

The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California

Agenda

The mission of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California is to provide its service area with adequate and reliable supplies of high-quality water to meet present and future needs in an environmentally and economically responsible way.

EO&P Committee

B. Pressman, Chair
T. Phan, Vice Chair
G. Bryant
M. Camacho
G. Cordero
C. Douglas
D. Erdman
S. Faessel
L. Fong-Sakai
F. Jung
J. Lewitt
J. McMillan
M. Ramos
N. Sutley

Ethics, Organization, and Personnel Committee - Final

Meeting with Board of Directors *

February 10, 2025

12:30 p.m.

Monday, February 10, 2025 Meeting Schedule

**09:00 a.m. EOT
11:00 a.m. LEG
12:00 p.m. Break
12:30 p.m. EOP
03:00 p.m. OWS**

Agendas, live streaming, meeting schedules, and other board materials are available here:

<https://mwdh2o.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx>. Written public comments received by 5:00 p.m. the business days before the meeting is scheduled will be posted under the Submitted Items and Responses tab available here:

<https://mwdh2o.legistar.com/Legislation.aspx>.

If you have technical difficulties with the live streaming page, a listen-only phone line is available at 1-877-853-5257; enter meeting ID: 862 4397 5848.

Members of the public may present their comments to the Board on matters within their jurisdiction as listed on the agenda via in-person or teleconference. To participate via teleconference 1-833-548-0276 and enter meeting ID: 815 2066 4276 or to join by computer [click here](#).

MWD Headquarters Building • 700 N. Alameda Street • Los Angeles, CA 90012

Teleconference Locations:

525 Via La Selva • Redondo Beach, CA 90277

City Hall • 303 W. Commonwealth Avenue • Fullerton, CA 92832

3024 Fairview Drive • Vista, CA 92084

Allendale Insurance Agency • 337 West Foothill Boulevard • Glendora, CA 91740

3008 W. 82nd Place • Inglewood, CA 90305

Santa Ana City Hall • 20 Civic Center Plaza • Santa Ana, CA 92701

* The Metropolitan Water District's meeting of this Committee is noticed as a joint committee meeting with the Board of Directors for the purpose of compliance with the Brown Act. Members of the Board who are not assigned to this Committee may participate as members of the Board, whether or not a quorum of the Board is present. In order to preserve the function of the committee as advisory to the Board, members of the Board who are not assigned to this Committee will not vote on matters before this Committee.

1. Opportunity for members of the public to address the committee on matters within the committee's jurisdiction (As required by Gov. Code Section 54954.3(a))

**** CONSENT CALENDAR ITEMS -- ACTION ****

2. CONSENT CALENDAR OTHER ITEMS - ACTION

- A. Approval of the Minutes of the Ethics, Organization, and Personnel Committee for January 13, 2025 (Copies have been submitted to each Director, any additions, corrections, or omissions) [21-4224](#)

Attachments: [02102025 EOP 2A \(01132025\) Minutes](#)

3. CONSENT CALENDAR ITEMS - ACTION

NONE

**** END OF CONSENT CALENDAR ITEMS ****

4. OTHER BOARD ITEMS - ACTION

NONE

5. BOARD INFORMATION ITEMS

NONE

6. COMMITTEE ITEMS

- a. Independent Workplace Culture Survey by Shaw Law Group [21-4225](#)

Attachments: [02102025 EOP 6a Presentation](#)

- b. Update on District Wide Workplace Assessment [21-4258](#)

Attachments: [02102025 EOP 6b Presentation](#)

7. MANAGEMENT ANNOUNCEMENTS AND HIGHLIGHTS

- a. Ethics Officer's report on monthly activities [21-4226](#)

Attachments: [02112025 EOP 7a Report](#)

- b. Equal Employment Opportunity activities
Human Resources activities
Safety, Security, and Protection activities

[21-4227](#)

Attachments: [02102025 EOP 7b Equal Employment Opportunity activities](#)

8. FOLLOW-UP ITEMS

NONE

9. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

10. ADJOURNMENT

NOTE: This committee reviews items and makes a recommendation for final action to the full Board of Directors. Final action will be taken by the Board of Directors. Committee agendas may be obtained on Metropolitan's Web site <https://mwdh2o.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx>. This committee will not take any final action that is binding on the Board, even when a quorum of the Board is present.

Writings relating to open session agenda items distributed to Directors less than 72 hours prior to a regular meeting are available for public inspection at Metropolitan's Headquarters Building and on Metropolitan's Web site <https://mwdh2o.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx>.

Requests for a disability-related modification or accommodation, including auxiliary aids or services, in order to attend or participate in a meeting should be made to the Board Executive Secretary in advance of the meeting to ensure availability of the requested service or accommodation.

THE METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

MINUTES

ETHICS, ORGANIZATION AND PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

January 13, 2025

Chair Pressman called the meeting to order at 8:32 a.m.

Members present: Directors Bryant, Camacho, Cordero, Douglas, Erdman, Faessel, Fong-Sakai, Jung, Lewitt, McMillan, Phan, Pressman, Ramos, and Sutley.

Members absent: None

Other Board Members present: Armstrong, Dennstedt, and Garza

Committee Staff present: Brower, Kasaine, Rubin, H. Rodriguez, Salinas, H. Torres, and Wisdom.

1. OPPORTUNITY FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC TO ADDRESS THE COMMITTEE ON MATTERS WITHIN THE COMMITTEE'S JURISDICTION

None

Chair Pressman announced agenda was rearranged, item 6c will be presented first.

