

A photograph of several purple crocus flowers with white and purple stripes, growing from dark mulch. The flowers are in various stages of bloom, with some buds still closed. The background is blurred, showing more flowers and green foliage.

MULTNOMAH COUNTY **WORKFORCE EQUITY STRATEGIC PLAN**

Workforce Equity Strategic Plan Renewal

March 2024

Table of Contents



Land Acknowledgement and Inclusively Leading with Race 4

Contributors. 6

Appreciation and Thanks 8

Letter from Chair Jessica Vega Pederson 9

Messages from the Executive Committee 11

A Message from Chief Diversity and Equity Officer Joy Fowler.....11

A Message from Chief Operating Officer Serena Cruz.....13

A Message from Chief Human Resources Officer Travis Brown.....14

What Is Included in This Document. 15

Introduction 16

Current State17

Methodology 18

Original Workforce Equity Strategic Plan18

Workforce Equity Strategic Plan Renewal.....19

Data and Evaluation20

Equity and Human-Centered Design21

Engagement 22

Workforce Equity Strategic Plan Enhancements 23

Workgroups 24

LGBTQIA2S+ Workgroup24

Disability Equity Workgroup26

Managers of Color Workgroup27

Initiative 1: Accountability. 28

Initiative 2: Infrastructure 31

Initiative 3: Retention 36

Initiative 4: Training 40

Initiative 5: Data 43

Initiative 6: Evaluation and Policy 45

Initiative 7: Compensation 46

Initiative 8: Standard Practice 47

Guidance on Implementation. 48

Land Acknowledgement and Inclusively Leading with Race



The [2021-22 Workforce Equity Strategic Plan Annual Report](#) included both Multnomah County's land acknowledgement and a reference to the value and importance of Inclusively Leading with Race. While highlighting these are critical to the work we do, it is equally important to take time to acknowledge people, place and history. We cannot talk about eliminating systemic barriers or improving the lives of marginalized communities without first paying homage to the traditional custom of land acknowledgements, which go back centuries for many Native American nations. Recognizing that we were not the first caretakers of this land and that generations of Native American people called, and continue to call, this place home, is essential to where we need to begin as a County and community. If we are intentional about equity and inclusion, being sincere in our words and actions will consistently result in respect for Native American people coming first.

Land Acknowledgement Statement

Multnomah County is built and conducts business on the forcefully ceded land of the Multnomah, Kathlamet and Clackamas Bands of Chinook Indian Nation; Tualatin Kalapuya; Molalla; and many other tribal communities who have always been stewards of this region.

What is now known as Multnomah County has long been a place of trade, commerce and cultural gathering for Native American people. Today, this place is home to thousands of Native people from hundreds of tribes across what is now the United States who continue their cultural practices and traditions.

As a governmental institution, we recognize our ongoing contribution to genocidal U.S. policy

and that our ability to live, work, and enjoy this region is a result of settler occupation of Northwest territory and the systemic removal of Native people from their traditional homelands.

We recognize that this land acknowledgment is only a small step in acknowledging the work to be done in partnership with Native communities and that Native-specific strategies and accountability measures must be woven into the words, policies and recommendations following this land acknowledgement.

We are committed to understanding our role in the ongoing dispossession of Indigenous peoples and taking meaningful actions to undo the injustices that have been perpetrated.

Inclusively Leading with Race

Multnomah County is not exempt from our nation's legacy of white supremacy culture in its institutions, policies, structures and systems of care. This legacy furthers racial disparities in our community and our workforce.

The County is committed to Inclusively Leading with Race¹ to fulfill our promise to address racism within our workforce and the community. The word “inclusively” ensures that communities with overlapping identities — and people for whom those identities compound disparities — are not overlooked. We must center the experiences of people of color within other marginalized identities. This call to action is intended to prepare the organization for changes in policies and practices that help ensure the voices of those most affected by racial inequity have a seat at the table to shape, influence, and lead decision-making around racial justice and equity work. Multnomah County strives to inclusively lead with race because it is the right thing to do and because doing so is the best and only way to achieve a vision of inclusive racial justice.

The County also uses the concept of Targeted Universalism, which focuses on examining employees' internal and external experiences, recognizing that each experience is unique, and

developing strategy and practice tailored to help employees navigate the County's organizational culture — supporting individual needs while recognizing we are one County.

Together, these concepts reflect and confirm the work that needs to be done, which was, and continues to be, an ambitious undertaking. That includes the acknowledgement of the actions of and behaviors within the County. We will continue to work to eliminate anti-Blackness in our workforce by no longer underestimating the work of our Black/African American staff as a result of conscious or unconscious biases.

We are hopeful this iteration of the Workplace Equity Strategic Plan will be able to embody and operationalize the true definition of inclusively leading with race and the full intention behind the words. We aim to ensure our actions mirror those words to positively impact our Black, Indigenous and other employees of color. It's what we must continue to do if Multnomah County is serious about using our position as an institution — as a local government, one of the region's largest employers and the state's largest service provider — to spur change within ourselves and in the community.

¹ [Workforce Equity Strategic Plan: 2021 - 2022 Annual Report](#), “The Letter: A Call to Action to Multnomah County,” pages 11-14

Contributors

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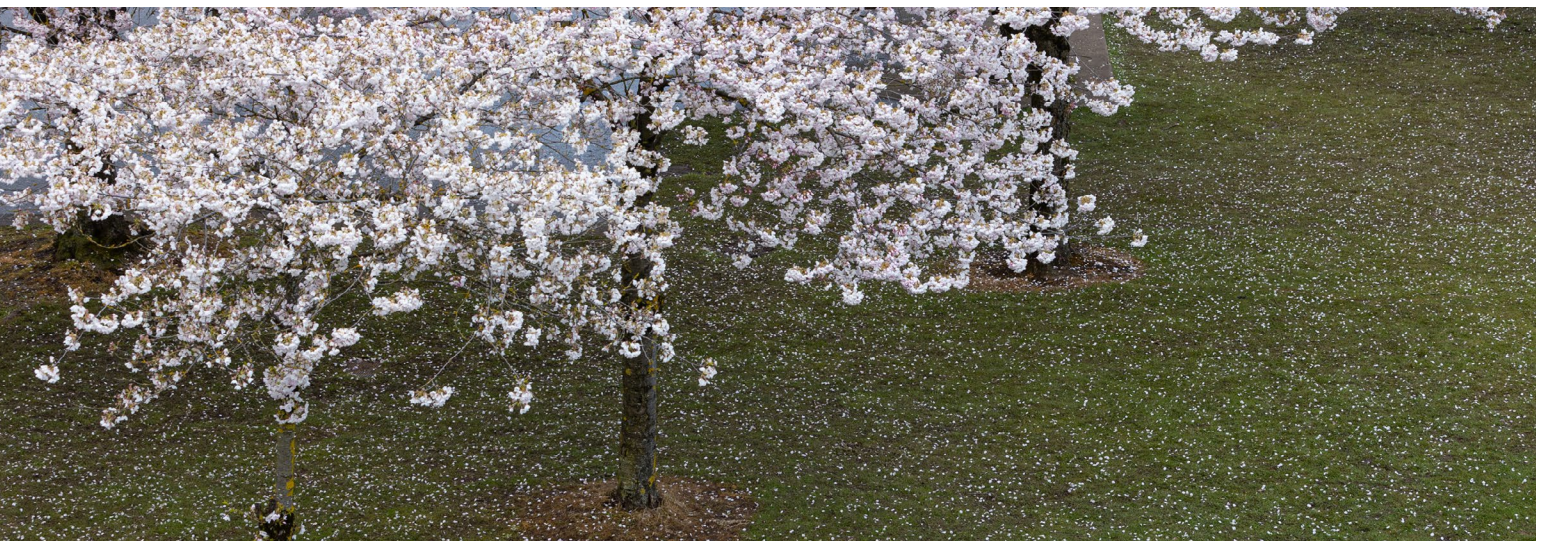
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Disability Equity Workgroup and LGBTQIA2S+ Workgroup Members

The individual names of workgroup members are not listed due to the sensitive nature of this identity-based work. We express our sincere gratitude to everyone who shared their experiences as members of the disability and transgender and gender diverse communities to design culturally specific recommendations.

Managers of Color Workgroup Members

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Appreciation and Thanks

Thank you to Chair Jessica Vega Pederson and to the Executive Committee — Chief Operating Officer Serena Cruz, Chief Human Resources Officer Travis Brown, and Chief Diversity and Equity Officer Joy Fowler — for sponsoring and co-sponsoring, respectively, this next iteration of the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan (WESP). Your commitment to delivering a comprehensive plan that engaged employees at numerous levels of the organization, with an emphasis on collaboration, is wholeheartedly appreciated.

An immense amount of gratitude is extended to the WESP Renewal Steering Committee that represented employees across all levels of the organization. Their dedication, time commitment, active participation and emotional labor spent having deep discussions during every work session is appreciated and forever valued.

To our three workgroups — Disability Equity, LGBTQIA2S+ Equity and Managers of Color — a tremendous amount of thanks for your commitment to having intentional discussions around the issues impacting your communities and putting forth culturally specific recommendations.

A special thank you to every subject matter expert who added insight and forethought as we discussed WESP topic areas in detail.

To Mary Li and Jooyoung Oh from the Multnomah Idea Lab (MIL), your partnership, dedication to walking alongside the Office of Diversity and Equity, and facilitation prowess have been immeasurable during this renewal process. We will forever appreciate the MIL's support and guidance.

To the Office of Diversity and Equity (ODE) staff, a deep and humble thank you to a group of dedicated, sincere, committed individuals that came together to propose a plan that is thoughtful, comprehensive and hopeful.

Lastly, thank you Multnomah County employees for trusting in all of us to bring forth a strategic roadmap that demonstrates we are willing, ready and committed to make true, lasting progress.



Letter from Chair Jessica Vega Pederson

The County Community and the County Workforce

Dear Employees,

I believe in a Multnomah County where not only is our County workforce strong, healthy and connected, but they also find a place of belonging. A place where people can — and do — bring their whole selves to their professional lives and the critical work we do to make good lives possible for the people of our community.

With that in mind, renewing our Workforce Equity Strategic Plan was a priority for me. Not only was it a chance to update and strengthen our guiding documents and frameworks, it was also an opportunity for many of us within our organization to work closely together to consider the central questions that help us realize our goals and our aspirations. Because as we look into the future together, I envision an organization that represents the people we serve. That reflects the values, the cultures and the communities we are a part of. Where we can come to work in service and support for our neighbors, and be uplifted in an equitable and responsive workplace that cares for us and helps us care for each other.

At its core, the WESP grounds us. It affirms our commitment to collaboration, communication and trust. A good plan helps to make each of these things more actionable inside of our daily lives and work. For this reason, how we renewed the WESP has been just as important as what this renewal looks like — and how it will function from here.

As a part of this renewal, it was important to me and to every leader whose work is reflected here that this be a specific, measurable, actionable and accountable strategic plan to address the workplace disparities countless employees experience. The initial WESP demanded we address the impacts of racism, anti-Blackness and systems of oppression that permeate our infrastructure. This renewal demands that the work is rooted in and reaffirmed with increased specificity, responsibility and accountability.

The future of Multnomah County's workforce and success as an employer relies on us taking bold action now. This strategic plan solidifies the role of the Office of Diversity and Equity to ensure the WESP meets the needs of our employees. These renewal recommendations are grounded in increased responsibility and accountability to guide the equity work of the County over the next four years. And this letter



solidifies my commitment as your County Chair to focus investments in support of this work. This will include continuing to invest County dollars in WESP implementation and resources, and prioritizing complementary renewal projects like our work to renew our mission, vision and values. It means calling leaders across Multnomah County into the good conversations this WESP renewal makes more possible. And it means making sure the guidelines, frameworks and resources of the WESP are available and successfully implemented across every department, office and work group.

