



# CITY OF MADISON

## PERFORMANCE EXCELLENCE



## Employee Voice

### Executive Summary and Recommendations

#### Background

Employees are the city's greatest resource and greatest link to the community. Employee feedback helps the Leadership Team for Performance Excellence and individual city departments make better, more informed decisions about issues impacting employees, which in turn influences the level and quality of city services to Madison residents.

As part of the implementation of Performance Excellence at the City of Madison, a baseline was needed to assess the city as a workplace. This survey was informed by previous surveys, such as the Multicultural Affairs Committee Workplace Climate Survey in 2017, and will be replicated in future years in order to measure progress.

City employees were invited to participate in the City's first National Employee Survey, administered by the National Research Center during the period of November 5-25, 2018. The invitation to participate was sent to every employee on the payroll at the end of October 2018, either in electronic or paper form and 60% of over 3,000 employees participated.

The survey provides opinions of employees regarding their satisfaction on the job and other key characteristics of a quality work environment, such as communication, organizational ethics, employee fit, wages and benefits, relationships, the job feedback systems, professional development and self-reported performance. The survey results are intended to inform the City in regards to identifying challenges, planning for and evaluating improvements, and sustaining organizational effectiveness for the long term.

The National Employee Survey is about the work environment of the City of Madison. A quality work environment is a workplace which is not simply acceptable, but that is desirable. It is not only where people do work, but where they want to work. Results of this and other surveys will help the City embody the vision of being Inclusive, Innovative & Thriving.

## Findings

The findings of the comprehensive study returned the following highlights, or three key focus areas:

- (1) City of Madison employees are satisfied with their jobs and plan to stay
- (2) Employee development and performance evaluation opportunities could be enhanced
- (3) Bolstering communication efforts between leadership and employees could increase confidence

### **City of Madison employees are satisfied with their jobs and plan to stay**

A key discovery that the City must build on is that employees are engaged, committed and want to contribute to the greater good. That is borne out statistically in the number of employees that participated (60%), felt satisfied with their job (85%), felt positive about working for the City (87%), felt the City was a good employer (90%), gain satisfaction from the job (87%), believe that their co-workers are committed to doing quality work (85%), and most importantly, would recommend working for the City of Madison (88%).

Knowing that the City has an engaged population of employees, who not only like working for the City but are committed to doing quality work, is a great first step in implementing improvements that will enhance their experience. City of Madison employees want feedback, career growth opportunities, two-way communication and more responsibility to move the City forward.

*Benchmarks: As it relates to the three areas highlighted in the study, the City of Madison was similar to comparable cities as it relates to an engaged work force but higher than its peers as a place to work.*

### **Employee development and performance evaluation opportunities could be enhanced**

Employee development and a feedback loop were recognized as key drivers to maintaining high job satisfaction. Key drivers are leading factors affecting performance of an organization. A key driver is something that has a big impact on whether the business thrives or struggles. It can also show warning signs for lower performance or results. The desire for better employee development opportunities and a feedback loop are supported by below-benchmark scores to key questions including:

- Received recognition in the last 7 days (58%)
- In the last 6 months, someone talked to me about my progress (50%), providing specific, constructive feedback (58%)
- Working together with employees to set goals (55%)
- Providing recognition for doing good work (56%)
- Encouraging innovative solutions to problems (53%)
- Dealing with low-performing employees (24%)
- Recognizing high-performing employees (36%)

Of these, responses to only one question – In the last 6 months, someone talked to me about my progress (50%) – were an order of magnitude (lower than 10 points) of the benchmark.

On the employee development side, lower scores on questions such as supporting continual learning and development (58%), opportunities to develop knowledge and skills (56%), coaching or mentoring employees (42%), opportunities for promotion (40%), opportunities to develop a career path (50%) all reflect a desire to improve the current status of employee development and opportunity.

*Benchmarks: The City of Madison ranked lower than its peers as it relates to employee development and performance feedback and there were eight questions that were lower than our peers in that category.*

### **Bolstering communication efforts between leadership and employees could increase confidence**

Throughout the survey report, the need to improve internal strategic communication at many levels was clear. Better communication in almost any organization is normally one of the top three opportunities for improvement and the City of Madison is no exception. Sprinkled throughout the survey results were communication issues that are having a direct or indirect adverse effect on our employees. Some questions here were below benchmark, including:

- Informing employees about decisions that impact work (61%)
- Communicating an inspiring vision (56%)
- Clarity of strategic direction, goals and objectives (54%)
- Communicating information in a timely manner (55%)
- Communicating information about problems facing the City of Madison (49%)
- Collaboration among staff (48%)

Responses indicate that throughout the organization there is fractured or inconsistent messaging.