6. COMMITTEE ITEMS

- c. Subject: Update on the Ad Hoc Committee for the Department Heads Evaluation Process, Next Steps for 2024-2025
- Presented by: Barry Pressman, Chair, Ethics, Organization, and Personnel Committee
- Eleanor Allen, Catapult for Change

Director pressman introduced the item as well as Eleanor Allen, a consultant working with the Ad Hoc committee. Ms. Allen gave an overview of the scope of work and expected outcomes for the department head evaluation process. She explained the two tasks developed. First task, Department head collaboration which include three workshops in February and March. Second task, Department head evaluations.

The following Directors made comments or asked questions:

1. Ortega

CONSENT CALENDAR ITEMS — ACTION

2. CONSENT CALENDAR OTHER ITEMS – ACTION

- A. Approval of the Minutes of the Special Ethics, Organization, and Personnel Committee for October November 19, 2024 (copies submitted to each Director, any additions, corrections, or omissions)

3. CONSENT CALENDAR ITEMS – ACTION

None

Director Erdman made a motion, seconded by Director Bryant to approve the consent calendar item 2A.

The vote was:

Ayes: Directors Bryant, Camacho, Cordero, Douglas, Erdman, Faessel, Fong-Sakai, Jung, Lewitt, McMillan, Phan, Pressman, Ramos and Sutley.

Noes: None

Abstentions: None

Absent: None

The motion for item 2A passed by a vote of 14 ayes, 0 noes, 0 abstention, and 0 absent

END OF CONSENT CALENDAR ITEMS

4. OTHER BOARD ITEMS – ACTION

None

5. BOARD INFORMATION ITEMS

None

6. COMMITTEE ITEMS (Continue)

- a. Subject: Equal Employment Opportunity Statistical Report

Presented by: Jonaura Wisdom, EEO Officer

Ms. Wisdom gave an overview of the EEO Statistical Report. The purpose of the presentation was to inform the board of the 2024-year overview of EEO statistics regarding complaints.

The following Directors made comments or asked questions:

1. Pressman

Staff responded to the Directors questions and comments.

- b. Subject: Non-Discrimination Plan Results for fiscal year 2024

Presented by: Cinthya Lupian, EEO Manager
Brenda Martinez, Unit Manager DEI

Ms. Lupian gave an overview of the Non- Discrimination program. The discussion items include Program, Legal requirements, Utilization & underutilization, EEO categories, NDP results, Concurrence process, and Partnership. Ms. Martinez explained the Workforce Development Priorities. Which include Community engagement, K-12 career pathways, Work readiness and Training.

The following Directors made comments or asked questions:

1. Erdman
2. Cordero
3. Ortega
- 4.

Staff responded to the Directors questions and comments.

Agenda was reorder to hear items 7 prior to item 6e.

7. MANAGEMENT ANNOUNCEMENTS AND HIGHLIGHTS

- a. Subject: Ethics Officer's Report on monthly activities
Presented by: Abel Salinas, Ethics Officer

Mr. Salinas gave a status update on pending ethics office investigations and contracts since November 2024 the ethics office has not initiated any new investigations or contracts. Currently there is one open investigation which is expected to be completed within the regular six-month timeline. There were six complaints received in December that were deferred to corresponding departments. Mr. Salinas gave a reminder to directors for the annual form 700 and announced Ethics issued their 3rd quarterly newsletter.

- b. Subject: Equal Employment Opportunity
Human Resources activities
Safety, Security, and Protection activities

Chair Pressman announced reports for Equal Employment Opportunity and Safety, Security, and Protection activities are posted online.

- Subject: Human resources Activities
Presented by: Mark Brower, Human Resources Group Manager

Mr. Brower started off by recognizing all those involved in helping with the wildfire situation, specifically those employees leading the efforts on behalf of the district along with the EOC team, and all Bargaining units.

Staff responded to the Directors questions and comments

6. COMMITTEE ITEMS (Continue)

- e. Subject: Update on labor negotiations. [Conference with Labor Negotiators; to be heard in closed session pursuant to Gov. Code 54957.6. Metropolitan representatives: Katano Kasaine, Assistant General Manager, Chief Financial Officer, Mark Brower, Human Resources Group Manager, and Gifty J. Beets, Human Resources Section Manager of Labor Relations. Employee Organization(s): The Employees Association of The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California/AFSCME Local 1902; the Management and Professional Employees Associations MAPA/AFSCME Chapter1001; the Supervisors Association; and the Association of Confidential Employees.]]

Presented by: Gifty Beets, Human Resources Section
manager

In closed session, the committee heard the item. No action was taken.

d. Subject: 2024 Ethics Survey Results

Presented by: Abel Salinas, Ethics Officer

Mr. Salinas gave an overview of the 2024 Ethics survey results. Survey was conducted in November of 2024 and had a total participant amount of 1,124 responses. 54% of participants have been with the district for 10 years or less, 26% 11-20 years and 20% of participants 21 years and more.

