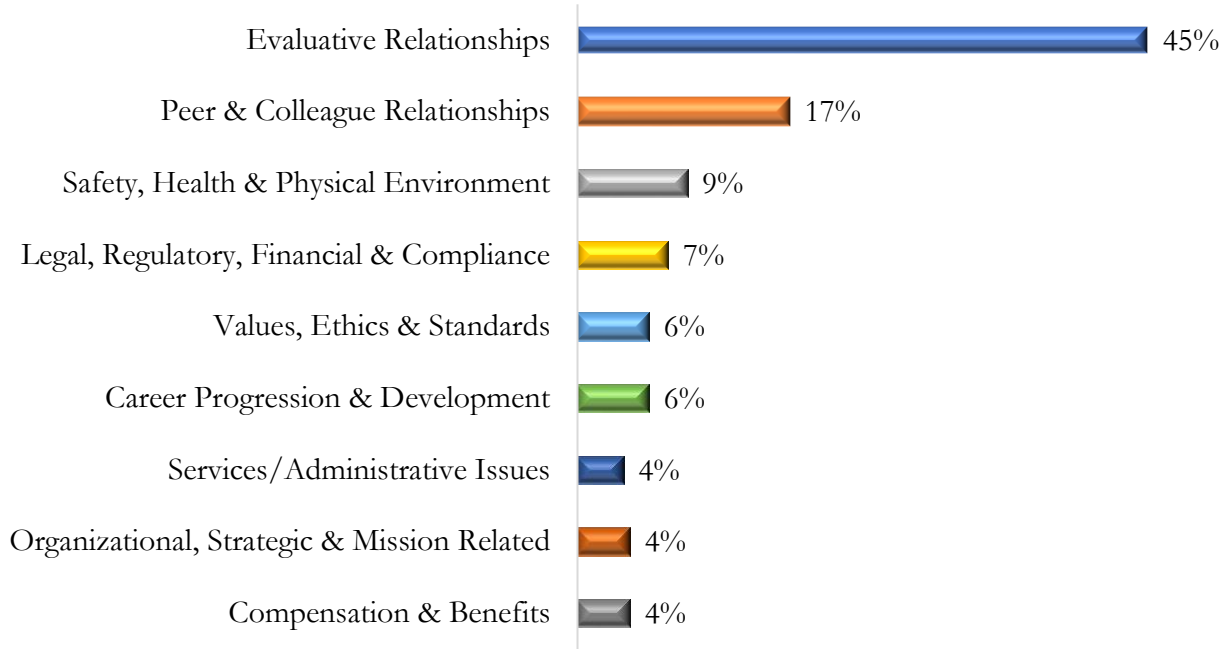
Coaching: Working directly with the visitor on their own communication and conflict resolution strategies to help them resolve conflicts without direct OEO intervention or involvement.

Facilitated Conversation: Convening a large group dialogue or listening session designed to help resolve issues within the group itself, or to raise concerns to leadership.

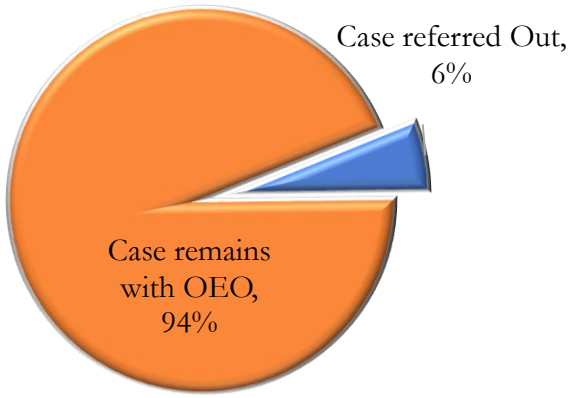
Mediation: Facilitating a small group dialogue, usually 2-3 people only, designed to help the individuals involved address harms they have caused to each other.

***Training Offered*: Working with the leadership in a unit to identify issues within their unit that could be improved or resolved through a training or other capacity building effort developed by the OEO and customized to unit-specific needs. This was included in our first two Annual Reports but has since become standard practice in all cases.

IOA Reporting Categories



The OEO practices to the standards of the International Ombud Association (IOA). We track issues using the IOA Standard Reporting Categories. Each case may include more than one category. For example, in a case where an individual is upset about their relationship with their manager and their performance evaluation, we might characterize the case as being both an issue of "Evaluative Relationship" but also, if their performance evaluation could hinder future career prospects, might be an issue of "Career Progression & Development." Full descriptions of IOA categories are available at the IOA website.

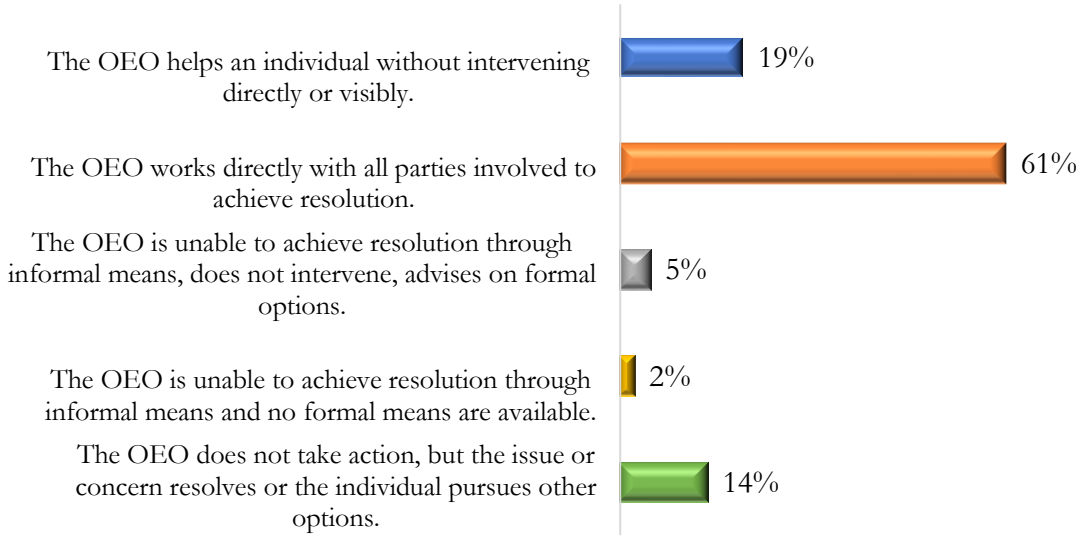


In 94% of our cases, we attempted informal resolution. Some cases were still referred out later to a formal process, but the vast majority resolved through informal intervention. There were a very small number of cases where the resolution sought was not possible through informal process, and in those 6% of cases, we made the referral without any attempted OEO intervention.

Case Outcomes

We track outcomes for cases in several ways. First, we track how the OEO intervened; whether visibly, behind the scenes, or through referral to formal processes. We refer to this below as "Case Outcomes by OEO Intervention." Our goal is to understand how we engage with cases and to see whether we are consistent in our intervention strategies. Second, we track whether the visitor's preferred respectful resolution was achieved, which we refer to below as "Case Outcomes by Respectful Resolution". Our goal is to track and monitor whether the individuals who are coming to the office are achieving the resolution they want by engaging with the OEO process.