In this process, many hands have made for lighter and more reflective work. Thank you to the dozens of leaders who have prioritized the WESP over the past several months. My deepest gratitude and thanks to the WESP Renewal Steering Committee participants and Workgroup members, subject matter experts, and Employee Resource Group members for their collective contributions to this strategic plan. And thank you to the staff from the Office of Diversity and Equity and Multnomah Idea Lab for their dedicated approach to this renewal process. This work is stronger because of your leadership.

In solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jessica Vega Pederson". The script is fluid and cursive, with a prominent loop at the end of the last name.

Chair Jessica Vega Pederson

Messages from the Executive Committee



A Message from Chief Diversity and Equity Officer Joy Fowler

“

...our office is making a different commitment to each of you regarding the WESP that is centered on increased responsibility and accountability.

The Evolving Role of the Office of Diversity and Equity

Dear Multnomah County,

In 2018, the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan (WESP) became one of the County's most critical documents. It set the stage for identifying and addressing barriers to equal employment — and employment experiences — faced by County employees because of their race, ethnicity, national origin, disability, gender and gender identity, sexual orientation, and other protected classes. While we openly acknowledge there is still much work to be done, the WESP has demonstrated progress in the areas of recruitment, funding numerous equity roles, and increased equity learning, along with department and office alignment around eliminating barriers within teams.

The Office of Diversity and Equity (ODE) is shifting our focus from 2018. Back then, our office facilitated the design, engaged with

partners and delivered the County's equity plan. I have a deep appreciation for the commitment of our office and key partners who ensured the WESP was established for the County.

Today, however, our office is making a different commitment to each of you regarding the WESP that is centered on increased responsibility and accountability.

Our Workforce Equity Manager, in collaboration with our office, the Multnomah Idea Lab (MIL), and the WESP Steering Committee, led and delivered work sessions over a six-month period from June through December 2023, to update the original WESP to what you see in this report today. The ongoing commitment of the Office of Diversity and Equity extends beyond the 2018 efforts to:

- Ensure we stand up a committee to hold ourselves accountable to the implementation of the WESP.



- Actively work with all partners dedicated to implementing the WESP by providing guidance, advice, consultation and support.
- Commit to ongoing and consistent reporting so we can measure our performance and progress, in addition to identifying and working to resolve areas of improvement.

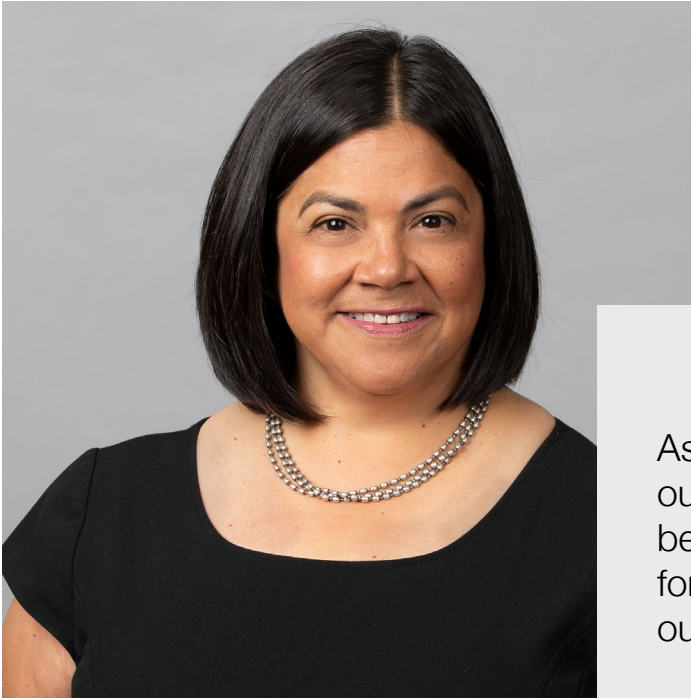
The Office of Diversity and Equity will be a team that continues to serve in an advisory, collaborative role — always looking to advance equity. We also commit to ensuring the WESP meets the needs of our employees, specifically our most marginalized and diverse workforce, supporting their success, professional development and desire to build a lasting career in Multnomah County.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joy Fowler', written over a horizontal line.

Joy Fowler
Chief Diversity and Equity Officer

Messages from the Executive Committee



A Message from Chief Operating Officer Serena Cruz

“

As COO, I am committed to fully supporting our departments in implementing the benchmarks found in this plan, and I look forward to seeing how these steps orient all our work toward true equity and inclusion.

The Workforce Equity Strategic Plan Renewal plan is an invitation for Multnomah County to step into the next chapter of our pursuit to become a more equitable and inclusive workplace. I believe the County is more than ready to lean even further into the work set out for us by this plan for the next four years.

If there's anything that I've come to understand as my role as Chief Operating Officer takes me all across the County, it's that our employees have both a profound desire for this organization to become the best version of itself and an enduring belief that we can. While this renewal plan is a map of the actions we must take to continue breaking down harmful systems and inequitable experiences, it's also a reflection of the people who make up the heart of this organization. It's no surprise that staff from all corners and levels of the County participated in this renewal process, and I'm grateful to see how deeply this project resonates with so many people.

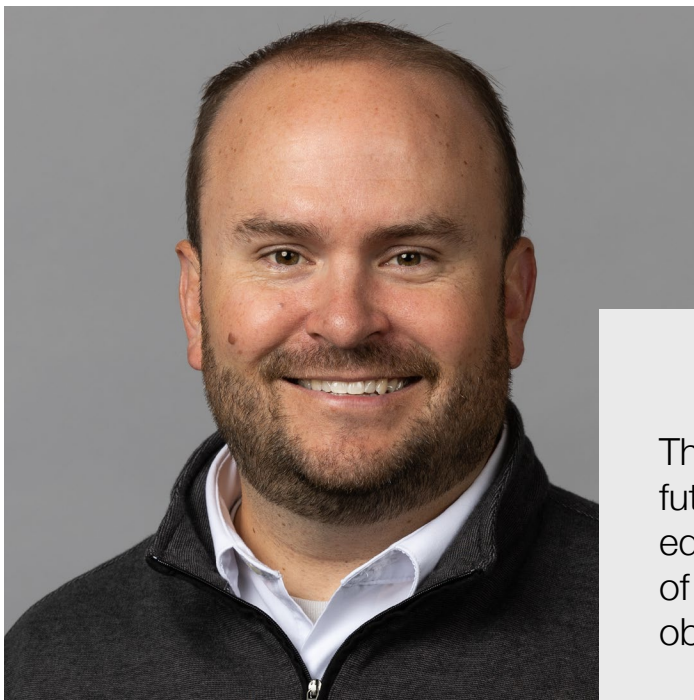
As COO, I am committed to fully supporting our departments in implementing the benchmarks

found in this plan, and I look forward to seeing how these steps orient all our work toward true equity and inclusion. Building up a workplace where all staff feel free to bring and be their whole selves, find the support they need, and find true belonging doesn't just create the organization we all deserve — it inevitably flows out into how effectively, and how equitably, we show up for our community, too.

In all but the rarest cases, organizational transformation takes time and feels like a destination. But the reality is that much of the change comes from showing up consistently to do the work, from feeling grounded in a clearer idea of what your organization stands for, and from the momentum you create when everyone is pulling in the same direction. We can make the road by walking, and I look forward to taking the next step in this journey toward equity in the workplace, and the next step, and the next step, together.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Serena Cruz".

Messages from the Executive Committee



A Message from Chief Human Resources Officer Travis Brown

“

This renewal is a critical investment in the future of Multnomah County, ensuring that equity and opportunity remain at the forefront of the County’s purpose and strategic objectives.

As the Chief Human Resources Officer at Multnomah County, I strongly support the renewal of the Multnomah County Workforce Equity Strategic Plan (WESP). This plan is a testament to the County’s commitment to building a just and inclusive workplace that reflects the diversity of our community. The tireless work of County employees in developing the WESP, driven by their profound dedication to racial equity, has resulted in a plan that promises meaningful change.

The objectives found within the WESP recommendations are inspiring, and will serve as a north star for all employees, especially new and prospective employees because they are a reflection of our values. By implementing these recommendations, Multnomah County will take tangible steps toward creating a workplace

where all employees feel valued, respected, and empowered to reach their full potential.

In partnership with the Office of Diversity and Equity, Central Human Resources is fully committed to the implementation of these recommendations. This renewal is a critical investment in the future of Multnomah County, ensuring that equity and opportunity remain at the forefront of the County’s purpose and strategic objectives.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Travis Brown".

What Is Included in This Document

- An introduction into the current state of workforce equity at Multnomah County since 2021.
- An overview of our methodology in achieving a renewal process that addresses concerns identified in the 2021 Workplace Equity Strategic Plan (WESP) Process Evaluation Report and additional feedback from County partners.
- Our engagement strategy to bring together equity practitioners across the County and County partners, such as employees, research groups, HR partners and those charged with implementing the WESP.
- An overview of our steering committee and work groups and the outcomes of their work over the six-month renewal period.
- Briefs on each initiative identified through the renewal process, including the final benchmarks we will work toward achieving by implementing the plan over the next four years.

Introduction

In 2017, Multnomah County employees of color shared their experiences with workplace racism during a Board of County Commissioners meeting. Their testimony set off a movement that ultimately led to the creation of the groundbreaking Workforce Equity Strategic Plan (WESP), a catalyst for addressing long-standing workplace disparities.

The Board took swift action in the wake of the employees' testimonies. Protected class complaints were relocated from departmental Human Resource offices to the direct supervision of the Chief Operating Officer. The Board concurrently directed the Office of Diversity and Equity, Central Human Resources, and other County departments to identify and prioritize themes related to workforce equity.

This urgent work resulted in a set of goals and deliverables adopted by the Board in April 2018 as Multnomah County's [first-ever Workforce Equity Strategic Plan](#), marking a turning point in the organization's frameworks on and commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. At the direction of the Board, Jemmott Rollins Group, a national consulting firm, was also brought in to conduct an audit. In January 2019, the Board approved the Jemmott Rollins Group's recommendations for implementing the WESP and cultivating a workplace culture of safety, trust and belonging. The group's recommendations were integrated into an amended version of the WESP as "Focus Area 5: Addendum to the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan."

For years, Multnomah County has utilized the [Equity and Empowerment Lens](#) to ensure our services address the root causes of issues like illness, poverty, hunger and homelessness equitably. This tool, which emphasizes questions about people, places, power and processes, centers the needs of those most impacted by disparities.

Success in addressing community needs requires a diverse workforce skilled in addressing culturally specific needs. The implementation of the first WESP prompted the organization to apply the Equity and Empowerment Lens internally to address workforce disparities. This involved confronting biases in hiring practices and evaluating the effectiveness of onboarding processes.

To achieve these goals, Central Human Resources and the Office of Diversity and Equity were restructured. New teams and staff, including the Complaints Investigations Unit, as well as equity manager positions for all County departments, the Sheriff's Office and the District Attorney's Office, were established. These investments created an equity infrastructure, enhancing our capacity to realize the County's vision for workforce equity.

The Office of Diversity and Equity, the WESP Committee and other collaborators kept the organizations and County leaders updated on the implementation of the plan throughout its cycle. A [2019 WESP Annual Report](#) was published in January 2020 and followed by a briefing to the Board of County Commissioners in February. Several weeks later, the County shifted many of its resources, personnel and focus to responding to the emerging COVID-19 pandemic. The Board received a briefing on the Health Department Equity Leadership Program in November 2020.

In 2021, amid the County's ongoing pandemic response, a series of four Board briefings — related to Central HR, the Complaints Investigation Unit, Civil Rights Policy Unit and Focus Area 5: Inclusively Leading with Race — replaced the publication of an annual report.

A [2021-2022 WESP Annual Report](#) was published in October 2023, which was followed by two Board briefings: one to focus on countywide highlights and the other to share departmental highlights.

Current State

The 2019-2022 Workforce Equity Strategic Plan represented a significant shift in our approach to identifying and addressing issues within our organization. As we have implemented that plan over the past few years, we have successfully developed an equity infrastructure that has matured to effectively collaborate and systematically tackle workforce equity disparities.