The following Directors made comments or asked questions:

1. Ortega

FOLLOW-UP ITEMS

None

9. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

None

10. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 1:16 PM

Barry Pressman
Chair



2024 Workplace Survey Results

Presented by: Jennifer Shaw, Esq.
February 10, 2025
Item 6a

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Shaw Law Group, PC

- We are a woman-owned employment law firm
- We work extensively with public sector employers throughout the state

Scope of the 2024 Review

Pursuant to Task Order No. 1 (Agreement No. 211157-02):

- Prepare and conduct a workplace cultural assessment survey as a follow up to the one Shaw Law Group, PC conducted in 2021
- Report the findings of the survey to this Board

The Workplace Cultural Assessment Survey Process

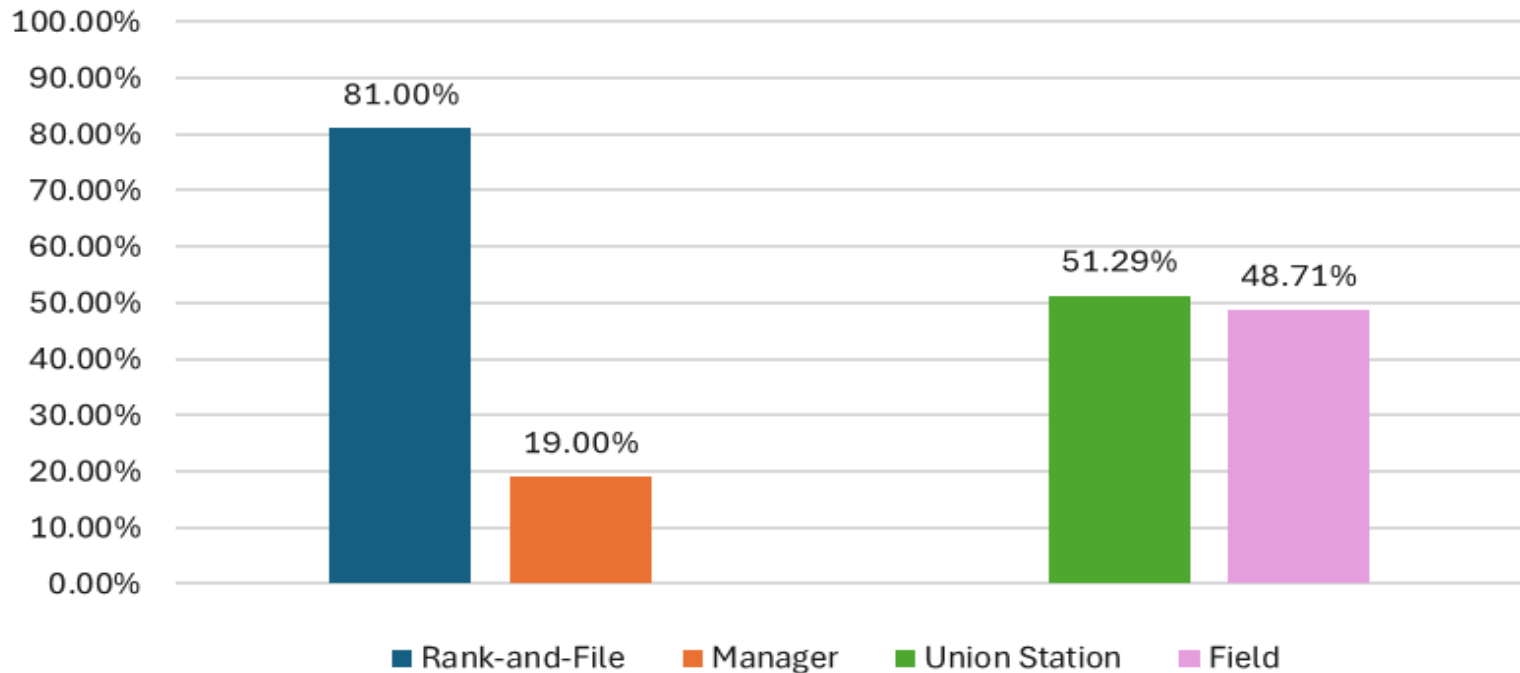
- Prepare and conduct the survey
- Organize and analyze the 2024 survey data and compare the 2021 and 2024 results

The 2024 Survey

- Survey dates
 - Opened December 4, 2024
 - Closed December 31, 2024
- Sent to 1,905 employees; 1,123 responses (59%)
 - Down from 86% in 2021

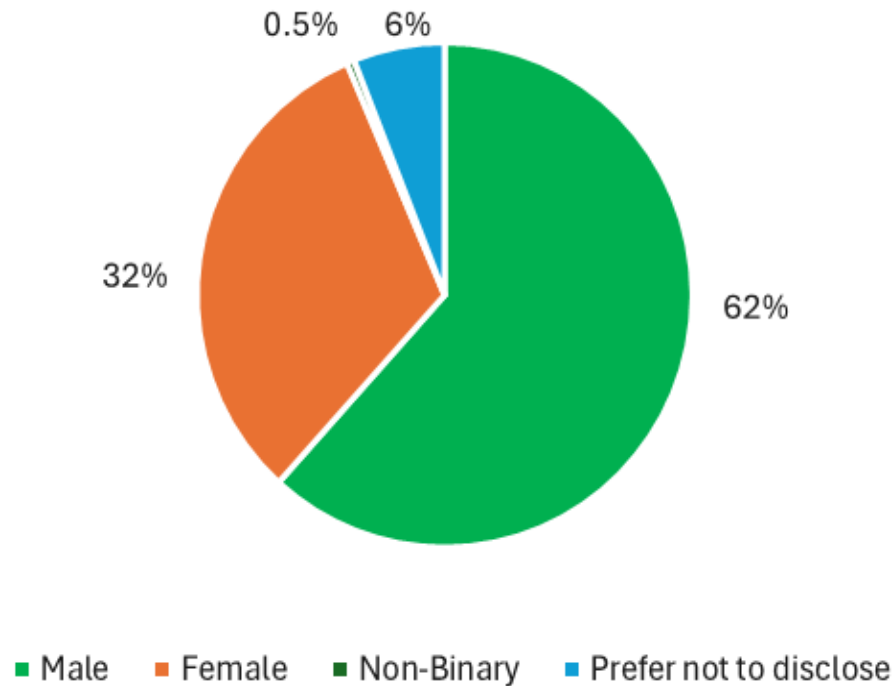
The 2024 Survey (cont.)