Case Outcomes by OEO Intervention

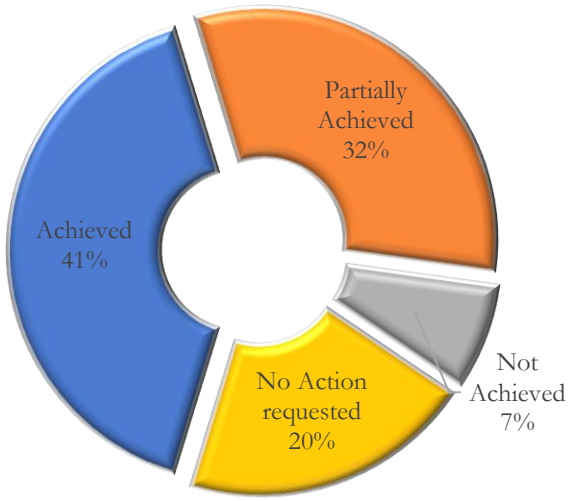


Although not specifically stated, it is our common practice in all cases to maintain a database of case trends and track emerging and ongoing systemic issues. We then continuously report on those trends to leadership. We also regularly conduct policy and process review in cases to see whether there was an unintended consequence that could be avoided through a policy change. Included in the 2019 Annual Report were case examples highlighting each type of intervention, which can help explain what the interventions look like in practice. You can access that report here.

From our 2020 report to our 2021 report, the most dramatic change to case outcomes by intervention was in the number of cases where our office worked directly with all parties involved, which went from 42% to 61%. The number of cases where our office helped without intervening visibly or directly went from 32% to 19%. We have been more likely in the last year to intervene directly rather than intervening behind the scenes. This is because over time, as our office has become more visible and built more trust with staff, we have been able to get our visitor's permission to intervene directly in more cases to help achieve our visitor's respectful resolutions.

Case Outcomes by Respectful Resolution

Each person who visits the office is asked about their respectful resolution to the concerns they raised. We adapt our subsequent interventions to achieve a resolution that is as close as possible to their requested resolution. In some cases, we are able to get exactly what was asked for, whether it is a better working relationship and communication with a supervisor, or an opportunity to better understand the expectations of their role, etc. In other cases, we are unable to achieve the desired resolution. In every case reported to us, we learn about our leaders, units, departments, and the larger system and we use that learning to help improve those areas as needed. If our assessment leads us to believe that leadership or process change is warranted, we raise the matter directly with department directors or, at times, with the Mayor's office.



Our audits tell us whether we achieved a full resolution, partial resolution, no resolution, or no action was requested in the cases we have had throughout the year. 'Achieved' in the chart refers to the 41%of cases where we achieved the exact respectful resolution requested by the visitor. In many cases, respectful resolution to our visitors means improved communication, better relationships, or clearer understanding of job expectations and we are often able to achieve those resolutions through informal intervention. 'Partially Achieved' means that in 32% of our cases we were able to achieve some of the visitor's desired resolution. Many of our Partially Achieved cases actually represent where we were able to do a lot within the bounds of an informal process but may have needed to do a referral to another resource to get the rest of the visitor's goals achieved.

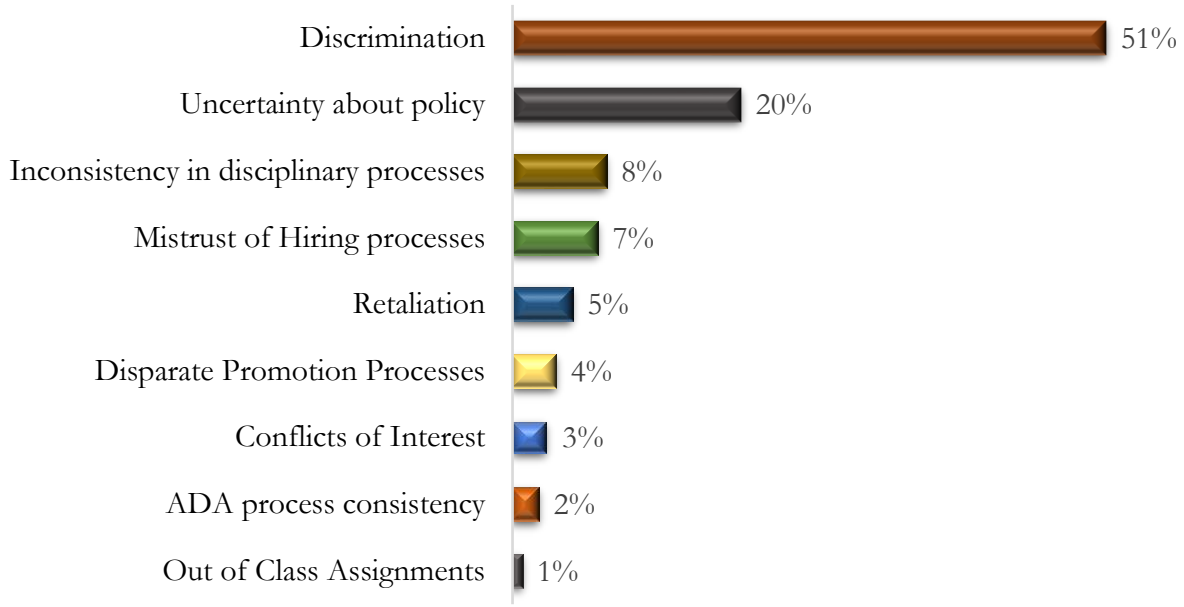
In other cases, respectful resolution as defined by the visitor might include disciplinary action or dismissal of a leader or coworker. 'Not Achieved' means that in 7% of our cases we did not achieve any part of the desired resolution of the visitor. It is not necessarily a failure of our office, but instead a recognition that we are not always the best resource to achieve the outcomes requested, such as termination or formal discipline. In reviewing the 7% of our cases where we noted 'Not Achieved', 80% of those cases either directly asked for the dismissal of a leader or staff member or required a formal process to achieve the desired resolution. In a few others, the resolution required ongoing engagement from OEO, such as building more collaborative leadership relationships with staff. In those cases, we may have attempted to get to this resolution through coaching or other feedback to leaders. However, that process can take time, and there have been cases where the visitor did not see the improvements they wished to and separated from their positions before we could achieve a full resolution in their case. In cases where a dismissal is sought, we do our best to advise on formal options where visitors can report their concerns and initiate a formal process that could lead to more formal disciplinary action up to and including termination.

From the 2020 Report to this year's Report, the biggest change in our numbers is in the number of cases noted as 'No Action Requested' – in 2020, those were 12% of our case outcomes, and they have grown to be about 20% of our cases in this year's Report. 'No Action Requested' cases are those where the visitor wishes to report an issue but does not want to follow up to complete an intake or provide requested information to our office. Part of the growth in the percentage of 'No Action Requested' cases is likely due to increased outreach. As our office has conducted more outreach, staff at the City are beginning to understand our role and becoming aware of our office. Knowing that our office is responsible for systemic tracking, individuals have reported concerns as a means to let us know that there is a systemic issue, even when they do not want any action taken in their particular situation.