However, our journey has not been without challenges. Diversity alone is not enough, and we now recognize the importance of addressing the specific needs of our increasingly diverse workforce. While initially focused on diversifying our organization, we have evolved to confront a broader spectrum of equity concerns, including race, gender, sexuality and ability.

Managers of color, in particular, face unique challenges, experiencing a higher number of complaints, often from other employees of color. This dynamic has prompted theories suggesting that employees of color are more attuned to equity concerns and have more opportunities to report them.

Even with our progress, we still struggle to acknowledge and address anti-Black bias within our equity frameworks. Furthermore, the organization's increasing diversity, including

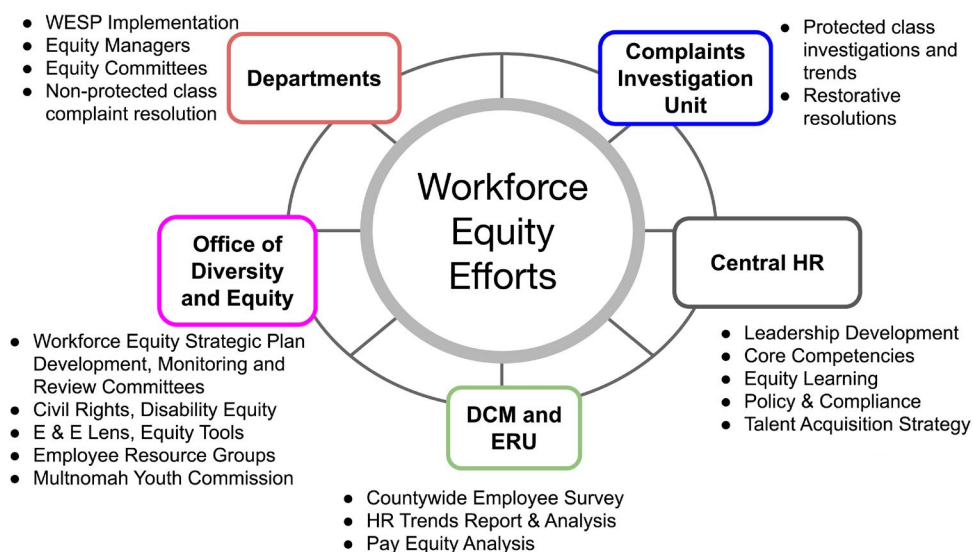
transgender employees, highlights the need for robust support infrastructure for both employees and managers.

The increase in diversity does not signify the resolution of issues, but rather necessitates a shift toward culturally specific human resources (HR) strategies. This includes targeted training, conflict resolution and support for managers working with a more diverse workforce.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic further underscored the importance of culturally specific services and diverse service providers. While the organization has made strides, efforts to maintain diversity and support the staff who are critical to working effectively with diverse communities must be ongoing.

As we navigate transitions among staff and leadership roles, the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan remains pivotal in attracting and retaining employees who expect intentional and effective efforts to address equity concerns.

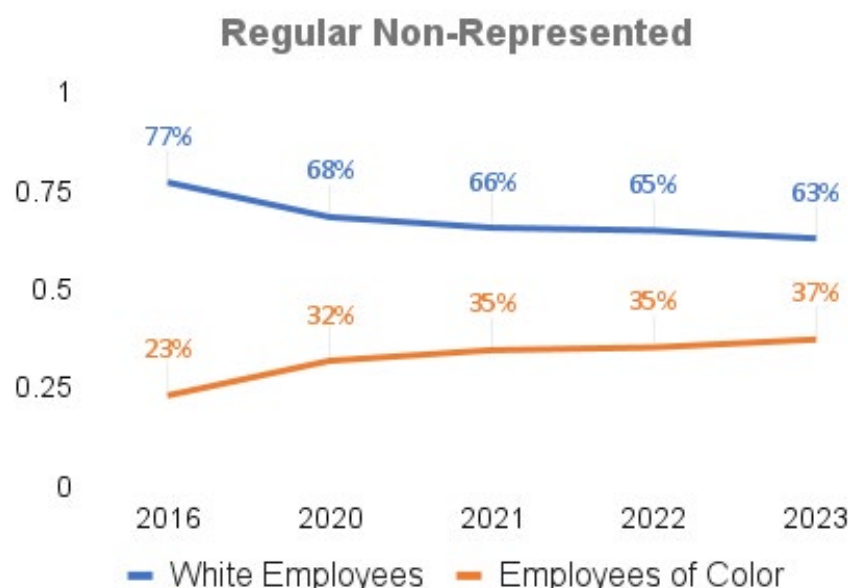
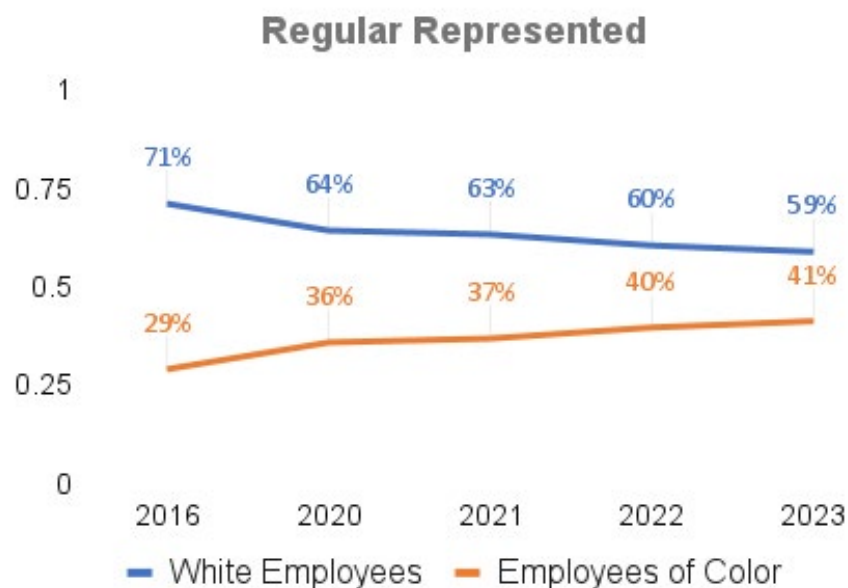
The [2021 WESP Process Evaluation Report](#) revealed key themes to consider during the renewal efforts, including the need for tighter collaboration between Central HR and departments, funding necessary infrastructure, tying equity recommendations to the budgetary process, and creating accountability through evaluation and reporting.



To address these themes, we propose the creation of a WESP Implementation Committee for this renewal plan, which will facilitate collaboration, review the plan's benchmarks and align them with the budget process, and ensure consistency in annual reporting across departments.

Moving forward, we are committed to implementing the benchmarks of the renewal plan to foster a more equitable and inclusive workplace, meeting the needs of our diverse workforce, and creating lasting positive change within our organization.

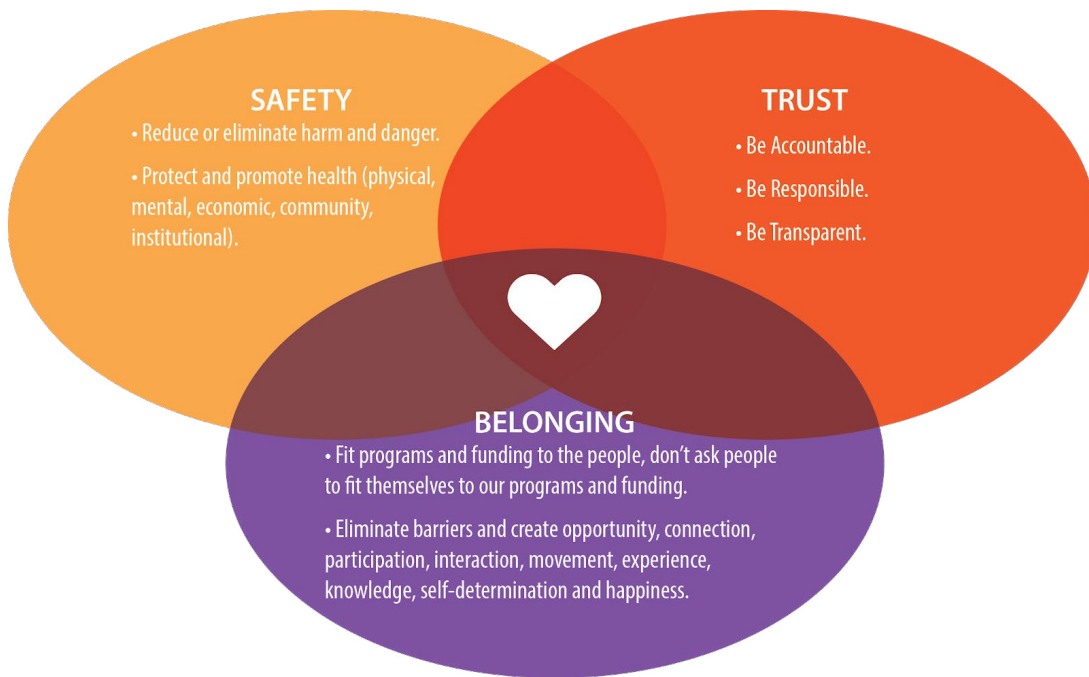
Changes in Workforce Diversity, Multnomah County Employment Trends



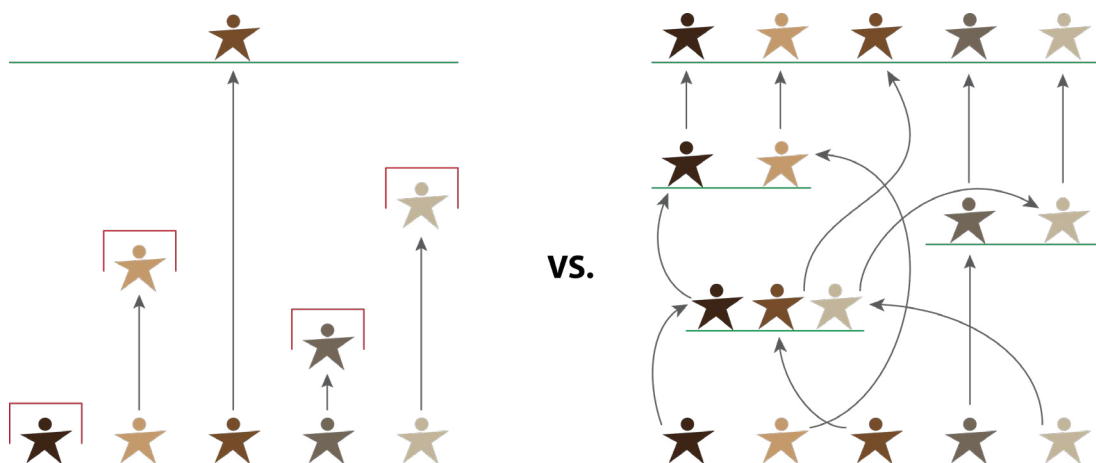
Methodology

Original Workforce Equity Strategic Plan

The original Workforce Equity Strategic Plan (WESP) included a set of conceptual frameworks that guided the strategic plan through the gathering of testimonials, reviewing of data and developing minimum standard/performance measures. The first framework, built off a vision grounded in the concepts of “Safety, Trust, and Belonging,” was designed to guide equity work at the County for employees to thrive.



The second framework, “Targeted Universalism,”² builds off of the first, functioning as a reflection of the principles and approaches that are key to advancing equity in the workplace. This concept moves away from focusing on the equality of groups and highlights the notion that different groups are situated differently with regard to access to resources and privilege, requiring a targeted approach to ameliorating disparities across workforce policies and practices.