Survey Participants by Role and Location



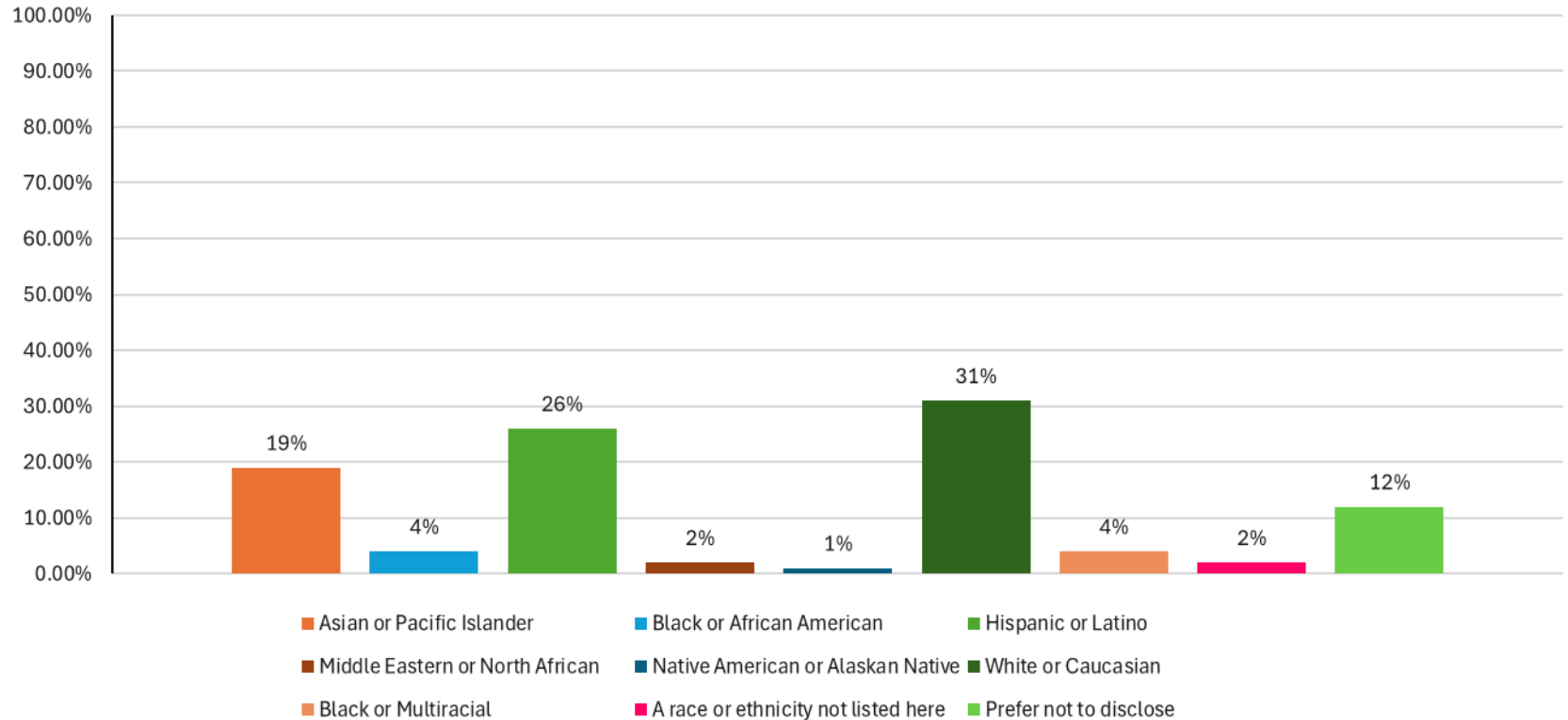
The 2024 Survey (cont.)

Survey Participants by Sex & Gender



The 2024 Survey (cont.)

Survey Participants by Race & Ethnicity



Working Environment: 2024 Survey Data

	Strongly agree		Somewhat agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Somewhat disagree		Strongly disagree	
	2021	2024	2021	2024	2021	2024	2021	2024	2021	2024
Executive management (EM) fosters a positive working environment	41%	21%	29%	29%	18%	27%	7%	12%	5%	11%
EM appropriately follows and enforces Metropolitan's policies and procedures	38%	18%	27%	26%	20%	26%	9%	17%	6%	14%
Management at my work location fosters a positive working environment	46%	39%	26%	29%	13%	15%	8%	8%	7%	9%

Working Environment: 2024 Survey Data

	Strongly agree		Somewhat agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Somewhat disagree		Strongly disagree	
	2021	2024	2021	2024	2021	2024	2021	2024	2021	2024
Management at my work location appropriately follows and enforces Metropolitan's policies and procedures	45%	35%	26%	31%	15%	16%	9%	9%	5%	9%
Management at my work location is open to employees' concerns	44%	36%	26%	30%	14%	16%	9%	9%	7%	9%
Management at my work location takes appropriate action to address employees' concerns	37%	30%	24%	26%	20%	21%	9%	12%	8%	11%

Working Environment: 2024 Survey Data

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Co-workers at my work location foster a positive working environment	39%	33%	15%	7%	6%
Co-workers at my work location appropriately follow Metropolitan's policies and procedures	36%	36%	16%	7%	5%