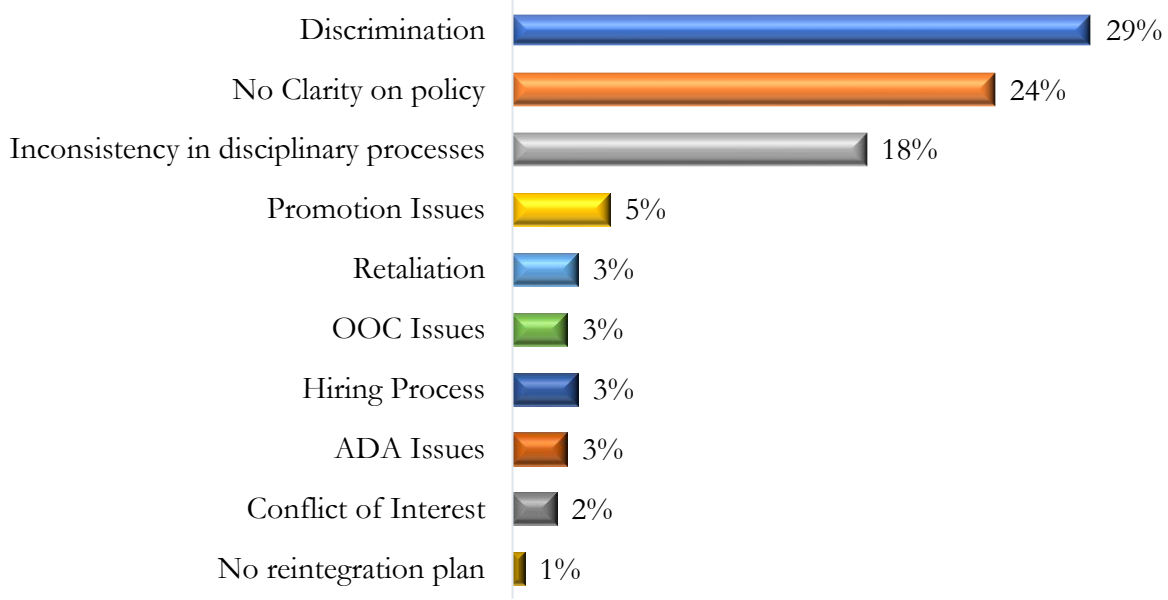
Many reports are submitted to document a concern, rather than a request for action in a specific case. For example, staff may submit a report to share their concerns about a policy change, as some staff did during the implementation of the vaccine mandate or other COVID related policy changes, which comprised about 4% of our cases in the 2021 year. The report itself may indicate that they know we likely cannot make any changes to the policy, but that they want our office to be aware of unintended impacts of that policy so we can push for systemic change. While we want to intervene in some way to improve the situation for every case that is brought to us, there are some cases where staff have indicated that they do not want intervention, and we respect their autonomy to guide the conflict and their situation as they see fit. We take all the information they provide and track it during our audit of systemic issues and attempt to use that information to promote positive systemic change wherever we can.

Systemic Trends

2020 Trends



2021 Trends



Changes to Systemic Trends in 2021

Both COVID-19 and social reckonings with systemic racism continued to play a major role in systemic trends noted by the OEO in this last year. Over time, fatigue over the pandemic has caused major mental health challenges for many City staff (and indeed, for the City and community that our staff serve). In recognition of those ongoing mental health tolls, our office has pivoted to developing and providing Trauma Informed Care trainings to City staff in the last year, which will be described in more detail in the Capacity Building section. This is an attempt to provide employees with a basic understanding of how trauma impacts individuals around them, and how it can be exhibited in behaviors of their coworkers and members of the public. Our hope is to provide staff with some tools to respond in situations where they believe past trauma has triggered a reaction.

Additionally, the pandemic has continued to put pressure on City systems and resources, with the timelines for return to work continually shifting for teleworking staff, but also with the vaccine mandate put in place by the Governor in October of 2021. This mandate is in line with the known health and safety information at the time and matches similar mandates at the County and State levels. However, the mandate still put pressure on staff related to compliance with the mandate, on managers to provide coverage where their teams were short-staffed after a vaccine related staff separation, and on department HR and administrative staff to develop policies and protocols in a short timeline to implement the mandate. Our City will continue to feel the reverberating impacts of COVID related pressures on the workforce for some time.

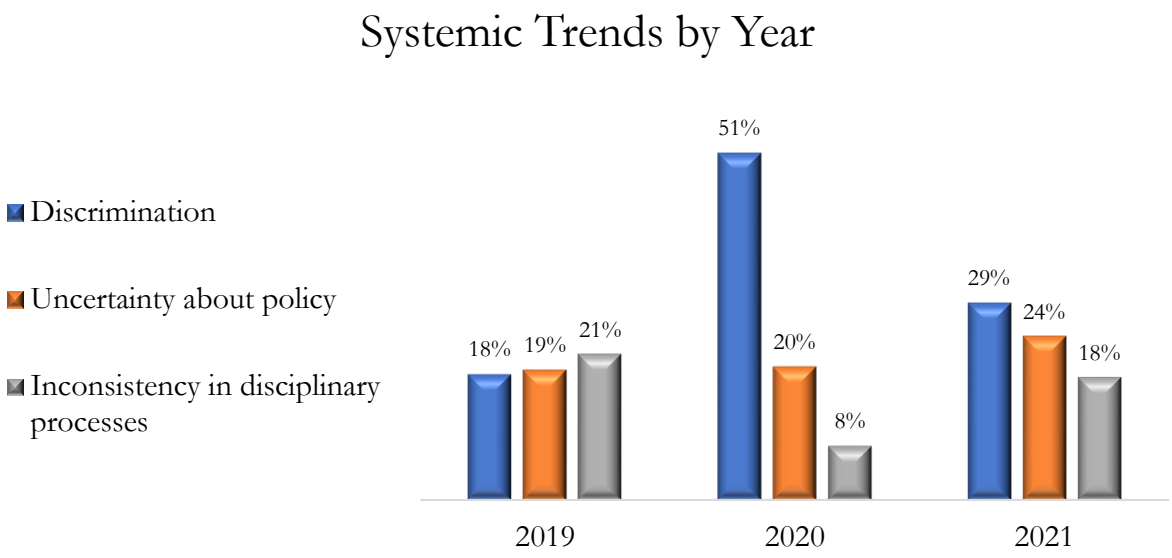
Over the last year and through the election cycle, we saw continued societal reckonings with mistrust in governmental systems, impact of manipulative elements of propaganda and a clear ideological schism in our society, as evidenced in the January 6th attack on the United States Capitol Complex. This mistrust, and the extreme social divides in our country, continue to impact staff at the City. In our office, we have seen cases where an individual staff's political affiliation or their views on systemic racism contribute to how they show up at work and can impact their relationships with colleagues and coworkers. Isolation from one another and from social connection with one another have made it difficult to overcome these divisions.

As staff begin to return to work, concerns about equity, fairness, and who has access to resources will be exacerbated by the knowledge that our systems continue to have inherent racism and oppression that require a more unified workforce instead of one that is riddled with political discord. Our office will continue to partner with City staff to increase dialogue, promote connection, and focus on healing in the coming year. There is immense power in dialogue. But for conversations and discourse to take effect, we must invite folks to the table as equal stakeholders to solutions. Our judgement of each other is our biggest hurdle to earnest dialogue. The difference in percentage drop in any trend highlighted by our previous reports could rightly be attributed to remote work and pandemic related changes within the workforce. Our fundamental issues are persistent and worthy of a cohesive response.

Top 3 Systemic Trends

The Office of the Employee Ombud has a mandate to track systemic trends and to monitor how those trends are changing over time. As discussed in the Accountability and Impact Section, each case is reviewed during regular case audits. We consider as part of those audits whether we are seeing common patterns and themes across our cases that indicate an existing or emerging systemic trend. We then work with our collaborators and departmental points of contact to determine whether they are seeing similar trends in their units or departments.

