

Office of Diversity & Equity - Findings and Recommendations

August 27, 2012

Submitted by: Artharee & Associates

Leadership, Commitment and Communication from the Chair's Office	
FINDINGS	RECOMMENDATIONS
<p>The message on equity & diversity from the Chair and Commissioners has been demonstrated through county documents, contracts, hiring, and through mainstream employee communications.</p> <p>Communication on equity & diversity could be strengthened from the director and manager levels.</p> <p>Although many directors would like to attend Employee Resource Group hosted events/activities they are often hampered by issues of location, time, and department priorities.</p> <p>Relocating the OED to the 6th floor has been symbolic and given the office respect and credibility.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The Chair's office needs to communicate directly with department directors about the mission and responsibilities of ODE.2. The chair should build an expectation that the directors will continue the diversity message to their respective managers.3. Directors and managers should be encouraged to attend / participate in employee diversity activities. There needs to be an increased level of visibility.4. New employee orientation is an opportunity for the Chair and selected directors to address the county's values of diversity and inclusion via a short video shown at each session.5. The Chair should be seen on the diversity website with a strong statement of support.

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Clarity of the Office of Diversity and Equity’s Mission, Responsibilities, Structure and Resources	
FINDINGS	RECOMMENDATIONS
<p>Employees find the ODE Director and staff to be accessible and well informed on equity and diversity issues with the county.</p> <p>ODE has launched several programs that are educational and worthwhile such as: <i>The Dignity & Respect Campaign</i>; and <i>The Equity & Empowerment Lens</i>.</p> <p>There needs to be clarity of ODE’s time appropriated to outside community involvement versus the time spent on internal employee issues/activities.</p> <p>Some misunderstandings still persist in regards to the role and responsibilities of ODE and how it differs from the work of HR.</p> <p>The office of ODE has been somewhat visible and has established a very informative website but it would be helpful to further define and communicate their role more widely.</p> <p>In the last diversity audit, there seemed to be constant friction with HR as well as a lack of trust. This has now developed into a relationship of mutual respect and cooperation. Collaboration has been successful in addressing personnel issues.</p> <p>Some directors/managers would like ODE to take a more systematic approach in identifying and addressing major initiatives. A desire expressed for ODE to take on a smaller number of priorities (3-4) placing more focus and depth into those projects.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There needs to be immediate clarity about the reporting structure of ODE within the Chair’s office and the advisory role of ODE versus line manager authority. 2. ODE should seek to even better coordinate with HR and other internal partners on programs, such as the “Dignity & Respect Campaign”. This will utilize existing networks to reach a wider audience of employees and achieve greater success. 3. ODE needs a distinctive branding that identifies and articulates the vision, mission and responsibilities.

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Confusion over the employee complaint process outside of union grievances	
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<p>The complaint process that is on the website is the formal process which is applicable to harassment, discrimination, and retaliation. It is well documented.</p> <p>The informal complaint process for other types of employee concerns is unclear to most of the staff.</p> <p>Since the departure of the Affirmative Action Officer, there is more confusion as to where the more “common” employee complaints are handled.</p> <p>Employees want a neutral place and person with whom to discuss concerns. Someone that can advise them on how to resolve workplace issues and concerns.</p> <p>ODE and the Equity Council have been working to provide employees with a written document of an informal complaint procedure. It is believed that this work has not been completed because of workload and priority issues at ODE.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The informal complaint process should be reduced to fewer options (2-3) within accessible places and departments.2. A written procedure for the purpose of filing a complaint should be developed and communicated to all employees by HR and ODE.

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Address perceptions of barriers being created by the legal and human resources departments	
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<p>The legal department has been instrumental in providing departmental training sessions that have clarified their role in the employment process.</p> <p>ODE has created opportunities to collaborate with the legal department and that has reduced the tensions from the past of “us vs. them”.</p> <p>The director of the legal department is seen as someone who is approachable, accessible and an honest broker of what can be done while balancing the legal, political and organizational realities of the various departments and a very diverse employees base.</p> <p>Employees want more information and training from the legal department about ways they can be assisted to achieve the county’s goals of equity and diversity. And they want to know if their expectations are realistic.</p> <p>The county has a great commitment to recruiting and hiring minorities but retention is problematic, particularly during the 90-day probation period.</p> <p>A number of employees had concerns about a perceived hiring process, which gives interim employees and interns the ability to circumvent the normal applicant hiring process.</p> <p>The Employee Survey conducted by HR had a high rate of participation and high scores on many workplace issues. This has also been an excellent indicator of the progress that the county has made in equity and diversity. Over the past several years.</p> <p>There is confusion over the roles of central HR versus department HR among some staff.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct exit interviews for those employees not successful in completing their probationary period. Have Central Human Resources and ODE review the information and formulate ideas for improvements. 2. Central Human Resources should look into the allegations made regarding the practice of hiring candidates into regular positions who have been interning or hired as part-time/temporary workers. 3. The legal department should continue their course in educating departments on the role they are charged with as it pertains to protecting the county from unnecessary litigation while promoting the goals of equity and diversity within the county. 4. To stay proactive, the county would benefit from conducting an Employee Survey after the results of the “span of control” become more clearly and accurately known.