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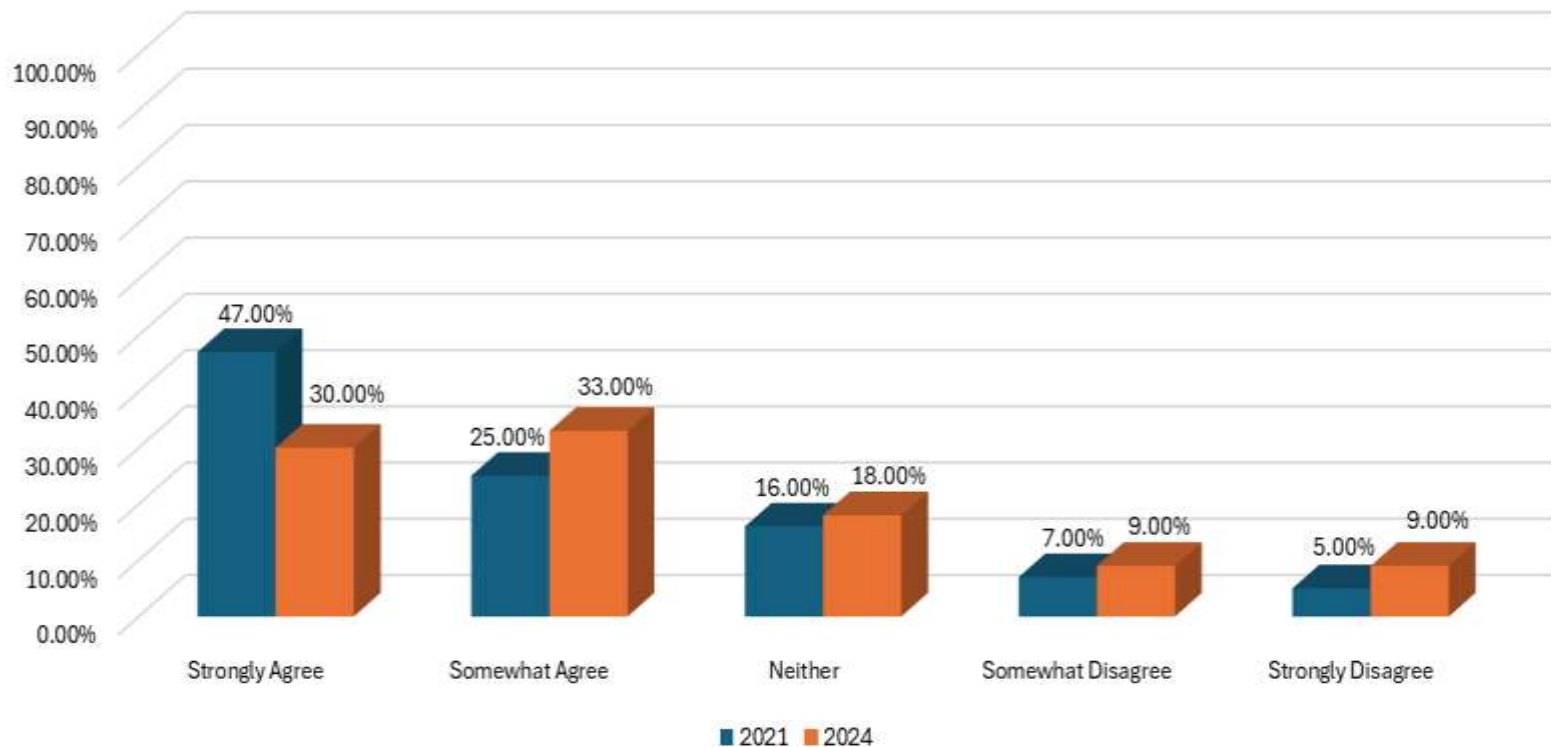
We Solve Workplace Problems.®