We monitor trends both in terms of verifiable, quantifiable trends, and in terms of qualitative reports to our office. One example might be the number of cases where discrimination is directly referenced and a referral to a formal entity is made. However, we also track the cases where a visitor perceives discrimination or believes that unfairness in their case may be attributed to their race, gender, ethnicity, or some other identity factor. Three trends have been strongest since the OEO opened in 2019 and began tracking cases, and they are presented below with more detail into each trend and the changes to those numbers over time.



Discrimination, as we define it as a systemic trend, represents all cases where the visitor reports that their race, ethnicity, gender, disability, or some other identity factor is central to the conflict. This includes reports of microaggressions, racism, ageism, sexism, and harassment. Since our office does not conduct formal investigations, these are based on visitor perceptions alone, and are unverified. However, we track this as a distinct systemic trend because even the perception of discrimination can be as damaging to relationships as discrimination that is verified through formal investigation. One of the reasons this trend has shifted in 2021, down from 51% to 29%, is because we have begun to do more in-depth analysis of whether the central issue is actually a bias or discrimination issue, or whether it is the unfair or unclear implementation of policy or inconsistency in disciplinary action that is contributing adversely. Here is a case example to highlight this in more detail (names and identifying details changed to protect the identity of the individuals involved):

A staff member, Jane, has seniority in the group and is the only BIPOC individual in her unit. Jane recently applied for an OOC leadership opportunity in her unit and was not selected. Instead, a more junior member of the team was chosen. Jane believed that her lack of access to the OOC opportunity is because of her race. However, when she went through a formal process, she was told that there was no finding of discrimination. When the OEO reviewed her concerns and talked to both HR and her management, it became clear that there were concerns about Jane's leadership skills because of a pattern of unprofessional behavior towards colleagues and coworkers, even including a recent incident of unprofessional behavior towards a colleague. Those concerns were not documented in formal discipline, as her management did not believe they rise to that level. However, none of Jane's management provided her with coaching either informally or in any of her performance evaluations. Therefore, Jane did not know what to improve and how to be more competitive for the next OOC opportunity. Because of this, Jane believed that it was primarily her race that was driving her management's decision. In this case, her management's failure to provide coaching in a performance management process was an issue of unfair/unclear implementation, even though they were be correctly following all the OOC policies and performance management policies.

As highlighted in the case above, there can be overlap between uncertainty about policy and discrimination, in that a visitor may perceive that a policy is being unfairly implemented in their case due to their identity and is therefore discrimination, when in fact the issue is one of implementation. Our office has defined uncertainty about policy to include unwritten, undefined, poorly or unfairly implemented policies.

Finally, our office continues to track inconsistency of disciplinary actions as an ongoing trend, which dropped in 2020 but has reemerged as we reoriented our trends tracking in 2021. Inconsistency in disciplinary action is often attributed to race, and it can be challenging to determine when a case represents an issue of discrimination or lack of consistency or both.

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Recommendations

Our office has provided recommendations in each of our previous reports. We will continue to highlight the solutions we believe would help address ongoing systemic trends and help improve staff perception around lack of clarity, consistency, and discrimination by creating fairer processes and involving staff in decision-making.

Solution #1:

The City should devote substantial resources to collecting Citywide data about disciplinary action and, eventually, to developing a consistent citywide guideline for disciplinary action.

Collecting Citywide Data

Concerns about consistency in disciplinary action across departments have existed for a long time at the City. The City currently has no centralized means to collect data on departmental disciplinary action. OEO has begun working with HRIU to explore the feasibility of creating a City-wide database of disciplinary actions and their context. HRIU has already started collecting data related to reported cases of misconduct and OEO intends to add a new layer of inquiry to this effort to determine how City departments have addressed incidents of Hate motivated conduct in the past few years. In addition to a description of the incidents, this database will include demographic information to help identify any patterns of inequity in disciplinary outcomes. The data will also alert us to areas within the organization where there are high instances of hate and bias motivated misconduct. This information will not be used to reward or penalize individual units or departments, instead, it will inform policy recommendations and focus capacity building efforts.

A functioning proof-of-concept dashboard has been constructed to present to leadership stakeholders. This alpha version contains data from SPU, and additional departments will be added as partnerships are developed. The dashboard can be modified by individual users to meet their reporting needs, but raw data will only be available to HRIU and OEO. Even in exploratory stages, this project present significant opportunities and challenges to the City. Government entities are traditionally averse to data portals that illustrate management gaps and areas of improvement. But launching a project like this would set Seattle apart from other municipalities as we will be introducing more consistent guidelines for corrective actions that serve as a deterrent as well.

Developing a City Guideline

Until the City can collect accurate and consistent data about disciplinary action, we will be unable to address consistency in disciplinary action and will continue to have systemic issues surrounding corrective action. Once we have centralized data, the City should focus on improving consistency in disciplinary action by creating a Citywide guideline to discipline. This would reduce concerns about unfairness and enhance clarity for all staff on disciplinary processes, but would particularly provide guidance for prospective sanctions, and give managers more support and structure to follow when determining what disciplinary action is warranted. Providing minimum standards to managers would

help them prevent conflicts from escalating to disciplinary action or other policy violations. As things stand, identical incidences of abuse of city resources, for example, would likely lead to strikingly dissimilar disciplinary outcomes in different City departments.

Name and Respond to Acts of Discrimination

The City needs to be consistent in how we name and respond to acts of discrimination or retaliation. Expected and standard procedures should be created and communicated to staff. These procedures should be initiated in as expedient a manner as possible, and focus on three key actions:

1) Acknowledge that harm occurred, even if the extent of the harm may be determined only after an investigation has taken place.
2) Circumvent continued harm by creating distance between the victim and the implicated party.
3) Keep stakeholders in the loop until the investigation wraps up. Managers can maintain confidentiality while keeping the victim informed that some corrective action/a remedy is still being worked upon.

Standardizing responses to such conduct specifically, as discussed above, would serve two distinct purposes: first, as a deterrent to potential actors, who would know the likely consequences of their actions, and second, as a means of offering some transparency to the victims of harm, who would be able to accurately predict what the response might be to their reports. It is our assessment that attempting to contextualize why discriminatory conduct occurred, or why someone acted in retaliation can also impact the victim repeatedly. For example, an employee who is a non-native speaker of English reported to HR that their performance evaluation is unduly harsh and doesn't capture the success they have had in leading a project. The HR colleague promised to look into it and later followed up to share that the manager really struggles with understanding foreign accents and wishes everyone on the team could speak perfectly. Not only is this explanation an excuse for bad leadership, it adds another layer of disrespect to the victim. Our attempts to name and address discrimination need to be resolute and without apology.

Solution #2:

The City should develop a comprehensive leadership support structure including training, mentorship programs, and coaching for all people leaders at the City.