2 <https://belonging.berkeley.edu/targeted-universalism>

With this set of conceptual frameworks at the forefront, the original WESP was built upon centering the voices of those most negatively impacted by organizational culture and practice. The process was initiated by the Employees of Color (EOC) Employee Resource Group (ERG), in partnership with community-based groups (e.g., Urban League of Portland, APANO, Center for Intercultural Organizing/Unite Oregon and VOZ) who facilitated early discussions. The Office of Diversity and Equity (ODE) collaborated with these groups to determine the best method of elevating the voices of marginalized and harmed employees and documenting their experiences. This was also a data-driven approach, utilizing workforce data to help quantify the information shared through testimonials and employee experience.

Contextual data was gathered through a series of facilitated discussions with ERGs to uncover common themes and ideas for action around specific workforce practices and elements of employee experience: Retention, Professional Development, Promotion and Organizational Culture. The process was participatory, meaning it included members of those groups with a particular focus on frontline employees, in the coding and analysis of the data. This drove a process of strategy development that aimed to reflect the needs and experiences of the workforce.

The Office of Diversity and Equity team, with support from the Multnomah Idea Lab, worked on grouping recommendations based on theme, combining similar recommendations and removing duplicates. Pictured left to right: Mariana Parra, Terralyn Wiley, Sam Silverman, Ashley Carroll and Jooyoung Oh.



Workforce Equity Strategic Plan Renewal

In 2021, the Office of Diversity and Equity completed the WESP Process Evaluation Report, which highlighted countywide efforts to meet the minimum standards and performance measures from the original WESP. This process identified both the challenges many departments across the County were facing when attempting to fulfill the WESP minimum standards and performance measures, and the progress we were able to make, even as the COVID-19 pandemic overshadowed much of the implementation period.

The work done between 2018 and 2023 to advance the recommendations of the first equity plan serve as the foundation for this next iteration of the WESP. The steps we took to implement Focus Area 1 (Organizational Culture) set the stage for our commitment to learning from, growing and promoting equity in our workplace. We've increased our investments in employees' professional development by utilizing performance review processes to collaboratively identify opportunities, resources, and pathways towards goals per Focus Area 2 (Promotion and Professional Development). We've made strides in our retention practices via Employee Resource Groups, employee onboarding and employee coaching as directed by Focus Area 3 (Retention). Our efforts to make advancements in Focus Area 4 (Recruitment and Workforce Pipelines) have led to the success of the College to County program, along with consistently diverse candidate pools for positions at every level of the organization. In order to demonstrate continued progress, the work and lessons of these focus areas from the original plan are intended to move with us to help us build on what we accomplished as we adopt new initiatives and benchmarks.

The Office of Diversity and Equity, led by the Workforce Equity Manager, embarked on the WESP Renewal process in 2023. The project aimed to leverage a collaborative process involving a Renewal Steering Committee of a manageable size and with diverse representation spanning gender, race/ethnicity, Employee Resource Group affiliations, managers and non-managers, represented and non-represented, and departments. This steering committee first convened in June 2024 to set the groundwork for engaging during the process and identify key topic areas that the renewal plan should address. The invitation to participate in the subsequent work sessions was then extended to subject matter experts across the organization. During five two-day work sessions between July and November, steering committee members and subject matter experts worked together to use their collective insight to co-create recommendations for the key topics.

The recommendations were reviewed by the Office of Diversity and Equity, Labor Relations, Central HR, the County Attorney's Office and the Budget Office to identify and address potential policy, legal and budgetary issues. The WESP Renewal Executive Committee submitted a set of vetted and updated recommendations to the Chair. Approved recommendations are presented in this renewal plan document as "Benchmarks" to convey the expectation of implementation; each Benchmark is accompanied by a corresponding Objective and Performance Measure(s).

Data and Evaluation

The 2021 WESP Process Evaluation Report revealed barriers that stood in the way of conducting a comprehensive outcome evaluation of the original WESP performance measures. With this in mind, the WESP Renewal process was designed to ensure that benchmarks included appropriate metrics, as well as streamlined data collection and

analysis processes, at both the department and Countywide levels. These processes will require an investment in infrastructure across the organization to facilitate the development of data collection instruments and ensure performance measure metrics align with WESP benchmarks.

A notable recommendation to come out of the renewal process is to develop a countywide WESP Data Consortium that includes data representatives from every department across the County. The consortium would oversee the feasibility of data-related benchmarks and develop strategies for facilitating the completion of those benchmarks. The consortium would also be responsible for ensuring that WESP renewal data metrics are collected regularly for every department to better facilitate the annual WESP outcome evaluation, and to assist departments with their own strategic equity work plans.

In addition to WESP evaluation efforts, the renewal process uncovered the need for capturing the experiences of County employees from marginalized communities. It is this renewal plan's recommendation that Multnomah County select outside consultants to evaluate the experiences of disabled employees to ensure disabled staff have equitable opportunities for promotion. In tandem, an annual disability experience survey is also recommended to capture the impact of disability-related benchmarks on employees with disabilities. Input from both of these research and assessment efforts will inform policy and practice decision-making regarding the experiences of employees with disabilities. Regarding the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accommodations process, it is recommended that the County transition to a centralized accommodation unit within Central HR to improve the experience of employees in need of ADA accommodations, as well as to increase efforts encouraging staff to apply.

The need to standardize and enforce “stay interview” data collection strategies arose throughout the WESP renewal process. In particular, this plan recommends that stay interviews be conducted annually for managers, with specific focus on managers who identify as Black, Indigenous, and/or People of Color, in order to identify gaps in training, professional development and leadership development. Similarly, it is recommended that a countywide process be developed and implemented to ensure stay interviews are conducted consistently across departments for all employees using a representative sample. These two assessment efforts can contextualize the employee experience by aligning interview findings with data from the Countywide Employee Survey (CWES), which can inform County policy and investments.

The process also found a need for qualitative studies that can parse out data from existing information collection efforts, such as the CWES and employment trends data. While quantitative findings are useful and informative, often illustrating what is happening across the County workforce in empirical ways, they are insufficient for explaining why or providing other details that facilitate problem-solving. Qualitative studies can delve deeper into the experiences, attitudes and perceptions of employees, providing the kind of information that can further inform the decision-making process.

WESP Renewal Steering Committee work session facilitators Mary Li and Jooyoung Oh from the Multnomah Idea Lab next to draft recommendations.



Equity and Human-Centered Design

The WESP Renewal process used Equity and Human-Centered Design practices as the tools for the development and creation of these recommendations.

Equity and Human-Centered Design begins with working to understand the history that has led the organization — in this case Multnomah County — to the place where it exists today. This approach aligns with the County’s Equity and Empowerment Lens tool, which asks participants to reflect on the “Five P’s”: Purpose, People, Place, Process and Power.

Once the shared history has been told and understood, the design process requires its participants to actively build empathy — for all who have been impacted, who continue to be impacted and who will be impacted in the future.

Only after these first two requirements have been met can Equity and Human-Centered Design begin.

For the WESP Renewal process, this called for centering the lived experiences and wisdom of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color at the beginning, middle and end of the work.

In addition, the County’s policy to [Inclusively Lead with Race](#) required that renewal participants also consider intersecting identities with race and ethnicity as part of the process. Specific components of the process were dedicated to meeting this responsibility.

Using a variety of facilitation and engagement exercises, steering committee members were invited in to collaborate with each other and co-create the recommendations represented in this report. We believe that this intentional approach and practice successfully supported the Renewal Steering Committee’s final outcome of a renewed WESP strategy for 2024 and beyond.

Engagement

The Workforce Equity Strategic Plan (WESP) Renewal process included an engagement strategy that sought to address issues identified in the 2021 WESP Process Evaluation Report. The primary goals were to increase participation from County Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) and County partners who were charged with implementing the original WESP; increasing communication and transparency countywide; and fostering a process that encouraged collaboration, feedback and questions.

Our approach involved establishing a nimble Renewal Steering Committee through an application process that was ultimately composed of 32 members. The steering committee consisted of representatives from all County departments, the Sheriff's Office and the District Attorney's office; 20% of the committee were represented staff. We also ensured that there was demographic representation and participation from County partners, such as departmental HR staff, equity managers, union representatives, Complaints Investigation Unit staff and ERG members. The steering committee process was enriched by continuous feedback from staff, facilitated by town halls on specific topics like Retention, Training and Data, each of which was attended by 30 to 40 individuals.

A pivotal element of our strategy was the [WESP Renewal Project Progress and Resources website](#), a dedicated public platform containing captures and notes from each session. After each work session, we collaborated with County Communications to produce detailed write-ups that were posted to the website and also shared through Wednesday Wire, the weekly internal countywide newsletter. In addition to the online content, we updated ERG leaders monthly, providing an overview of the topics that were discussed and taking feedback.

After the WESP Renewal work sessions concluded in December 2023, the Office of Diversity and Equity team held a series of

meetings to update County partners, including HR executives, Executive Council members, elected officials, ERG leaders, and department equity managers. ODE also organized two employee forums focused on ERGs, attracting over 100 participants in each session. Individuals were also given access to feedback forms to ask questions and provide insights about the committee's captures and notes.

Another significant aspect of the engagement strategy involved three workgroups that expanded the steering committee's representation to include individuals with diverse gender identities, staff with disabilities and managers of color. All three of these groups met in parallel to the steering committee to identify and develop workplace equity recommendations to address their unique needs.

Further, to incorporate demographically and culturally specific perspectives, work session participants regularly broke out into caucuses centered on identities. These caucuses allowed the groups to facilitate discussions on essential questions related to racial disparities, allowing the committee to prioritize actions based on informed conversations.

CDEO Joy Fowler addressing in-person and online participants during a forum on Training and Data topics.



Workforce Equity Strategic Plan Enhancements

Departments, offices and Central HR are expected to continue addressing unfulfilled recommendations from the original WESP as identified in the 2021 Workforce Equity Strategic Plan (WESP) Process Evaluation Report and expand into new areas of work as necessary, while incorporating this work into strategic plans for the latest benchmarks established in the renewal plan.

For instance, while training recommendations from the original WESP should continue to be implemented and built upon, departments and Central HR should work to integrate new, more specific training tailored to diverse communities and relevant topics. Similarly, with regard to recommendations like expanding conflict resolution resources, the expectation is to prioritize these efforts based on identified needs and concerns.

The process evaluation revealed that several goals and recommendations from the original WESP had not been either initiated or reported, mainly due to common challenges across departments, such as a lack of capacity and resources. An example is the set of recommendations concerning accommodating disabilities in the workplace, which larger departments succeeded in completing while smaller ones faced challenges. Recognizing this, the renewed plan suggests establishing a centralized accommodations unit for people with disabilities.

Additionally, recommendations like manager reviews call for more countywide consistency and centralization to ensure accurate reporting. Department directors and equity managers are expected to establish their processes informed by previous WESP priorities.

Continuing to report on goals from the previous WESP will ensure comprehensive tracking and monitoring of progress of County equity efforts and will likely be incorporated into the 2024-2028 cycle, with a mid-cycle process evaluation to keep departments and programs on the right track.

To further enhance transparency, an impact report at the end of the 2024-2028 cycle will discuss the evaluation and impact of this renewal plan. An ongoing issue during the original WESP cycle was the inability to meet some recommendations due to unfilled department equity manager positions or insufficient staffing levels. However, significant progress has been made to fill these roles, leading to increased capacity for equity efforts across the County. Some departments have even introduced specialized HR positions to address concerns highlighted in the original WESP.

Workgroups

LGBTQIA2S+ Workgroup

Looking to the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan (WESP) as a racial equity plan, a critical component of Inclusively Leading With Race is to consider how intersectional forms of oppression impact Multnomah County employees. Queer and transgender employees of color experience overlapping forms of discrimination in racism, homophobia and transphobia that prevent the LGBTQIA2S+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual or agender, and two-spirit) community from truly feeling a sense of Safety, Trust, and Belonging.

The first iteration of the WESP did not include gender, gender identity or the unique needs of transgender County employees in the recommendations. For the renewal process, employees who identify as transgender and/or gender diverse were intentionally included and invited to co-design culturally specific recommendations, with a focus on the intersection of race and gender.