February 10, 2025 Ethics, Organization, & Personnel Committee



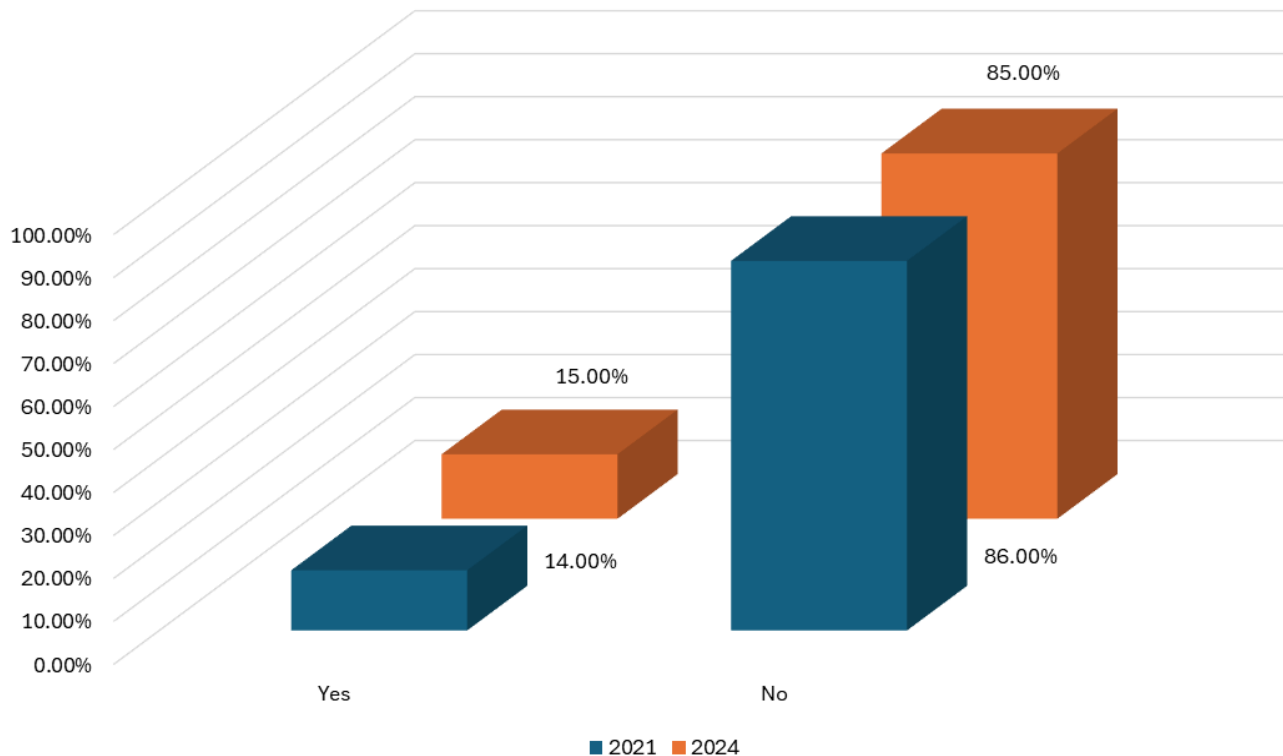
Working Environment: 2024 Survey Data

"Metropolitan provides a safe and respectful working environment for all employees."



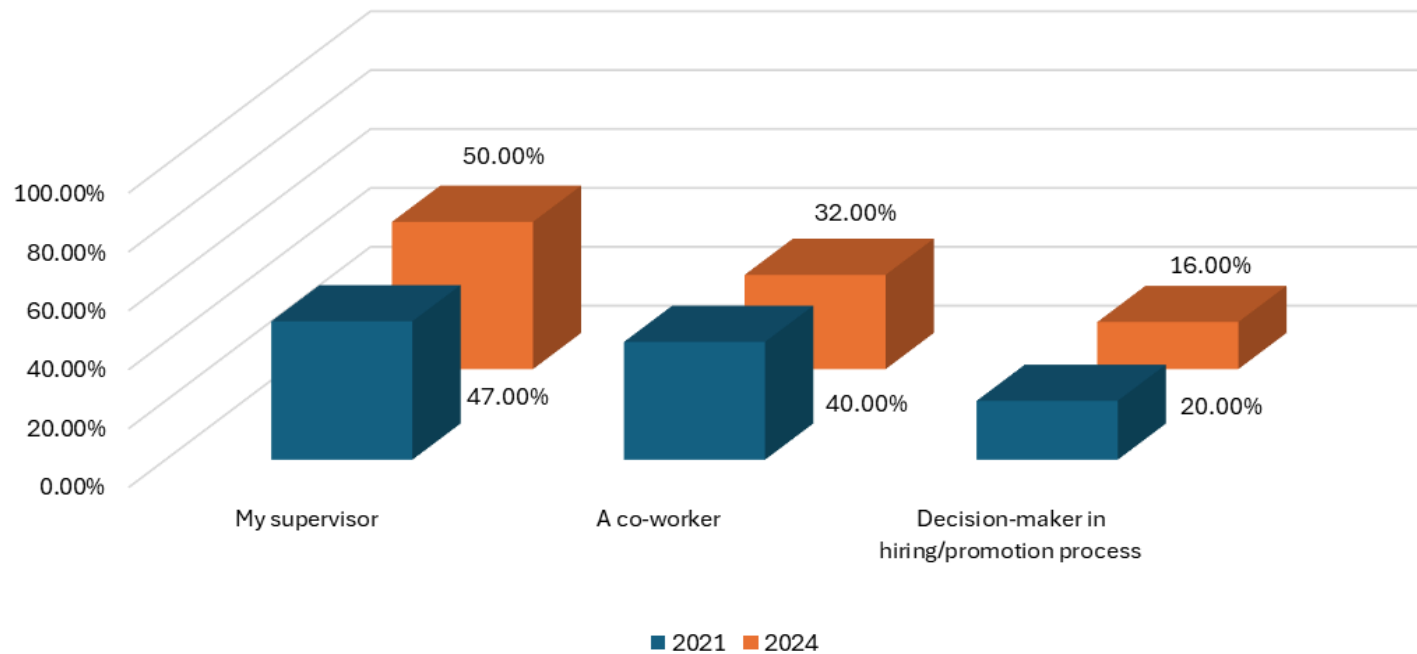
Experience with EEO Issues: 2024 Survey Data

"In the last 3 years, have you had any experiences at the District during which someone at work treated you unfairly because of your race, ethnicity, national origin, sex, gender, sexual orientation, and/or any other characteristic protected by law?"



Experience with EEO Issues: 2024 Survey Data (cont.)

"Who treated you unfairly?"