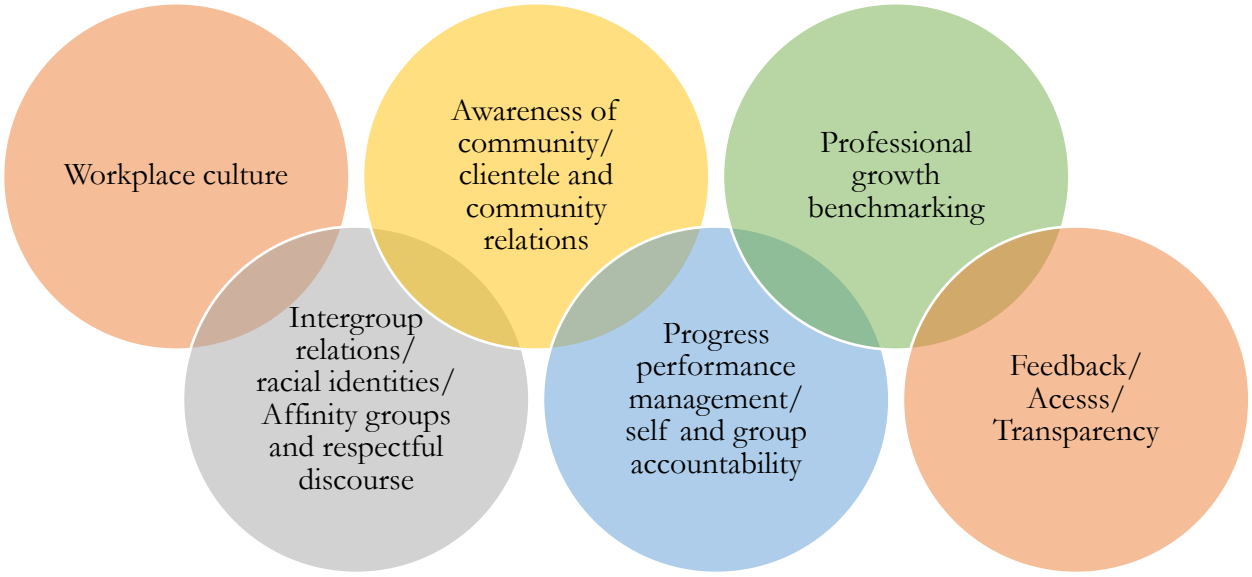
Support Current Efforts

One important solution to many of our recurring issues is to create minimum and progressive standards for people management and supervisory stewardship. Not all people who meet minimum qualifications for a position are equipped to be good people managers. It is reasonable to expect that seniority would be a determining factor in upward mobility in a unit, but we must not promote people into managerial positions without equipping them with minimum standards of care, growth and wellbeing of staff. SDHR Workforce Equity has continued to expand their training programs

for leaders, and those efforts will create more consistency among managers to respond to ongoing challenges faced by staff.

Incorporate an Inclusive Excellence Model

In order to establish minimum standards for effective people management, the City should institutionalize an Inclusive Excellence Model of leadership training that is available and expected of all managers and supervisors including leaders serving in executive roles. An Inclusive Excellence Model typically serves as a certification in following key areas of sound leadership:



Trained through these minimum standards, each manager should be evaluated against the following key abilities:

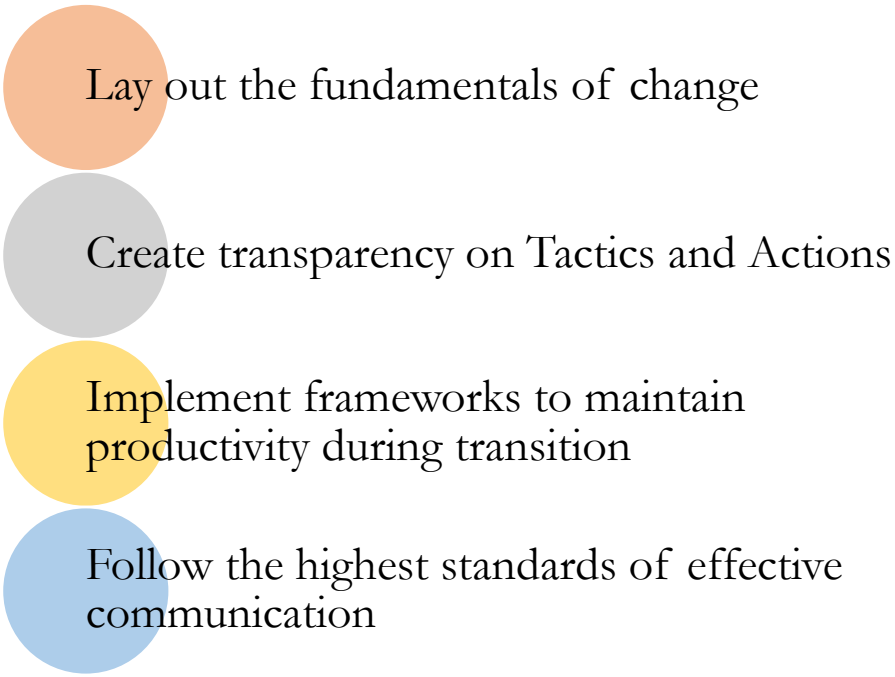
1. Vision setting/Team Goals
2. Being able to communicate effectively, especially on difficult topics
3. Trusting staff and being trustworthy
4. Showing empathy
5. Being approachable
6. Being decisive
7. Being able to address conflict
8. Motivating the team
9. Demonstrating accountability for self and others
10. Problem solving
11. Taking responsibility for staff skills/professional growth

Focus on Change Management

An enterprise the size of our City must be prepared for change and should be able to execute it with seamless efficiency. One of the most common complaints our office receives from staff is that change in leadership, policy or procedure is too frequent, poorly communicated and at times chaotic. OEO wants to step up in our efforts to serve as a communication platform for transition and change management.

As an example, as the City developed a new Dispatch unit as it separated from SPD, we held listening sessions to understand how staff felt about the move. We asked: 'What challenges and points of pride existed for them prior to the transition?' 'What kind of leader they would like to see in place?' And, most importantly, we asked: 'What should the new leader fight for in terms of long term and short-term goals?' We communicated our learning to the Mayor's team, gave guidance during the selection of the department head and maintained regular communication with the new leadership to ensure that they can meet the staff needs/expectations head on.

Our aim is to serve City departments during stages of transition by helping them to target their actions in the following critical areas:



At the unit level, we urge department leaders and managers to attain change management skills. An emphasis on change management training would be helpful to many managers who are asked to manage during dynamic times. Over the last year, the City has been through numerous transitions, from 40% of the workforce going to telework, to reckonings with systemic racism, to a return to work amidst the ongoing challenges posed by the pandemic. Leaders are called upon to work within a dynamic and everchanging system. Change management training and support would allow for leaders to help guide their staff more successfully as changes arise.

Expand Training and Coaching Support Resources

More training for managers, and a coaching resource as well would help prevent issues of uncertainty about policy and lack of consistency of disciplinary action due to implementation issues. Almost 10% of our cases were directly related to an issue of lack of role clarity, expectations setting, or involved ongoing coaching provided ineffectively by management to their employees.

Related to training, a coaching resource for all managers and staff would give more opportunities to improve implementation of many of the policies and procedures. Again, the issue is not that there are not written policies or procedures, but that the implementation of those is inconsistent, which leads to procedural unfairness. As the case example in our Systemic Trends section above illustrates, an inability or unwillingness to openly share concerns about a staff member's performance or to highlight areas of growth for staff leads to ongoing challenges in the managerial relationship. There is a continued issue of lack of training among managers highlighted in our previous reports, and we have highlighted it again in our 2021 report to continue to push for expanded training for managers.

Coaching support for managers and staff would also help reinforce trainings by giving managers an individualized platform to develop their own management style and become comfortable implementing their training. The OEO will be working to expand our training offerings in the coming year and will be asking the City to provide additional resources to make coaching more available to managers. We believe coaching support would significantly address the ongoing trends we have reported in previous reports surrounding lack of disciplinary action, uncertainty about policy, discrimination, and OOC assignments.

Solution #3:

Develop a transition management model for consistent use throughout the City.

Intentional and Inclusive

Related to leadership training and ongoing coaching is our recommendation to develop an intentional and inclusive process for transition management. As leadership changes, inviting conversations about leadership transition should be a consistent practice, but should also include larger conversations about preexisting needs, upcoming needs, etc. Where possible, a transition management model would find ways to acknowledge that change is traumatic. This should occur prior to putting a new unit or leader in place.