In September 2023, the LGBTQIA2S+ Workforce Equity Workgroup was formed via a recruitment process with the Prism and Queer and Trans People of Color (QTPOC) Employee Resource Groups (ERGs). Out of nine participants, 100% of workgroup members identified as transgender or gender diverse, 78% identified as Black, Indigenous, or People of Color, and all members brought lived experience across the intersections of age, sexual orientation, disability status, family status and more. The group met every other week between September and November to develop recommendations based on the limited available data and [previously commissioned reports](#) produced by the Office of Diversity and Equity (ODE) in 2016, 2017 and 2023.

Among the recommendations that were created, the group identified the most critical focus areas as Accountability and Retention, because

the County cannot retain its transgender staff without having accountability. To that end, the workgroup felt the most urgent need to improve gender equity at the County is the creation of a Transgender/Gender Diverse Committee, composed of County employees who identify as trans or gender diverse, to oversee the implementation of the WESP benchmarks and other countywide actions that address transphobia. This would ensure that work related to trans employees is guided and directed by trans employees, providing countywide coordination and consistency throughout the departments from the perspective of lived experience.

“

We deserve safety emotionally, physically and psychologically.

- LGBTQIA2S+ Workgroup Member

Other recommendations heavily emphasized the need for gender equity training that is mandatory for all employees, especially executive leadership, managers, and supervisors, to develop skills related to conflict resolution and mitigating microaggressions. Employees who identify as LGBTQIA2S+ frequently report experiencing discrimination over several months without the individual that is causing harm facing formal discipline or being removed from their position. The lack of transparency around accountability measures has led many trans employees to believe that even if they do report discrimination, nothing will be done to address or resolve it. There is a need for a clear, transparent and consistent policy for removing employees who cause harm to trans, gender diverse employees and people of color.



Racism and homophobia are all fathered by one system of white supremacy; one fight can't be fought without the other at the same time.

- LGBTQIA2S+ Workgroup Member

As of Dec. 31, 2023, the Multnomah County Employment Trends Dashboards³ show that 49% of employees had not yet entered their gender identity into Workday, the organization's workforce system of record. To date, we are still unable to accurately measure the number of Multnomah County employees who identify as transgender and/or gender diverse. The lack of meaningful data regarding the demographic composition of the LGBTQIA2S+ community is also national issue; the U.S. Census Bureau only added the first questions regarding Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) to the Household Pulse Survey in 2021.

The need is dire to improve data collection for LGBTQIA2S+ employees to be able to analyze their experiences working for the County. It's important to acknowledge that a primary reason people do not share their personal demographic information is because they do not feel safe to do so out of fear of further discrimination and harassment. In the 2021 Countywide Employee Survey (CWES), only 55% of employees who identify as transgender agreed that they would feel safe reporting discriminatory behavior. While gender identity is the second-most common form of discrimination reported to the Complaints Investigation Unit, these numbers underrepresent the actual breadth of the issue as countless trans and gender diverse

employees experiencing microaggressions and transphobia across the County choose to not share their experiences.

Throughout each of the workgroup's recommendations, special attention was paid to how these issues are exacerbated for transgender employees of color. It is critical to increase the representation of trans and gender diverse people of color, especially in positions of power, to ensure that conversations about discrimination do not delineate race and gender as two separate issues.

Recognizing that racism and homophobia are all fathered by one system of white supremacy culture, the workgroup identified the need for intersectionality as a guiding principle of its work that also served as a call to action to fight alongside each other in pursuit of collective healing and liberation.



An intersectional lens is necessary. We can't consider trans and gender diverse issues in isolation from other marginalized identities that also affect staff experiences.

- LGBTQIA2S+ Workgroup Member

³ The Department of County Management's Evaluation and Research Unit (ERU) developed and maintains the Multnomah County Employment Trends Dashboards as part of the broader [Employment Trends project](#). Dashboards are updated quarterly.



ADA standards are a floor, not a ceiling. The county could lead and set the bar above and beyond the ADA standards and accommodation process because we believe and invest in our employees.

- Disability Equity Workgroup Member

Disability Equity Workgroup

In 2021, 22% of Multnomah County employees who took the Countywide Employee Survey identified as having one or more disabling conditions/disabilities. This is in-line with worldwide numbers that estimate 20-25% of the population have a disability. In contrast to the percentage of employees who indicated having disabilities in that anonymous survey, only 5% of employees identify as disabled in Workday. This discrepancy limits our ability to analyze employment trends data, such as hirings, separations, and promotions due to the small sample size. It especially impacts the opportunity to disaggregate data and better understand the experiences of disabled employees of color and/or disabled LGBTQIA2S+ staff.

The first iteration of the WESP did not include identity-specific recommendations for disabled employees. For this renewal, employees with disabilities were intentionally included and invited to provide recommendations to leadership regarding their experiences with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accommodation process and larger disability equity issues at the County.

In August 2023, the Disability Equity WESP Workgroup was formed. Seven employees with disabilities began meeting to review past reports and compile an updated list of recommendations to provide to the WESP Renewal Steering Committee. This group met seven times through November to develop and

finalize their recommendations. The workgroup also decided to survey additional employees with disabilities to gather recommendations and experiences to supplement and guide the work.

A survey sent to employees who had requested an accommodation as tracked in Workday (285 individuals) and through the ERG network received 218 responses. The workgroup added new recommendations to their list after survey submissions were analyzed for disparities by race, gender identity, and sexual orientation. These results were shared with the survey recipients, as well as the Including Disability in Equity and Access (IDEA) ERG and the Human Resources Executive Committee. Findings included a need for additional support through the ADA accommodation process, especially for employees of color and LGBTQIA2S+ colleagues.

The most urgent recommendation identified by disabled employees is the need for a centralized HR unit to facilitate ADA accommodations. This shift will alleviate inconsistencies across departments and allow for HR staff fully trained on the ADA to intentionally interact with employees throughout the process. Creating this unit will also lead to other benefits for disabled employees, such as the creation of a lending library for equipment and development of an accommodations guidebook.

While the recommendations put forward by the Disability Equity WESP Workgroup were prioritized by topic area, the group stressed that each recommendation is important and all need to be implemented.

Managers of Color Workgroup

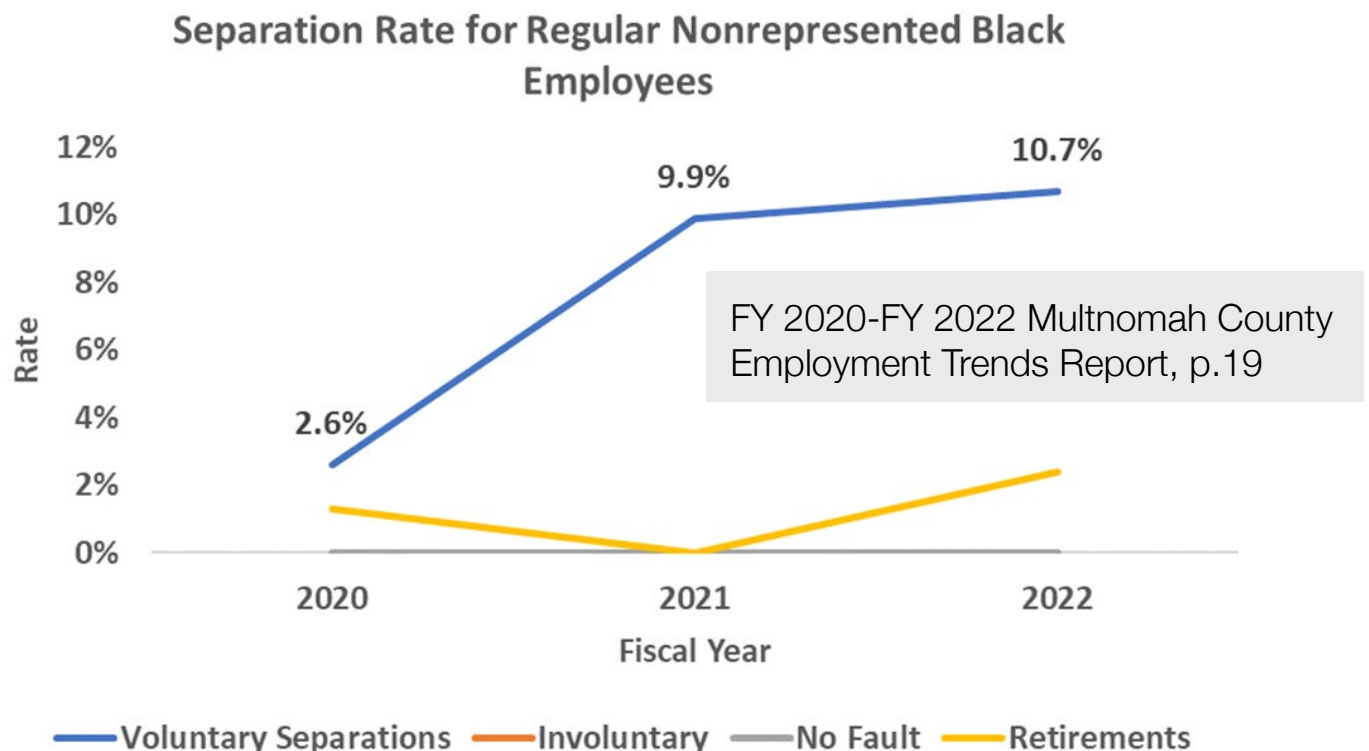
A number of recommendations highlighted the need to develop strategies, processes and supports to assist managers of color and improve their retention across the workforce. Specifically, there was a requirement to create a needs assessment tailored for managers of color concerning their training needs and professional development. The needs assessment would identify gaps in learning and development opportunities critical to the success of managers of color. Findings from the needs assessment would inform collaborative efforts between Organizational Learning (OL), Managers of Color (MOC), and ODE in developing learning needs and professional development opportunities, as well as developing retention strategies for managers of color.

As part of the needs assessment, it is recommended that a qualitative approach be integrated to identify the perceived causes for MOC turnover rates and to identify strategies for increasing MOC retention. Separation data from the [FY 2020-FY 2022 Multnomah County Employment Trends Report](#) indicated that more Black, non-represented employees voluntarily separated from the County between the

2021 and 2022 fiscal years compared to other demographic groups.

This suggests that more consistent and standardized stay and exit interview implementation and analyses can facilitate discussions on supporting managers of color by addressing challenges and barriers before separation.

Providing improved learning and professional development opportunities can also assist departments in navigating the high rates of complaints against Black managers. An analysis of Complaints Investigation Unit (CIU) cases, between November 2019 and December 2022, indicated that Black managers were significantly more likely to receive a complaint filed against them than their white counterparts, 50% and 25% respectively ($p=.000$). Furthermore, of those cases that were substantiated as a protected class violation by a CIU investigation, 73% were for white managers compared to 27% for managers of color. These findings highlight the need for many of the benchmarks outlined in this report.