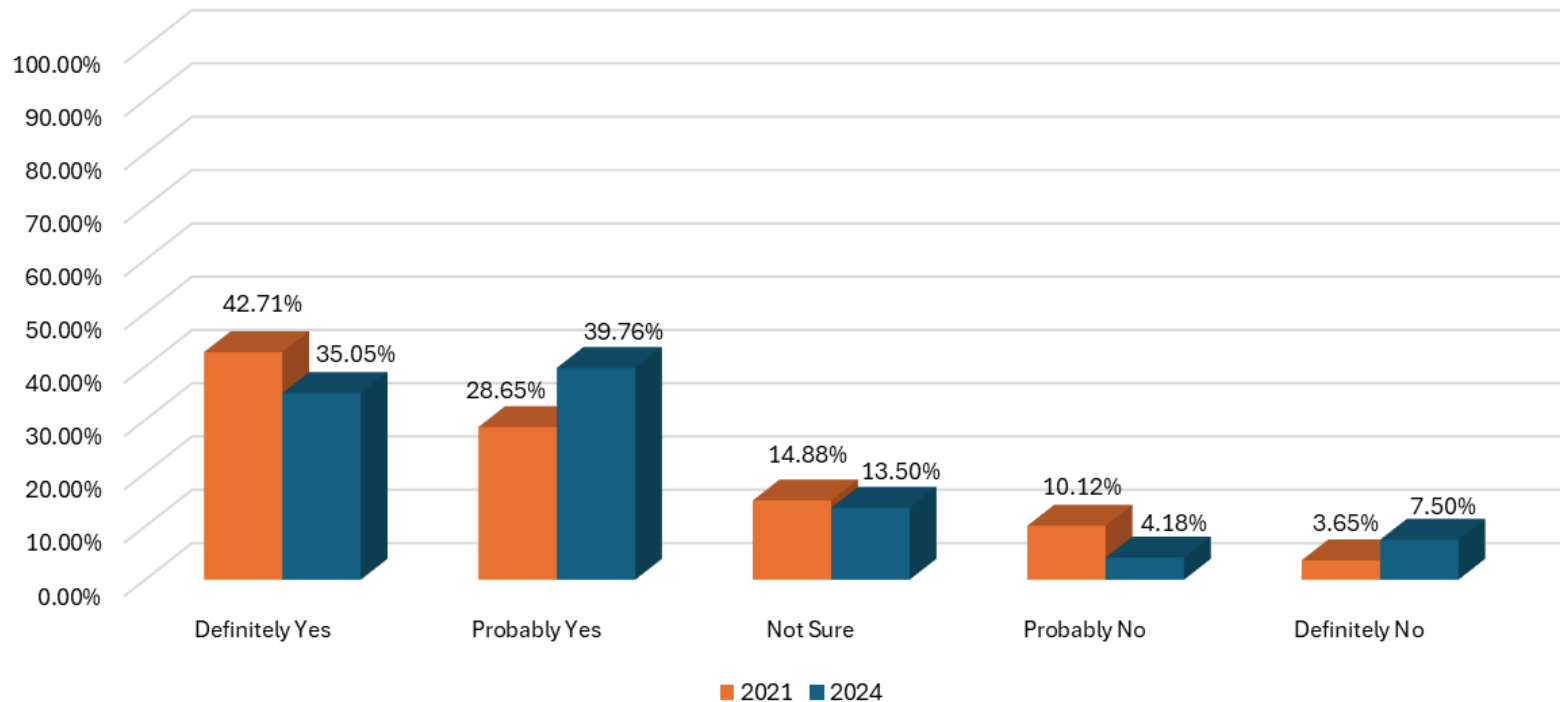


Concerns About Reporting EEO Issues

- 49% of respondents (84 individuals) stated they had EEO concerns, but did not report them
 - 2021: 51% (117 individuals) did not report
- 18% of respondents (165 individuals) stated they would not report EEO concerns if they had them
 - 2021: 14% (185 individuals) would not report

Fear of Retaliation Related to Reporting EEO Issues: 2024 Survey Data

"Would you feel comfortable reporting unfair treatment at work?"



Top Five Reasons Given for Not Reporting EEO Issues

2021

- Fear of retaliation
- No one cares
- Ineffective process
- Management cover-up
- Previous bad experience

2024

- Fear of retaliation
- No one cares
- Ineffective process
- Management cover-up
- No confidentiality

Common Themes in Survey Comments (2024)

- The new interim GM is moving in the right direction
- MWD must improve communication and transparency
- The DEI program operates in reality as “reverse discrimination”
- Executives and senior leadership should receive the same training as everyone else and held accountable to the same standards
- The unions have too much power and influence
- The survey process should be more specific in the use of terms (e.g., “Executive Management”), and include post-survey communications about next steps

2021 Recommendations

- Update current EEO-related policies to reflect best practices
- Implement a policy to address abusive conduct, even if not EEO-related
- Continue promoting and hiring individuals for management positions who demonstrate emotional intelligence and the commitment to creating and maintaining a positive and respectful work environment

2021 Recommendations (cont.)

- Hold managers accountable for modeling professional and respectful behavior, and demanding the same of their teams
- Require District Leadership to visit field locations on a regular basis, and facilitate town-hall-like events to solicit feedback and input from employees
- Continue to enhance the District's current EEO training program

2021 Recommendations (cont.)

- Require managers to follow and enforce District policies and procedures
- Require managers to promptly and consistently address EEO Issues and other employee concerns
- Evaluate the performance of managers and compensate them based on their ability to drive positive interactions on their team, hold employees accountable, demonstrate an appropriate “tone at the top,” and further the District’s DE&I initiatives

2021 Recommendations (cont.)

- Require managers to provide written, position-specific training and advancement plans to all employees to prepare them for internal promotional opportunities
- Continue management forums and leadership breakfasts, with a focus on providing opportunities for managers to learn from one other

