



Common Council Chief of Staff
Position Review and Re-envisioning

Common Council Chief of Staff Position Executive Summary

In December 2019, the Common Council Chief of Staff (CCCoS) proactively initiated a review of the newly created CCCoS position in order to identify areas of strength and opportunity as the position is currently written; and to inform a potential “re-envisioning” of the position and subsequent update of the position description. The survey was distributed to 61 City Staff listed in the Common Council Resource Guide, and to City of Madison Alders; 19 out of 61 City Staff participated in the survey (31%) and 11 out of 20 alders participated in the survey (55%).

This report includes a high-level review of the Common Council Chief of Staff Survey results. Overall findings can be found in the following Addendum:

- Addendum A - Alder Survey Results
- Addendum B – City Staff Survey Results
- Addendum C – Qualitative Responses

Survey Highlights:

The Common Council Chief of Staff is a new position with the City of Madison. The position was created to support three major focus areas.

- 1) **Strategic management of the Council Office and staff** – this includes developing staff and program level strategies, setting priorities, problem solving and providing leadership to ensure optimal support for Alders in the execution of Alder initiatives and responsibilities.
- 2) **Expert consultation and support for Alders in the analysis of City policy** – including supporting Alders in navigating City legislative and administrative processes and procedures.
- 3) **Relationship building and communication support** – this includes serving as a communication and policy liaison between the Common Council Office, the Mayor’s Office, City managers and staff, and the public.

Over 1/3 of respondents were unable to agree or disagree with survey questions and choose either “Unsure” and/or “Neither Agree or Disagree” for their responses. There are a number of potential reasons for these responses, however qualitative data points to a gap in knowledge about the role of the Common Council Chief of Staff Position and to the need for standardizing processes to support greater engagement and accessibility to the services and information available through the CCCoS.

This need is not unique to this position. As part of the implementation of Performance Excellence at the City of Madison, a baseline survey to assess the city as a workplace took place in November of 2018. The survey results were intended to inform the City in regards to identifying challenges, planning for and evaluating improvements, and sustaining organizational effectiveness for the long term. Responses to the survey indicated that throughout the organization there is fractured or inconsistent messaging.

Recommendations:

Suspend any “re-envisioning” of the position and any subsequent updates of the position description until process improvements can be implemented to support greater alignment with the intended role and function of the position.

Next steps:

- **Create a communication plan** and support documents as needed to create shared understanding of the Common Council Chief of Staff role and responsibilities.
"I've never been told, or seen information regarding the role of the CCCS." – City Staff
"I am unsure of the role and what I should expect." – City Staff
- **Standardize process for when and how to request support from the Common Council Chief of Staff.**
"...Develop a trackable request form to be completed by Alders..." – Alder
"Help responding to complicated requests from constituents, navigating city departments, and info gathering help for complex and multistep requests." – Alder
- **Standardize format for ongoing information sharing.**
"Where does this position provide updates to Dept Heads and how?" – City Staff
"I receive almost no services or information from the CCCoS..." - Alder
- **Standardize policy development and implementation process.**
"Pro-active development, analysis and strategy for policy element(s) with a policy status review." – Alder
"...list of priorities from council members/updates on policy changes." – City Staff
- **Conduct a follow-up assessment in a year to measure impact of process improvements.**

These steps should improve engagement with the Common Council Chief of Staff (CCCoS) which will benefit the City of Madison, as there appears to be some correlation between level of engagement with the CCCoS and level of satisfaction with the services or information received.

City Staff respondents:

- 13 of the 19 respondents (68%) from City Staff report being either somewhat engaged or very engaged with the Common Council Chief of Staff (CCCoS); 10 of 13 (77%) report being satisfied or very satisfied with the services or information received from the CCCoS.
"Current level of communication and information sharing is good." – City Staff
"Relationship and communication has been very good." – City Staff
"Continue to aid in communication with council members." – City Staff

Alder respondents:

- 7 of 13 respondents (54%) of Alder respondents report being either somewhat engaged or very engaged with the Common Council Chief of Staff (CCCoS); 5 of 7 (71%) report being satisfied or very satisfied with the services or information received from the CCCoS.

Data Limitations:

- **Survey Distribution List** - The survey was distributed to a larger cross section of city staff, however Department Heads are the primary contact for the Common Council Chief of Staff. Any future survey or assessment should include Department Heads only.
- **Data Collection Methodology** – Surveys do not allow for follow-up questions. With the number of "Unsure" and/or "Neither Agree or Disagree" responses, a focus group to gather more information may be of value.
- **New Department Heads and Alders** – Approximately 9/20 Alders and 7/27 Department Heads were relatively new in their roles at the time of the survey. This may have disproportionately influenced the "Unsure" and/or "Neither Agree or Disagree" responses.

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