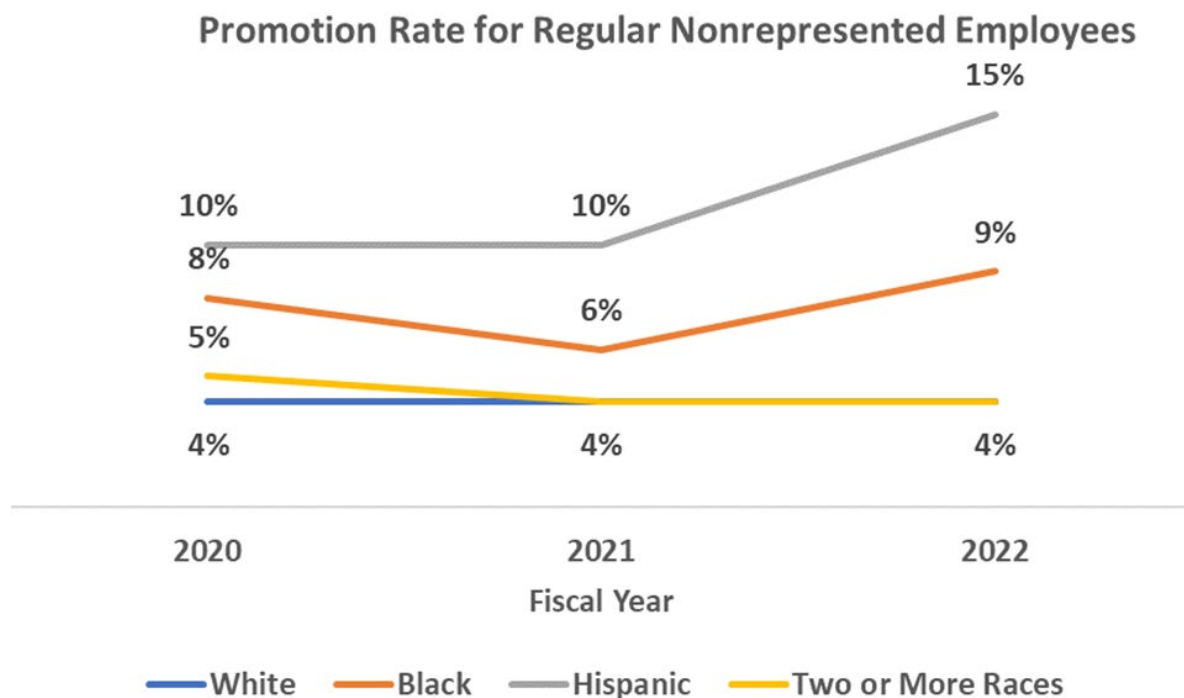


Initiative 1: Accountability

This set of benchmarks is aimed at maintaining Multnomah County's commitment to fostering equity in the workplace through the implementation of assessments that measure the effectiveness of countywide equity policies, practices and procedures.

Over the past seven years, Multnomah County has made significant strides in enhancing the diversity of its overall employee base. This progress extends to an increased diversity among its managers, achieved through promotions and reclassifications. As a result, we now stand as one of the most diverse municipalities in the region. While this accomplishment is noteworthy, it has also brought forth a new set of challenges and responsibilities that necessitates an intentional strategy for adequately supporting organizational diversity.

When the first Workplace Equity Strategic Plan (WESP) was initially drafted in 2017, a main focus was on addressing the lack of diversity in middle management, including managers and supervisors, amid an increasingly diverse represented staff. At that time, there were more white managers overseeing staff of color. Since then, we have successfully narrowed this diversity gap. Data from the FY 2020-FY 2022 Employment Trends Report illustrate a 3-5% increase in promotions for Black and Hispanic managers⁴ to 9% and 15% respectively, compared to the promotion rate for white managers that remained steady at 4%.⁵



FY 2020-FY 2022 Employment Trends Report, p. 38

⁴ In the FY 2020-FY 2022 Employment Trends Report, managers are reflected as regular, non-represented employees.

⁵ [FY 2020-FY 2022 Employment Trends Report](#), page 38

Following those changes, a new circumstance has emerged in which the County employs more managers of color than ever before. And while the workforce has become more diverse, Black managers now face higher rates of reports to the Complaints Investigation Unit made by employees of color than their white counterparts. A targeted support system for managers of color to help them navigate changes that have arisen from a more diverse demographic landscape is needed. In addition, a deeper dive into why more employees of color are filing complaints is warranted.

Managers of color, while facing a disproportionate number of complaints against them, also encounter less support when dealing with conflicts in the workplace. The WESP Renewal plan's Accountability benchmarks aim

to enhance support for managers by giving them more tools to manage staff effectively, accounting for the need for culturally specific leadership development, and offering support specifically for managers of color.

Furthermore, the Accountability benchmarks encompass the development of standardized assessments and the tracking of employee responsibilities for applying equity values within the workplace. These assessments extend beyond capturing interactions with co-workers to include engagement with the community, which has also increased in demographic diversity over the last eight years. Overall, these benchmarks reflect our commitment to continuous improvement and the proactive inclusion of diverse perspectives in Multnomah County.

Benchmark 1.1

Implement an accountability framework for managers to consistently engage with staff by having them:

- Document the initial conversation in the employee's performance planning and review (PPR) process
- Have ongoing follow-up through regularly scheduled check-ins
- Develop intentional partnership between employee and manager
- Additional follow-up to be provided in the manager's PPR as part of their performance

Objectives

To ensure all staff receive the necessary support, guidance and interaction from their managers based on ongoing check-ins.

Performance Measure

- 1) Assess manager PPR process and add manager/employee coaching to all PPRs.
- 2) Managers to add coaching to each employee PPR.
- 3) Provide coaching template to all managers.

Benchmark 1.2

Ensure the status of Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accommodations is supported by regular communication between the accommodated employee, their manager and the Centralized Accommodation Unit.

Objectives

To ensure the accommodations process is implemented correctly and that the accommodated employee and manager are updated regularly on the progress of the accommodation application.

Performance Measure

- 1) Disability Experience Survey
- 2) Centralized Accommodation Unit employee and manager post-accommodation experience survey

Benchmark 1.3

Develop awareness and knowledge of disability justice through consistent training on differentiating between visible and invisible disabilities, ableist language, and bias in the workplace.

Objectives

To increase countywide employee knowledge based on training received.

To create a sense of belonging among employees with disabilities.

Performance Measure

- 1) Disability Experience Survey
- 2) Countywide Employee Survey

Jooyoung Oh from the Multnomah Idea Lab facilitating a WESP Renewal Steering Committee work session on the Accountability topic.



Initiative 2: Infrastructure

This set of benchmarks pertains to improvements in the equity workforce infrastructure established by the previous Workforce Equity Strategic Plan (WESP).

While the original WESP introduced new structures to address prevailing issues, the experiences accumulated over the last several years, along with reporting and evaluation, allowed the Renewal Steering Committee to identify emerging issues and discover better practices in providing services to Multnomah County employees. Notably, the benchmarks expand the equity infrastructure established by the implementation of the original WESP, which incorporated entities such as the Complaints Investigation Unit (CIU), expanded the Office of Diversity and Equity, mandated equity managers in all departments, and increased equity training and leadership development resources in Central Human Resources.

The Infrastructure benchmarks found in this renewal plan include a call for evaluating not just how effectively the CIU completes investigations in general, but how effectively it completes investigations by or about staff of color, as well as how the presence of the CIU affects the work experiences of staff of color — in particular with regard to Black employees. Additionally, there are benchmarks to transition toward more dedicated and intentional representation among employees participating in decision-making processes, achieved through involvement in Employee Resource Groups, departmental Equity Committees, and countywide committees and advisory boards.

This initiative also includes specific benchmarks to address Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

accommodations, which were not explicitly addressed in the original WESP, but were identified through the [Research on Equity and Accommodations for Employees with Disabilities Report](#). This translates to a recommended increase in resources and practices for managers to accommodate employees with disabilities and ensure compliance with ADA law, including the creation of a dedicated, centralized Human Resources unit to oversee the accommodation process and meet the needs of employees requesting accommodation.

To ensure the effectiveness of the projects and provide oversight, these benchmarks also address implementation issues identified through the 2021 WESP Process Evaluation Report. These improvements rectify limitations related to budget considerations, process timelines, and reconfiguring the WESP's governing council to include subcommittees, including a Data Consortium and a Transgender/Gender Diverse Committee.

Expansion opportunities for the equity infrastructure in departments are reflected in these benchmarks, as well. Increasing and strengthening infrastructure — particularly by enhancing departmental equity teams — is crucial for departments to meet their workforce equity goals and metrics.

These benchmarks reflect a commitment to ongoing improvement and adaptation, ensuring that the infrastructure that supports our equity efforts evolve to meet the changing needs of our organization and employees.

Benchmark 2.1

Develop a Workforce Equity Strategic Plan Implementation Committee, with clear roles and responsibilities, to support the Office of Diversity and Equity (ODE) in the implementation of the established goals and to track progress on objectives.

Objectives

To ensure a consistent sense of transparency and accountability toward WESP implementation.

Performance Measure

- 1) Meeting roster illustrating countywide representation
- 2) Meeting notes documenting WESP implementation progress, challenges and barriers

Benchmark 2.2

Evaluation and Research Unit (ERU) to conduct an evaluation of Complaints Investigation Unit (CIU) processes, policies and investigation outcomes every three (3) years. This cadence gives recommended changes time to be adopted, implemented and reviewed before the next evaluation cycle.

Objectives

To ensure employees have a functional route for protected class complaints to be investigated in an equitable, consistent and timely manner.

Performance Measure

- 1) CIU evaluation every three (3) years that will disaggregate data and highlight areas of opportunity for process improvement/correction
- 2) CIU evaluation results

Benchmark 2.3

Create a WESP Data Consortium (that includes a full-time analyst starting in FY 2026) to lead and manage all aspects of WESP performance measure data management. The position will be housed in the ERU to ensure access to workforce data and current workforce data collection efforts (e.g., Countywide Employee Survey, employment trends, dashboards, etc.). The analyst will analyze workforce data relevant to WESP performance measures and assist departments with performance measure data needs. This consortium will serve as a subcommittee to the WESP Implementation Committee.

Objectives

To ensure consistency and transparency in workforce data collection and analysis efforts.

To liaise with department representatives on data equity needs related to the WESP performance measures and departmental equity strategic plans.

To assist the ERU and ODE with other WESP-related data needs.

Performance Measure

- 1) Data Consortium development
- 2) Data Consortium recommendation implementation and monitoring guide

Benchmark 2.4

Develop a Transgender/Gender Diverse Committee represented by employees and allies with the ability to recommend countywide policy, procedures, and training related to transphobia and gender equity. This group will serve as a time-limited subcommittee to the WESP Implementation Committee, using what it learns in this role to inform how all groups can identify paths for bringing forward concerns and ideas.

Objectives

To ensure transgender and gender non-conforming staff are represented, acknowledged and feel supported in their grievances.

To provide spaces where they and other groups can show up and ensure their community is truly represented, and that their voices and recommendations stem from those groups.

Performance Measure

- 1) Transgender/Gender Diverse Committee development
- 2) Countywide Employee Engagement Survey
- 3) WESP Performance Measure Survey

Benchmark 2.5

Implement the recommendations from the [2022 Conflict Resolution Gap Analysis for Central HR](#) to partner with the departments in establishing consistent systems of support for employees experiencing conflict in the workplace.

Objectives

To ensure all employees have standardized resources to address harmful behaviors and access conflict resolution services.

Performance Measure

- 1) Countywide Employee Survey
- 2) WESP Performance Measure Survey

Benchmark 2.6

Create a charter for the CIU's Protected Class Committee (PCC) to outline roles and responsibilities, formalize its work with CIU, and inform the decision-making process. PCC members include: CIU, County Attorney's Office, Department directors, Human Resources, ODE, equity managers and Labor Relations.

Objectives

To ensure consistency and accountability in the application of equitable principles in the formation and operation of the CIU.

Performance Measure

- 1) Completion of charter rubric (scoring sheet) listing CIU processes and case outcomes
- 2) Annual review of rubric data — addendum to CIU annual report
- 3) CIU evaluation review

Benchmark 2.7

Incorporate training for Human Resources teams related to anti-bias and add targeted questions around anti-bias for HR candidates during the interview process.

Objectives

To increase training opportunities and knowledge related to anti-bias among HR staff in order to provide a safe and inclusive space for all employees to address their HR needs.

Performance Measure

1) Countywide Employee Survey or WESP Performance Measure Survey

Benchmark 2.8

Create a centralized accommodation unit within Central HR to oversee the accommodation process by:

- Improving communications on the accommodations services available to all staff.
- Developing a standardized onboarding process that includes assessment of any needed ergonomic and/or adaptive equipment.
- Creating, implementing and maintaining an ADA Accommodation Guidebook that includes helpful information (e.g., equipment available outside of formal accommodation process, lending library, etc.).

Objectives

To ensure the ADA accommodations process is consistent and employees with disabilities have access to all the information they need to access accommodations.