A transition management model would also include intentional involvement of staff in the hiring process for new leaders. For example, wherever possible, the City should provide a public forum with all team members for every finalist candidate for a managerial role and then solicit the team's feedback on the eligibility of each finalist. Each year, mistrust of hiring processes, frustration about OOC opportunities and promotion issues have been distinct trends that we have tracked apart from uncertainty about policy. In the 2021 year, those trends comprised 11% of our cases. A transition management model that includes a more inclusive hiring process would give employees a better chance to view that process directly to build trust and would also create more intentional professional and career development opportunities for staff to further their careers.

Create Consistency in Policy Implementation

Lack of clarity in policy and lack of training and mentorship for new leaders also creates inconsistencies in policy implementation as new leaders come on board and do not follow the established policies and procedures. An intentional transition model would also include considerations of succession planning to ensure more robust planning around onboarding our new leaders quickly and ensuring that policy implementation does not falter during a leadership transition.

Solution #4:

Develop reintegration protocols for staff returning from leave.

Both inconsistency in discipline and uncertainty about policy are major trends, but we believe there is an added layer of reintegration challenges that is harder to discern within each trend. The City does not have a comprehensive established reintegration protocol for staff returning from leave and the OEO has handled many cases where issues of reintegration are contributing to the conflict. Reintegration, simply put, is the process by which a staff member returns from leave and rejoins their team. This includes any type of leave, from administrative leave for an investigation to FML, parental or other disability, illness or personal leaves.

Staff returning from these leaves, their managers and their colleagues all experience and have reported ongoing challenges with the transition to the OEO. Particularly with admin leave related to an investigation, there is an intricate balance between maintaining established HR and legal protocols for confidentiality and not giving the appearance of shrinking from the problem or trying to make it disappear. Any conduct that leads to serious discipline leaves an imprint on the entire team. One of the tools rarely used at our city is the application of a reintegration plan for employees returning from discipline. Such a plan could include:

- Healing circles before and after discipline
- Prevention planning/inviting staff to strategize on how best to prevent the same harm
- Communicating the extent of a problem before and after discipline has been carried out

Particularly where there has been a formal investigation where all the staff members in a unit have been questioned and a specific staff member has been put on leave, rebuilding trust and team camaraderie can be very challenging. There are limitations to what can be discussed among team members, and this stifles their ability to communicate their concerns about coming back together as a team. There is often unresolved conflict, unaired concerns, and ongoing frustrations that will make collaboration difficult.

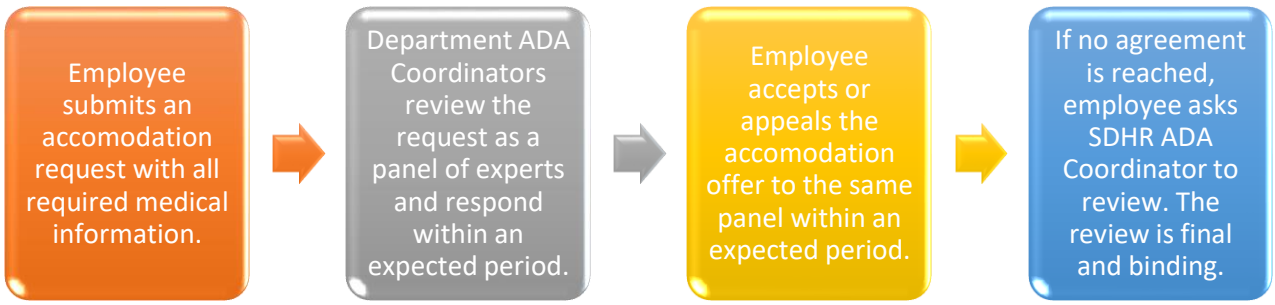
The OEO has continued our work developing a reintegration protocol that all managers can utilize with their staff to help create a more restorative approach for everyone on their teams. We will be working to finalize and roll this reintegration protocol out for use throughout the City in 2022.

Solution #5:
The City should streamline ADA processes.

Although ADA issues have made up a small number of our cases in the past year, less than 5%, the cases themselves tend to be challenging and complex. In at least half the cases, numerous meetings with management, HR, and the impacted staff were required to resolve the conflict. In all the cases, there were issues of training, lack of sensitivity, and misunderstandings that exacerbated the conflict.

In addition, a disproportionate number of cases that involve ADA accommodations have gone from the informal process to litigation, and there appears to be some issue of risk to the City. Streamlining ADA processes would provide clarity of process to City employees but would also create more consistency in those processes.

The City used to provide centralized ADA resources and should return to doing so for all departments. If ADA case management were centralized, all requests for accommodations could be processed in a uniform manner in consultation with department HR and within a prescribed timeframe. OEO thinks the following structure would help streamline known concerns with our current ADA protocols:



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Capacity Building

Supporting capacity building efforts during a global health crisis continues to be a journey of discovery and adaptation for OEO. Throughout the pandemic, OEO has strived to provide effective capacity building resources by redesigning our service delivery model, primarily adapting to digital infrastructure and making sure employees are able to widely access and utilize our resources. All our training modules, for example, had to be reviewed and revamped with a "digital makeover" to cater to the changing needs of many of our teleworking workforce. The content of the trainings and other interventions is also more responsive to the realities of working through the pandemic (and its attendant mandates), national and local political changes, rising costs of living and diminished personal interactions of City employees.

Over the last year, OEO continued to offer City-wide trainings almost every week; we increased individual coaching engagements with supervisors and employees grappling with work environment changes; we collaborated with the Seattle Office of Civil Rights (SOCR) and the Workforce Equity Learning and Development team to synchronize our capacity building efforts and we submitted a proposal to the State Legislature to protect certain OEO records from disclosure. A more detailed overview of OEO capacity building initiatives is given below.

Interdepartmental Collaboration Group

The Directors of Human Resources (HR), SOCR and OEO identified an opportunity to maximize efficiency by openly sharing capacity building strategies and lessons learned from our respective offices. The main goal is to create a robust and responsive learning development system that cuts across the departments and individual functions. Through expanded and coordinated efforts, OEO is working collaboratively to strengthen positive workplace practices and to enhance employee engagement.

The representatives of the group consist of content developers who meet regularly to tap into each other's knowledge repositories and fashion a more integrated capacity building strategy. For example, after reviewing existing and upcoming trainings from each of our offices, we are now able to structure our content in a way that compliments each other, and we can make training recommendations to employees in a way that provides them with a more congruent learning experience.

Coaching

Employee relations have undergone an unprecedented metamorphosis in the last couple of years. For instance, there is noticeable uncertainty on how to hold each other accountable, measure productivity and provide care for each other in a post-pandemic world. We recognized early on that there was a need and that there was value in equipping supervisors and non-supervisory staff with new capabilities that meet the needs of a post-pandemic workforce. We increased our individual coaching engagements with a view to integrating knowledge and best practice skills in this new and evolving work environment. Having OEO as a confidential coaching resource has alleviated the stress and anxiety of City employees having to handle changes on their own. While we recognize and

embrace the utility of increased coaching arrangements, our efforts in this regard are limited. As a five-member Department, we must be very selective in our approach and we also identified the need to have a more uniform approach in our coaching engagements. For this reason, we hope to build the internal coaching capacity of OEO by adopting a more standardized coaching process that would objectively cater to who is eligible for coaching and will also apply a consistent coaching model by members of the OEO team. We will be focusing on developing external partnerships in the coming year to help train our team and increase our ability to provide consistent coaching.