*Benchmarks: As it relates to communication, the City of Madison was largely similar to its peers with three notable exceptions, which were lower than our peers: 1) Clarity of strategic direction, goals and objectives, 2) Speed of response to important issues or change and 3) Process for making important decisions.*

The Voice of the Customer (VOC) Committee accepts the study as valid and supports the recommendations as highlighted within the report. These are all actionable, quantifiable areas for improvement, and the City of Madison can track our progress during the next Employee Voice Survey cycle in 2020.

In addition, while not called out specifically in the consultant's report, in reviewing the survey results and reflecting on the City of Madison's five values – specifically Equity and Shared Prosperity – we want to add an additional focus on the responses of some employee demographic groups.

## Demographic Highlights

We reviewed the survey results relating to gender and race to identify disparities within the responses, where people of color, women, and non-binary people reported lower scores. With regard to the city-wide recommendations, the only disparity found was on two questions: providing specific constructive feedback (male 61%, female 55% and non-binary 41%) and working together with employees to set goals (male 57%, female 53% and non-binary 31%).

Overall, the survey response rate was very high at 60% with similar response rates for white (50%) and people of color (47%).\* Further, of the 2,136 survey results received, 397 respondents did not include demographic information. Finally, some racial, ethnic, and gender discrepancies in survey responses to questions outside of the three key focus areas also exist.

|                           | Total | Total less surveys with no indication of race or gender | White | Non-White | Male | Female | Non-Binary |
|---------------------------|-------|---------------------------------------------------------|-------|-----------|------|--------|------------|
| # of Employees (1)        | 3587  | 3587                                                    | 2890  | 658       | 2386 | 1198   |            |
| # of Survey Responses (2) | 1771  | 1771                                                    | 1464  | 307       | 977  | 714    | 36         |
| % of Employees            | 60%   | 49%                                                     | 51%   | 47%       | 41%  | 60%    |            |

(1) The total number of employees (3,587) includes 34 employees that did not indicate race and 5 that did not indicate gender

(2) The total number of survey responses does not include 397 employees who did not indicate race or gender

In addition, by using a national survey instrument, we gained the ability to compare ourselves to other cities, but we lost the terminology and inclusiveness that we value in Madison. We recognize that the way the survey data is presented, and the language used – specifically the combination of many unique perspectives and cultural backgrounds into the term “non-white” – is not reflective of the values of the City of Madison, and we will seek ways to improve the reporting of the survey vendor in the next survey.

*\*Dataset was provided by Human Resources in consultation with Department of Civil Rights as of February 2019.*

## Recommendations

Demonstrating continuous improvement requires that we all build upon the momentum provided by the employee survey toward the outcomes we seek. Based on these findings, the VOC committee makes the following recommendations:

**Develop Department/Division level survey response plans by May 1, 2019, to build upon and improve within the three key areas identified in employee survey findings as well as**

**other organizational culture issues identified as a priority in the department/division level survey results.**

- In March 2019, Organizational Development will present department/division specific results to department/division heads and provide templates for this plan.
- Departments/divisions may include in the plan those efforts already under way through other city or department-specific initiatives, such as actions described in equitable workforce plans (e.g., employee mentoring/onboarding; regular department-wide staff meetings, etc.).
- The results of these plans will inform a larger, city-wide action plan, below.

**Develop and implement a city-wide action plan to build upon and improve within three key areas identified by the survey, including:**

- Identify ways to maintain or increase job satisfaction across the city.
- Develop and implement training programs and development opportunities which support department/division actions in response to the focus areas and other organizational priorities identified in the department/division level survey results.
- With the support of a city-wide Public Information Officer, create a city-wide internal communications plan to improve strategic communication between supervisors and employees; within departments and divisions; among the elected officials of city government; and between city government and residents.

**Conduct additional analyses in key areas:**

- Examine survey disparities between demographic groups in order to set more specific goals to enhance the employment experience for employees of color, women employees, and employees who identify as non-binary. While there were very few disparities in the answers to questions relating to the three broad categories highlighted in survey results, the VOC committee observed other opportunities in the survey results that require further analysis.
- Examine the few questions where City of Madison employees gave responses that were an order of magnitude greater or lower than the benchmark. A city-wide response to these areas, if aligned with city-wide areas for improvement, may offer greater overall impact in ensuring that the City of Madison closes the widest gaps and capitalizes upon the greatest perceived strengths in the coming years.
- Support development of a city-wide data standard that is used for future measurement.

The VOC committee was encouraged by the overall report and believe implementation of these recommendations will result in improvements for all City of Madison employees.