Performance Measure

1) Disability Experience Survey

Benchmark 2.9

Discuss the feasibility of transferring FTE from Organizational Learning to the ODE to support countywide learning with a focus on culturally specific/responsive development and curriculum. Hold discussions with all parties to discuss impact and intent on the teams, department and organization.

Objectives

To support and design curriculum intended to educate employees, executive leadership, managers, supervisors and frontline staff on gender equity, identity and expression, and culture, developed with a culturally specific perspective.

Performance Measure

- 1) Development of an ODE role to support culturally specific curriculum
- 2) Employee to support countywide learning transferred to ODE

Benchmark 2.10

Develop minimum staffing level for departmental Equity Teams to assist in the facilitation of WESP performance measure implementation, provide updates for WESP annual reporting and carry out departmental equity-related initiatives.

Objectives

To secure a baseline amount of funding so all departments are guaranteed a consistent level of internal equity support.

Performance Measure

- 1) Review departmental budgets to determine:
 - a. funds needed to fill those roles
 - b. shortfalls within the current budget
 - c. amount of additional funds needed to implement recommendations.
- 2) Develop program offers to fund equity roles that do not currently exist.

Benchmark 2.11

Ensure all Central HR Benefits staff can demonstrate the knowledge and skills to create a seamless way for employees to access affordable gender-affirming care.

External: Pursue healthcare navigator model for County health plans specific to gender-affirming care. Patient navigators will help guide County employees through the complex benefit programs to ensure access to affordable gender-affirming care.

Internal: Develop resources regarding the County's benefit coverage for gender-affirming care. Implement outreach and communication strategies to increase employee knowledge and awareness of benefit coverage.

Objectives

To ensure that staff within Human Resources provide a safe and inclusive space for employees to get the right information to access gender-affirming care.

Performance Measure

- 1) Benefits Satisfaction Survey
- 2) Recruit, hire and train HR professionals with experience with gender-affirming care.
- 3) Central HR to determine additional resources needed (e.g., KSA role) to be successful.

Initiative 3: Retention

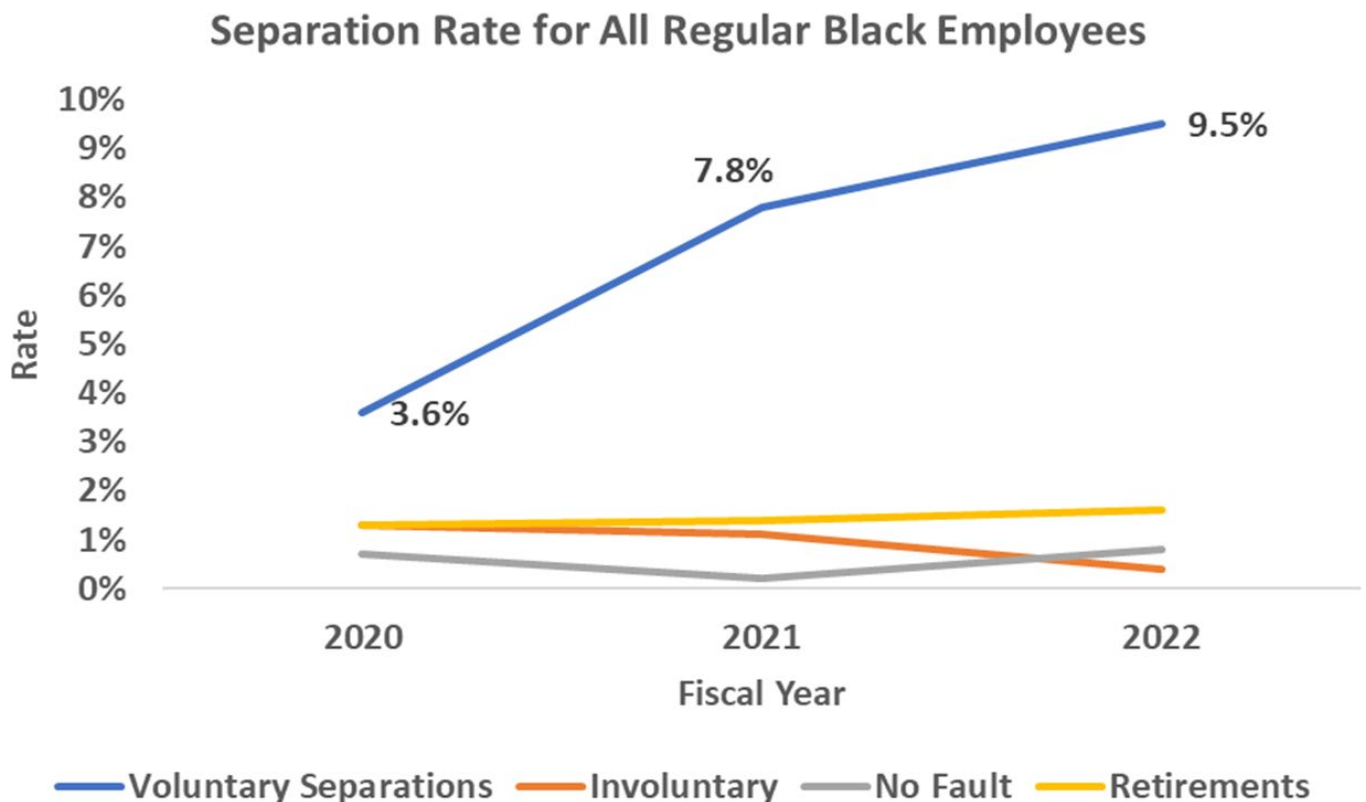
The benchmarks of this initiative aim to address disparities in retention as identified through the County’s latest Employment Trends Report.

An analysis of our Employment Trends data revealed discrepancies between retention rates of white employees and those of staff of color, particularly Black employees. Despite ongoing efforts to increase diversity across all racial/ethnic categories, we are still witnessing the highest voluntary separation rates among Black managers and staff.

This underscores the urgent need for culturally specific retention strategies that target disparities within these communities and demographics. The retention disparities also prompt questions about the underlying

conditions that contribute to these issues. Further study and evaluation are necessary to formulate effective strategies that can counter the attrition rates of managers and staff of color, with a specific focus on our Black staff.

The renewal plan pushes for the consistent implementation and analysis of stay and exit interviews countywide. Exit interviews are conducted with departing employees to gather feedback on their experiences and reasons for leaving, while stay interviews are proactive conversations with current employees aimed at understanding their job satisfaction, identifying factors contributing to their engagement and addressing potential concerns to enhance retention.



FY 2020-FY 2022 Employment Trends Report, p. 18

A countywide tracking system for completed stay interviews does not currently exist. A preliminary review of exit questionnaire data from 2022 indicates that of 651 voluntary separations among all regular employees, 308 exit surveys were completed in Workday. Capturing feedback about ways the County can retain staff from less than half of employees separating voluntarily shows that a more concentrated effort is needed to capture the experiences of employees, with a particular focus on managers of color.

Beyond racial categories, there are also disparities with LGBTQIA2S+ staff, especially transgender and gender diverse employees. This issue is further complicated by the lack of accurate data and categorization in Workday of these identities within our workforce — a crucial data shortcoming considering Multnomah County's role in providing support services for the LGBTQIA2S+ community. According to the Employment Trends workforce demographic data dashboard,⁶ by the end of December 2023, almost 50% of employees had not yet responded to the gender identity question in Workday.

An additional area of study this plan recommends is understanding the role of Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accommodation requests and retention through an intersectional approach. This involves measuring not only accommodations for disabilities, but also cross-referencing accommodation requests and approvals with race and other demographic categories.

While resources like mentorship programs and onboarding exist countywide to support retention, their impact remains unclear. A common sentiment within the organization is that experiences in any particular department or HR program do not resonate in other parts of the County. The focus of this conversation emphasizes consistency across the entire organization, requiring collaboration among Central HR, departmental HR, equity managers and the WESP Implementation Committee.

This set of Retention benchmarks also includes recommendations regarding evaluation and data collection, which are pivotal to tracking our progress.

WESP Steering Committee members and subject matter experts participating in an after-lunch activity during a work session on Accountability.



6 The Department of County Management's Evaluation and Research Unit (ERU) developed and maintains the Multnomah County Employment Trends Dashboards as part of the broader [Employment Trends project](#). Dashboards are updated quarterly.

Benchmark 3.1

The Office of Diversity and Equity (ODE) implements manager stay interviews annually for a representative sample of managers countywide and provides an annual report of the findings, with a specific engagement focus on capturing the experiences of Black, Indigenous, and other managers of color.

Objectives

To determine training, professional development and leadership development needs of managers based on interview analysis.

Performance Measure

1) Annual report of stay interviews for managers, with an emphasis on Black, Indigenous and other managers of color

Benchmark 3.3

Identify pain points experienced by County departments demonstrating an increase in turnover rates of managers identifying as Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC), and identify strategies for rectifying the issues with assistance from ODE, Central HR and departmental HR.

Objectives

To increase manager retention and decrease turnover rate of Black, Indigenous and other managers of color.

Performance Measure

- 1) Stay and exit interviews for managers who identify as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)
- 2) Countywide Employee Survey
- 3) Employment Trends data on retention

Benchmark 3.2

Department HR to complete annual comprehensive employee stay interviews for a representative sample of employees and provide a report with recommendations based on interview data analysis.

Objectives

To contextualize the employee experience, align findings with the Countywide Employee Survey, and inform County policy and investments.

Performance Measure

- 1) Stay interview and Workday data
- 2) Countywide Employee Survey

Benchmark 3.4

Develop a comprehensive catalog of Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) retention strategies to assist executive leadership generate ideas that better support and retain those leaders and managers.

Objectives

To increase retention of managers identifying as Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) by providing support and a sense of belonging in the workplace.

Performance Measure

- 1) BIPOC Manager Data from stay and exit interviews for managers who identify as Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC)
- 2) Countywide Employee Survey
- 3) Employment Trends data on retention

Benchmark 3.5

Evaluate the barriers (such as adequate levels of staffing) for employees to participate in Employee Resource Groups (ERGs), community-building events, equity work and wellness benefits.

Objectives

To ensure employees are able to fully engage in the workplace by connecting with peers with shared lived experiences, participating in work that feels meaningful to them and prioritizing personal well-being.

Performance Measure

- 1) Development of an assessment of employee/manager perceptions of barriers preventing participation in ERGs and equity work
- 2) ERG and equity work participation assessment (by department) to identify strategies for removing barriers

Initiative 4: Training

The renewal plan's Training benchmarks seek to expand equity concepts by modifying employee training, leadership development and onboarding experiences. This set of benchmarks includes integrating a focus on equity into trainings, adjustments to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accommodation and compensation processes, and a focus on addressing professional development strategies.

For instance, the [Disability Equity WESP Survey](#), an assessment conducted with the Including Disability in Equity and Access (IDEA) Employee Resource Group (ERG), ERG leaders, and all staff with an accommodation request in Workday indicated a need for an improved accommodation request process. According to the survey, the top four reasons employees did not complete the accommodation process after starting it were:

1. Lack of support on the ADA process.
2. Delays with medical provider.
3. Poor communication from Human Resources.
4. Feeling that the process is overwhelming/took too much time.

The creation of a new centralized accommodation unit within Central HR as benchmarked in the Infrastructure initiative should be coupled with a concentrated effort to train staff, managers and HR staff to increase knowledge of the streamlined process. Additional training, with a focus on addressing ableism and promoting disability justice, is also included in the benchmarks.

When it comes to specific training efforts, training sessions should be led or co-led by trainers with lived experience, such as people with disabilities, local tribal community members, trainers who are Black, Indigenous and other People of Color (BIPOC), and BIPOC gender diverse providers.

Data from the [2021 Countywide Employee Survey](#) indicated that 67% of employees who identified with a disability reported having opportunities at work to learn and grow, a significant decline from 2019. Slightly over half of Native American employees agreed with this statement, while 71% of Black employees agreed with this statement; neither group demonstrated a significant change from 2019. While data from transgender employees was not collected in 2019, 60% of employees who identified as transgender agreed with this statement in the 2021 survey. These findings suggest there is room to improve on the training and professional development opportunities offered to the County's diverse workforce.