Training

Our training curriculum is designed with an acute awareness that elements of power, privilege and race present themselves in all conflicts and must be acknowledged in any type of mitigation strategy. Based on that awareness, we have come up with trainings which are meant to address occurring conflict and to minimize future conflict. Our training package may be regarded as separate building blocks of our conflict mitigation hub. The trainings can be taken sequentially or independently; with each completed step making us more adept at handling conflict in positive ways leading to an overall improvement of our workplace environment and culture. During this reporting period, OEO delivered trainings to a total of 1,697 employees. We also added 3 new topics to our curricula for a total of 8 City-wide and unit specific trainings on the following subjects:

- Bystander Intervention
- Preventing Harassment and Discrimination in the Workplace
- Conflict Management
- Cultural Intelligence
- Preventing Racism at Work
- Trauma Informed Care
- Effective Management
- Giving and Receiving Feedback

A detailed description of each of the OEO trainings can be found here. All of our trainings have been received exceptionally well and we continually revise the content and its delivery based on participant feedback. The following are samples of participant testimonials:

Bystander Intervention:

I really enjoyed it and would recommend it to anyone. One comment I made to a colleague afterwards was that [the trainers] were engaging and it was like being in a room with colleagues and not having someone talk to the team. Many thanks.

Everyone needs to take this training, practice, practice, practice, and repeat the training almost every year. Honestly, people will find ways/loop holes to get around the rules. We must be vigilant in identifying new behavior that may hinder or impact positive culture from being fully realized.

Preventing Harassment and Discrimination at Work:

It's a good start. And our respective teams/units need to do the ongoing work to integrate the learning into our everyday practices

I would recommend this training to my colleagues.

Conflict Management:

I thought the different styles of communication were helpful to understand where I am coming from and those, I'm communicating with might be coming from. It will help me in my approach to conflict.

Highly recommended! Excellent training.

Cultural Intelligence:

Important training to take especially as City employees.

I'd recommend this to colleagues, especially those who are unfamiliar with the concept of cultural intelligence. Even if you don't learn anything new, taking the time to share space and be in conversation with colleagues about this topic is a valuable experience.

Preventing Racism at Work:

Good ideas, well delivered. Very informative trainer(s) and a good learning environment that felt both accountable and like a safe space for white people to sharpen their anti-racist tools for the work place.

I'm looking forward to sharing with my team and telling them about the resources and conversations we had in the training.

Trauma Informed Care

I would say that it is a good training about a critical topic, and that the training is still being refined - which is another reason to sign up for it, to help the development.

I thought the training was effective at delivering information, but for implementation, I always believe in highly discussion-based training where folks can imagine themselves in the subject matter, so more of that would be great.

Effective Management

I would recommend this training for all staff.

[OEO trainers] were great and engaging. Take their trainings.

Giving and Receiving Feedback

The training on giving and receiving feedback was a holistic approach and provided very useful and relevant tips for the workplace and life in general. The trainer was very knowledgeable and relatable. He went at a good pace and kept the audience entertained, interested and engaged. I look forward to future trainings with [OEO].

Very effective and useful training. I hope we will offer to our front-line supervisors as well.

Our Assistant Ombud for Capacity Building was invited to discuss Bystander Intervention Strategies on the show Seattle Now on KUOW in April 2021. Following that appearance, our office received several requests to deliver OEO trainings to multiple external entities. We were able to respond in a limited manner due to our current mandate of serving City of Seattle employees only, but the high level of public interest in our work may warrant discussion on a potential outward facing role for the OEO in future.

Legislative Proposal

At the heart of any organizational capacity building process is the desire to make its recipients more effective at discharging the stated mission and objectives of the institution. With a view to improving workplace culture and promoting equity in City processes, the OEO has been tasked with providing a secure data in-take and management system that is separate from other formal reporting mechanisms and that provides City employees with a safe, confidential space to freely discuss any workplace concern, including harassment, discrimination and other forms of misconduct.

Over the course of the last year, we identified a way to bolster our own capacity to effectively discharge our mandate. We submitted a proposal to the State legislature seeking to create a law that would specifically enhance the level of confidentiality that we can offer City employees. OEO must be able to provide a safe way to discuss undesirable, unsafe or illegal behavior and serve as a credible resource for employees. The benefits of the OEO can only be realistically achieved if the office is assured of a high degree of confidentiality. Confidentiality is what motivates people to share issues of genuine concern without the fear of negative repercussions as a result. This confidentiality needs to extend to materials and records that OEO uses to discharge its function and which may be misinterpreted or misused to further a party's individual interests if we are forced to release sensitive records. Further, compelled disclosure of confidential information by one party may destroy the perceived neutrality of OEO and deter others from trusting OEO as a confidential resource.

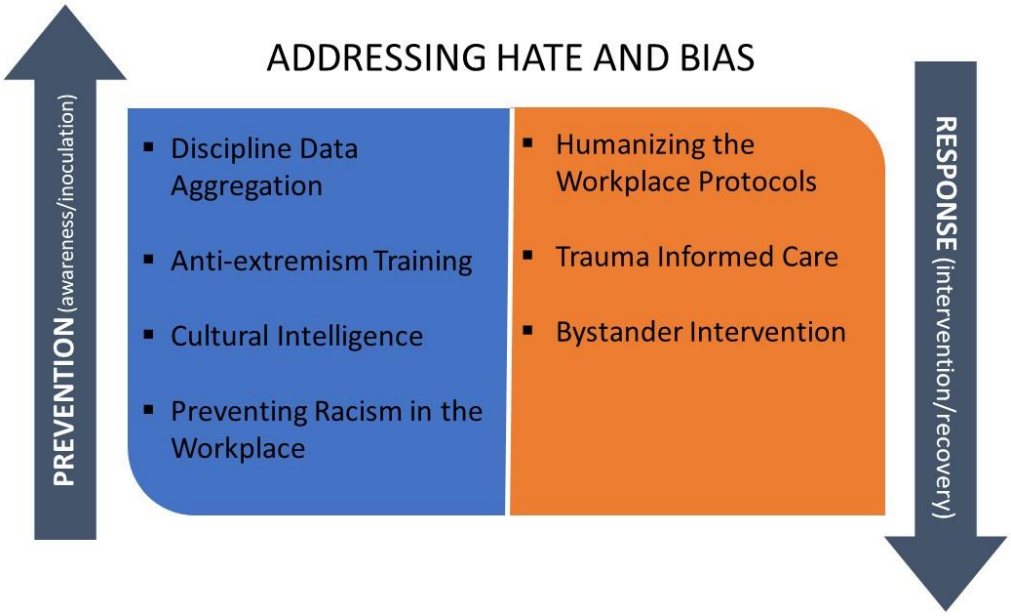
Our request to the legislature is not unusual. Indeed, similar concerns have been recognized and legislative protections accorded to other governmental Ombud offices such as the Office of the Corrections Ombud {WAC 138-10-050}, the Long-Term Care Ombud Program {42.56.210(2) & WAC 388-01-120} and mediation communications {RCW 7.07.050(5) & RCW 7.07.070}. Similar protections have also been afforded to offices like ours at the federal level as well.

It is our hope that the State Legislature will consider our proposal favorably in the 2022 legislative session.