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The Purpose and Value of the Diversity Advisory Council (Equity Council)	
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<p>The Diversity Advisory Council has been successfully re-chartered as The Equity Council.</p> <p>The Equity Council has been right-sized with the expertise of cross section of key county staff members.</p> <p>The Equity Council’s role has been defined to serve as an advisor to ODE.</p> <p>The Equity Council is ready to assume more substantial work but needs structure and more formalized direction.</p> <p>Employees would appreciate recognition from department directors for the work that is being done by the Employee Resource Groups.</p> <p>The Employee Resource Groups have added Immigrants, Working Parents and Veterans to their network since 2010.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Chair’s office needs to communicate that time allowed during work for these types of committees are appropriate. 2. There should be encouragement for employees to participate as appropriate in diversity activities. 3. The Equity Council meetings need an agenda with structure but allow time for members to share and interact. 4. Employees want more details on projects/issues that are results driven.

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Collection of Data	
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<p>There has been a vast improvement on data collection in terms of the ODE staff member and how efficiently and accurately she can explain and deliver information.</p> <p>The collection of data on demographics and other helpful statistical information can be trusted.</p> <p>Many employees did not know where this department was housed and what information was available and useful to them.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Widely promote the services and assistance that is available.

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Overall Communication	
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<p>Referring employees to the website is not the most effective means of communication.</p> <p>The “Executive Learning Series” for directors has been a compelling tool for communicating equity and diversity.</p> <p>The health department has shown leadership in utilizing the “Equity Lens” training to instill the value of equity and diversity throughout the county.</p> <p>Under the direction of the ODE Director, the website’s link pertaining to issues of equity and diversity has significantly improved.</p> <p>There is a general assumption by central administration that those located in the field see the website as a primary communication tool.</p> <p>Employees will often gage their level of enthusiasm and support for an issue/program depending on their management’s initial support and accountability.</p> <p>Although ODE does not conduct formal complaint investigations, they can play an important role by providing “preventative training” to managers/supervisors on how to avoid complaints that can often lead to full investigations.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The “Executive learning Series” should be broadened to include managers. 2. Assure that the information on the human resource and ODE links is current. 3. Increase the use of email communications from the Chair’s office and directors in lieu of just referring people to the website. 4. ODE should continue its on-site visits to departments and making presentations/training to particularly those in field locations. 5. When possible remove the firewall between the county and the Sheriff’s Office. Over 1000 employees do not have the benefit of the diversity and inclusion emails and links.

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The State of Multnomah Evolves: Span of Control	
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<p>There is tremendous confusion and negative reception for the perceived results of the “span of control” aspect of this report.</p> <p>There is concern among employee groups that the ODE was not among those involved with this report.</p> <p>Many employees fear that “span of control” will disparately impact people of color and thus undo the work that has been accomplished by the county.</p> <p>Concerns were expressed that The Coraggio Group Report may have failed to consider that within 5 years’ time, 50% of the county’s workforce will retire.</p> <p>The “span of control” issue has been thoroughly misunderstood. There were considerations in the first communication that were not detailed and explained.</p> <p>The results were a less than accurate representation of how the span of control could affect the workforce.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. HR is to provide a more accurate account of what the “span of control” will mean to each department by taking a snapshot of what the workforce looked like in July 2011 and again in July 2012.2. ODE and HR should monitor the workforce snapshots for 2011 and 2012 to address any negative results produced by the “span of control”.

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Dignity and Respect Campaign	
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<p>The program has been received with enthusiasm by many employees,</p> <p>Some questions and concerns about why this particular campaign; what does it solve; too pre-packaged; too basic.</p> <p>The signing of pledges of employee participation has been low.</p> <p>Middle and senior management are lacking in their knowledge and support of the program.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The program should be re-introduced to the department directors/managers to gain buy-in and support.2. ODE should do more “face to face” presentations of the program within departments.3. Set a goal for the percentage of employees to have signed the pledge.4. Measure results in a fun manner such as construct an oversized meter type display that visually shows the upward results.