In addition to providing more diverse training opportunities, the Renewal Steering Committee also identified the need for measuring the impact of training efforts on the County organizational culture. The plan recommends that follow-up assessments be developed to not only measure knowledge gained, but also the impact the training has on employee behavior.

The Training benchmarks also recommend that the findings from the training assessments be incorporated into the employee Performance Planning and Review (PPR) to ensure employees are applying what they have learned.

Benchmark 4.1

Develop local community contracts with Native American trainers who have tribal knowledge to lead sensitivity and culturally specific training sessions.

Objectives

To increase County staff awareness on tribal culture, norms and practices, and improve the employee and community/client experience.

Performance Measure

- 1) Contract members of the local tribal community to develop a series of sensitivity and culturally specific training sessions.
- 2) Develop a policy requiring all employees to engage in training sessions.
- 3) Develop a tracking system to record the number of trainings implemented and number of employees trained.
- 4) Develop pre- and post-surveys to capture knowledge gain.

Benchmark 4.2

Through collaboration between the Office of Diversity and Equity (ODE) and Organizational Learning (OL), develop a centralized countywide mandatory baseline equity training that includes (but is not limited to) topics about racism, gender, gender identity, anti-Blackness, xenophobia, Islamophobia, antisemitism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism and sanism, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) rights and requests, etc.

Objectives

To enhance baseline knowledge on equity and illustrate how oppression manifests in the experiences of members of marginalized communities.

Performance Measure

- 1) Collaborate with OL and review current countywide training curriculums.
- 2) Enhance or create a countywide training curriculum.
- 3) Develop an assessment of training curriculum goals and objectives (e.g., training series completion, training completion tracking, training assessment data).

Benchmark 4.3

Implement a standardized countywide onboarding process to include employee rights for ADA accommodations.

Objectives

To ensure employees understand how to engage leaders in requesting appropriate ADA accommodations.

Performance Measure

- 1) Review onboarding material to ensure inclusion of ADA/accommodation employee rights information.
- 2) Disability Experience Survey

Benchmark 4.4

Each department to implement or enhance their employee onboarding experience by integrating equity topics (e.g., Inclusively Leading with Race, microaggressions, Safety, Trust and Belonging, etc.), best practices and core competencies into departmental new employee orientations.

Objectives

To ensure everyone has a baseline understanding of equity topics and best practices.

Performance Measure

- 1) Review employee onboarding processes across the County.
- 2) Departmental review or implementation of their onboarding processes
- 3) Standardized, onboarding training guide

Benchmark 4.5

Enhance the current department trial service process for employees during their first year at defined intervals based on union contract or personnel rules. Manager to provide support and ensure success through results gained using the New Employee Hire Survey.

Objectives

To ensure employees receive the tools, information and guidance necessary to pass their trial service and experience professional growth at the County.

Performance Measure

- 1) Implement New Employee Hire Survey for managers to document activities around support and professional development opportunities.
- 2) Document survey findings in Workday.
- 3) Employment Trends data on retention (by post-probationary period) (ongoing)

Benchmark 4.6

Investment in and enhancement of culturally specific professional development opportunities for all employees.

Objectives

To increase employee awareness and knowledge of culturally specific experiences at the County.

Performance Measure

- 1) Employment Trends data about retention and promotion rates

Initiative 5: Data

The benchmarks for this initiative aim to ensure that data collection efforts accurately reflect the diversity of the workforce.

While race/ethnicity categories were updated in Workday in 2017, there are other demographic categories (e.g., gender identity and sexual orientation) that were only recently updated in 2023. Race/ethnicity categories are also expected to be updated in 2024 based on the federal guidelines slated to be released this summer.

In addition to collecting demographic information, a concerted effort must be made to more consistently track the experiences of employees with disabilities to inform disability policies and practices.

The need for this work is clear. Data from the Disability Equity WESP Survey indicated that the top three reasons why employees who needed an accommodation did not start the process were:

1. The process is overwhelming/takes too much time.
2. Lack of support on the ADA process.
3. Fear of stigma/implications on their career.

In addition, overall job satisfaction declined for employees with a disability between 2019 and 2021, along with a statistically significant decline in affirmative responses to a survey question about feeling valued.

Data collection practices to ensure the WESP benchmarks are implemented and working as intended will also need to be developed. While there are some data collection efforts in place, such as the Countywide Employee Survey and Employment Trends reports, these are not specifically designed to address the WESP benchmarks, nor do they take place annually. As such, specific data collection processes need to be developed and standardized for all departments to ensure the necessary information is being collected and will be available for WESP annual evaluation assessments. These assessments will help inform WESP implementation progress and address recommendation outcomes.



Walle Brown, DCJ WESP Project Manager, presenting ideas from a breakout group during a work session on the topic of Data.

Benchmark 5.1

Implement a Disability Experience Survey that occurs every other year; align disability questions with the Countywide Employee Survey to supplement findings.

Objectives

To ensure staff with disabilities feel comfortable sharing their experiences without fear of retribution and that their experiences are captured through the lens of consultants with disability experience.

Performance Measure

- 1) Disability Experience Survey
- 2) Employee Engagement Survey

Benchmark 5.3

Implement inclusive identity data collection practices that reflect multi-racial identities within the workforce.

Objectives

To enhance the representation of multi-racial identities by offering the selection of multiple racial identity categories in Workday.

Performance Measure

- 1) Updated Workday race/ethnicity selection processes (to include multi-identity selection)

Benchmark 5.2

Contract with external consultant that has experience and knowledge of the issues faced by people with disabilities to evaluate experiences for employees with disabilities and can provide external perspective of organizational progress.

Objectives

To ensure staff with disabilities feel comfortable sharing their experiences without fear of retribution and their experiences are captured through the lens of consultants with disability experience. Supporting what is learned from internal surveys.

Performance Measure

- 1) Evaluation report
- 2) Employment Trends data

Initiative 6: Evaluation and Policy

The Evaluation and Policy topic was added by the Renewal Steering Committee during the initial review process when recommendations were grouped based on theme, similar recommendations were combined and duplicates removed. This topic was established to capture the recommendations that are out of alignment with other initiatives and require research, evaluation and/or policy change.

This set of benchmarks evaluates wellness offerings, such as the Employee Assistance

Program (EAP), for cultural specificity and relevance to employees of color, gender diverse staff and employees with disabilities.

In addition, these benchmarks call for an evaluation of whether the County is successfully addressing the culturally specific needs of LGBTQIA2S+ community members and community members with disabilities. Both benchmarks enhance policies to improve employee wellness and culturally responsive services.

Benchmark 6.1

Evaluate wellness benefit offerings to increase culturally specific and intersectional services for our workforce.

Objectives

To ensure wellness benefits and EAP services are provided for employees by providers who understand their culture, identity and values.

Performance Measure

1) Wellness benefit offerings review

Benchmark 6.2

Evaluate departmental programs and services to recruit and maintain staffing resources for LGBTQIA2S+ individuals and people with disabilities. Central HR to provide support by developing recruitment resources for all employees, with emphasis on LGBTQIA2S+ individuals and people with disabilities.

Objectives

To encourage LGBTQIA2S+ and Disability community members' workforce participation; ensure individuals with experience are properly compensated for their valuable expertise, and more comprehensive services are provided to the community

Performance Measure

1) Employment Trends data

Initiative 7: Compensation

Discussions about the topic of Compensation originally aimed to address the need for equitable recognition and compensation in response to the additional responsibilities associated with countywide equity work. As the Renewal Process participants proposed recommendations — such as fair compensation for volunteer work and the exploration of issues related to expanding benefits for staff — it became evident that the compensation aspect should be integrated into the bargaining process to thoroughly address concerns raised by staff. Although distinct from the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan (WESP), conversations about compensation are imperative regardless and we eagerly anticipate collaborating with labor unions.

A notable finding during the Renewal Process was the absence of specific classifications for equity-related roles in the workforce. The sole benchmark for this initiative recognizes the necessity of assessing and analyzing these roles in the context of equity, which includes the reclassification or establishment of a classification for County equity practitioners.

The urgency to address this matters has grown along with the substantial expansion of the County's equity infrastructure that has seen the creation of over 62.72 FTE⁷ since 2018. These positions have all been placed under Human Resources, including analysts and managers, which has posed challenges in maintaining consistent job descriptions and compensation structures.

This HR-centric classification has introduced complexities in relationships, as equity positions are often situated outside HR offices or departments, leading to confusion about roles, responsibilities and accountability.

Looking ahead, the renewal plan supports the standardization of certain aspects of job descriptions to enhance effectiveness and equity throughout the organization. This proactive approach reflects a commitment to continuous improvement and the establishment of a more equitable compensation framework.

Benchmark 7.1

Review equity manager and equity analyst roles to determine if a separate job classification is appropriate. Conduct an overarching assessment, as well as organizational and strategic analyses, about equity roles (e.g., Equity and Inclusion Manager I,II, III; Equity Analyst; Equity Analyst Sr.)

Objectives

To ensure equity work is fairly recognized and compensated according to job classifications.

Performance Measure

1) Department HR to report on classification status annually

Initiative 8: Standard Practice

The benchmarks relating to the Standard Practice initiative focus on operationalizing the County's commitment to equity outlined in the LGBTQIA2S+ Workgroup section of the report. They are also intended to eliminate the barriers to support, safety and belonging that many gender diverse and trans staff experience — including navigation of gender-affirming benefits and name/pronoun changes — that also stand in the way of recruitment and retention efforts.

Renewal Process participants approached this topic with the aim to create processes that permeate the County at all levels. Adopting precautionary and trauma-informed practices for workforce equity and exploring targeted approaches for each department aids in ensuring consistency countywide.

Benchmark 8.1

Demonstrate commitment to retaining employees who identify as transgender and gender diverse by streamlining processes for name and pronoun changes.

Objectives

To ensure gender diverse employees are able to initiate and complete these administrative tasks.

Performance Measure

- 1) Develop and provide "Name and Pronoun Guide" materials (e.g., workshop sign-up, video and step-by-step guide).
- 2) Review Countywide Employee Survey data

Benchmark 8.2

All position descriptions will be updated to reflect current essential job functions.

Objectives

To ensure job descriptions are accurate, reduce barriers for potential job applicants, increase access to Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accommodations and outline equity expectations (e.g., Inclusively Leading with Race; budget equity and equity lens tool; Safety, Trust and Belonging; etc.).

Performance Measure

- 1) Develop an annual position description guide and timeline to assist managers.
- 2) Identify any additional resources and/or infrastructure needed to meet the annual timeline.
- 3) Document ADA accommodation requests before and after annual reviews.

Guidance on Implementation

This document includes the distilled briefs and vetted benchmarks identified from our Workforce Equity Strategic Plan Renewal process. An additional addendum,

encompassing a detailed implementation plan that is delineated year by year, is slated for presentation during the March 14, 2024 briefing to the Board of County Commissioners.

Key Components of the Implementation Plan

1. Guidance for Departments and County Offices

- Clear directives for departments and County offices to integrate equity initiatives into their operations.
- Strategies to align existing workflows with the overarching goals of the renewal process.

2. Leadership Engagement

- Tailored guidance for leadership, emphasizing their pivotal role in driving the cultural shift toward equity.
- Leadership-specific initiatives designed to foster a culture of inclusivity and proactive engagement in the renewal process.

3. Roles of Equity Managers

- Defined roles and responsibilities for equity managers, ensuring they fill a central role in implementing and championing equity initiatives within their respective spheres.
- Work closely with the Chief Diversity and Equity Officer to align on strategy, implementation and support.

4. Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)

- Strategic incorporation of ERGs into the implementation plan, recognizing their role as catalysts for positive change.
- Guidance on how ERGs can contribute to and amplify the impact of the renewal process.