Hate Crimes Executive Order

Our ongoing response to Executive Order 2020-01: Addressing Hate Crimes and Crimes of Bias has already produced meaningful outcomes. With each step forward, the scale and complexity of the challenges we face becomes clearer. We remain committed to effecting positive, organization-wide change while leading interdepartmental efforts to reduce hate and bias in our communities.

Our executive order related activities in 2021 were guided by a working group consisting of leadership representatives from 12 departments: HSD, SPR, ART, LAW, OCR, SPD, SHR, DEEL, DON, OLS, SFD, and the Mayor's Office. Discussion at our monthly meetings has been centered on observed trends related to hate and bias crimes and the best course of action for combating this pervasive issue. We focused our collective energy on hate/bias prevention and response through training, advocacy and policy recommendations informed by comprehensive data analysis.



City-wide discipline data aggregation

OEO has begun working with HRIU to establish and maintain a City-wide database of disciplinary actions and their context. In addition to a description of the incidents, this database will include demographic information to help identify any patterns of inequity in disciplinary outcomes. The data will also alert us to areas within the organization where there are high instances of hate and bias motivated misconduct. This information will not be used to reward or penalize individual units or departments. Instead, it will inform policy recommendations and focus capacity building efforts.

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as partnerships are developed. The dashboard can be modified by individual users to meet their reporting needs, but raw data will only be available to HRIU and OEO.

Anti-extremism training

In 2021, OEO partnered with American University's Polarization and Extremism Research and Innovation Lab (PERIL) to develop a training pilot that aimed to prevent our employees from adopting extremist ideologies. PERIL uses an "inoculation" approach that equips participants with an awareness of the disinformation strategies and manipulation tactics used to radicalize people.

Three internal focus groups were held to give PERIL's team a deeper understanding of our organization's unique culture while identifying the types of issues our employees face related to hate and bias in the workplace. Overall, representatives from 13 departments provided critical insights that helped shape the pilot training experience. Most importantly, the focus groups revealed that differences in workplace culture across departments would likely affect how participants engaged with course content. With that in mind, we divided the pilot into 4 independent sessions to observe how different groups might respond to the content.

The pilot was a hybrid of video-based learning, self-led reading material and facilitated group discussion. Following completion of the pilot, PERIL collated the feedback gathered from pre and post-session assessments and the group discussions. After evaluating this information, they recommended against a city-wide rollout of the training without significant modification. While participant assessments did show that the training produced a positive change in anti-extremist sentiment, PERIL concluded that the inoculation approach alone would be inadequate to serve the needs of our ideologically diverse workforce. They prescribed coupling the inoculation approach with a more interventive strategy to address individuals who may have already been negatively influenced by polarizing propaganda.

OEO is currently developing a revised anti-extremism course incorporating PERIL's recommendations and feedback from the pilot group. We anticipate piloting this training in Q2 of 2022.

Humanizing the Workplace

Centuries of oppression and violence against Black and Indigenous People of Color in the U.S. has had a dramatic effect on our nation. Most recently, marginalized groups have endured continued gun violence—particularly the targeted mass shootings of minority communities, the ongoing political division that led to an angry mob attacking the United States Capitol and violence against Black Lives Matter protestors. These events, along with many others, have created repeated trauma for City employees. It is critical that we take measures to acknowledge trauma, connect it to a historical context of generational oppression and offer resources that are relevant to our diverse workforce.

In response to these circumstances, OEO has drafted a plan outlining standard operating procedures rooted in principles of Trauma Informed Care to respond to national, local and regional events that have a traumatic impact on City of Seattle employees. The plan entails the following:

1. **Trauma Response Action Committee (TRAC):** a group of City employees led by OEO's Hate Crimes and Crimes of Bias Prevention Coordinator who meet regularly to determine what issues/events merit a City-wide outreach.
2. **Standard Response Protocols**: the action committee develops a template for digital outreach that includes resources for managers, information related to bystander intervention, links to useful videos, and a list of City resources including OEO's newly developed Trauma Informed Care training.
3. **Customized Response**: the action committee determines that a traumatic event merits a unique response such as inviting an expert to speak about the issue, or holding safe spaces for employees to be in community, etc.

By adopting these protocols and installing a committee to guide efforts, we will increase the interdepartmental consistency and effectiveness of support in the aftermath of a traumatic event.

Trauma Informed Care

As a complement to our "Humanizing the Workplace" protocols, we have created a training course that will teach our workforce how to integrate Trauma Informed Care principles into their interactions with internal and external stakeholders at all levels. Research suggests that around 70% of adults have experienced at least one traumatic event at some point in their lives, and studies have linked these events to both behavioral health and chronic physical health conditions. As we serve communities, it is imperative that we realize the widespread impact of trauma and learn effective strategies to create safety, restore power and support the recovery of those who have been traumatized.

This training provides the tools to recognize the signs and symptoms of trauma in service providers, clients, families, staff and others involved. It helps managers, supervisors and colleagues respond by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies and procedures as they seek to actively resist re-traumatization. It also promotes awareness of the prevalence of communal trauma and its effects on various people groups.

The course was prescreened by members of City of Seattle's Learning & Development community (including RSJI representatives), and content was revised based on their feedback. A pilot will be held in February 2022with staff in DEEL.

2022 Priorities

Priority 1: Develop a Change Management Protocol for the City

- Establish procedures to ensure swift change management within City departments to address policy or leadership shifts.

Priority 2: Offer Executive coaching to City leaders

- OEO is set to launch an executive coaching service for City leaders at various levels of leadership in the organization. We will have trained and certified coaches available for City departments seeking a confidential/secure course correction and leadership development.

Priority 3: Pilot the Trauma Informed Care program

- Available only by request, this training will highlight the need for trauma informed responses to workplace issues stemming from a diverse and complex workforce/customer base that has unique and deeply traumatizing lived experiences.

Priority 4: Discipline data project

- Work in collaboration with HRIU to collect and analyse City data from across departments to learn how misconduct is reported, investigated and corrected. OEO will specifically focus on data from the past 4 years and assess what kind of hate motivated misconduct is reported at the City.

Priority 5: Streamline ADA processes

- OEO will work with SDHR on streamlining ADA processes across departments.

Priority 6: Pilot Anti-Extremism Training

- Based on the focus groups and pilot conducted with PERIL in 2021, revise training content and produce a new pilot for City staff in 2022.

Conclusion

The work of our 3rd year as an office was about transitions. We have watched externally as our City staff continue to work and grow as a collective and adapt to the changing needs of our City community. We have also experienced a number of staff transitions internally, adding new staff members and watching others depart for new adventures. There are so many opportunities that transition offers, and we continue to be hopeful in the team we are building and continuing to build even as we face new challenges.

We are grateful and humbled by the engagement and partnership from all City staff who have worked with our office in the past year and look forward to opportunities to engage with new staff in the coming one. We know that this next year will bring more transitions as we gradually begin a return to work with City staff. We will also be more able to reengage as a City community as in-person engagements become safer. One of the benefits of return to work is that it will decrease some of the social isolation we have all experienced during the pandemic. Our hope is that this also offers more opportunity for dialogue. There is immense power in dialogue, particularly where we are able to put aside our judgment of one another and to come to the table as equal stakeholders in finding solutions. We will continue to look for opportunities to partner with City staff to increase dialogue, promote connection, and focus on healing in the coming year. Office of Employee Ombud at the City of Seattle is and always will be an anti-racist, anti-bias and anti-harassment resource. We built ourselves from deep rooted convictions in equity and racial justice. Those convictions have only strengthened with time, and we are determined to do our utmost at making this City a respectful, healthy, workplace for all.