2021 Recommendations (cont.)

- Create additional positions in the Training Unit and Employee Relations to ensure both areas are properly staffed and resourced
- Provide in-depth and regular training to relevant HR personnel regarding laws, regulations, and best practices regarding responding to accommodation requests and handling confidential medical documentation

2021 Recommendations (cont.)

- Elevate the EEO Office to an independent department, and eliminate Legal's direct involvement in most EEO investigations*
- Create additional internal EEO investigator positions

2021 Recommendations (cont.)

- Regularly communicate with all employees regarding the separate components of the EEO Office and the Ethics Office, including direct messaging from the General Manager, the CAO, and the Ethics Officer
- Implement a hotline program to allow for anonymous reporting of EEO Issues
- Update the District’s “EEO Discrimination Complaint Procedures,” and provide copies to complainant(s) and respondent(s) in each investigation

2021 Recommendations (cont.)

- Create a process for investigating and resolving complaints against department heads and Directors
- Initiate and complete investigations of EEO Issues in a timely manner
- Immediately identify during investigations of EEO Issues whether interim measures are appropriate
- Prioritize investigations if any employee is placed on PAL pending completion of the investigation

2021 Recommendations (cont.)

- Take appropriate steps to prevent any form of retaliation against individuals involved in the complaint process
- Provide in-depth and regular training to all EEO Office personnel regarding complaint intake and investigation best practices, and ensure internal EEO investigators are trained in trauma-informed practices, including interview techniques and credibility assessments
- Make only factual findings during investigations, not policy and/or legal findings, and use the appropriate evidentiary standard

2021 Recommendations (cont.)

- Adopt restorative practices, including creating a conflict resolution team, requiring transparency about the District's remedial actions to the extent consistent with employee rights, and ensuring appropriate follow-up after an investigation is complete
- Implement a process for Employee Relations and/or the EEO Office to inform internal recruiters about information relevant to transfer requests, such as an employee's prior complaint against an employee working at the potential new location

2021 Recommendations (cont.)

- Consider eliminating confidentiality/non-disclosure provisions in settlement agreements with employees who will remain employed with the District after the investigation is completed

2021 Recommendations (cont.)

- Create a DE&I Manager position to be filled by an individual with prior DE&I experience to create a DE&I Office, lead the DE&I Council, and guide Council members and District Leadership to identify and implement best practices
- Take steps to further develop the DE&I Council
- Only permit Executive Management to attend DE&I Council meetings when invited by the Council
- Ensure that participation on the DE&I Council is voluntary

2021 Recommendations (cont.)

- Continue to support DE&I Council participation by releasing Council members from their regular work assignments to attend Council meetings and perform Council work
- Include the DE&I Council in the implementation of the recommendations from the review as appropriate

2021 Recommendations (cont.)

- Implement a District-wide communication program regarding what conduct may constitute retaliation under the District's policy, and the District's commitment to protecting employees from retaliation
- Strictly limit the dissemination of information regarding internal complaints of potential EEO Issues
- Establish a system to ensure that the EEO Office maintains ongoing communication with the complainant(s) and the respondent(s) during an investigation

2021 Recommendations (cont.)

- Inform every employee interviewed during an investigation that District policy prohibits retaliation against any employee who submits a complaint, and against any witness who participates in the investigation, including the respondent

What Now?

- Continue Board oversight to ensure the development of consistent investigation processes and procedures
- Develop an effective annual survey strategy to assess the workplace culture and identify applicable action items, including post-survey follow up
- Continue Board leadership to drive collaboration among internal departments without comprising their independence
- Continue organization-wide listening and feedback sessions and town halls
- Facilitate training for the Board, Executive Management, and other leaders on investigation best practices and modeling MWD's values
- Consistently apply MWD's policies and standards to leaders at all levels and limit discretion as appropriate

Questions/Comments



Thank you!

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Ethics, Organization and Personnel Committee

Update on Workplace Assessment

Item 6b

February 10, 2025

Item xx

Subject

Update on 2024 Workplace Assessment

Purpose

Update on 2024 Survey Results and Next Steps

Why Conduct Workplace Surveys?

Essential for any organization to identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement in its environment, culture, policies, and overall functioning:

Overview

1. Identify Potential Issues Early
2. Improve Employee Satisfaction and Retention
3. Enhance Productivity and Performance
4. Foster a Positive Organizational Culture
5. Data-Driven Decision Making
6. Benchmarking Against Industry Standards
7. Support Leadership Development

Survey Timelines: Shaw Law Group

February 8, 2021: survey & report by Shaw Law Group

Survey: 35 Questions

Report: 47 recommendations

Assessment &
Report: Shaw
Law Group

Shaw Law Group Recommendations

47 total recommendations: 38 were to complete a specific task:

Examples:

- #1: Update current EEO-related policies to reflect best practices.
 - #2: Implement a policy to address abusive conduct, even if not EEO-related.
 - #12: Create additional positions in the Training Unit and Employee Relations to ensure both areas are properly staffed and resourced.
 - #32: Ensure that participation on the DE&I Council is voluntary.
 - #46: Require Directors to model professionalism and respectful behavior at all times and reinforce these expectations on a regular basis.
 - #47: Conduct an annual employee survey for at least the next five years to evaluate the District's progress in implementing the recommendations in the report, and the effectiveness of those recommendations.
-
- 9 recommendations were surveyable

Shaw Law Group Report

Workplace
Assessment:
Conducted by
Quantum Workplace

Organization-wide Workplace Assessment: August 2024

- 41 Questions
 - Captures information that is actionable, not just reportable
 - Questions triangulate root causes of employee concerns including:
 - surveyable recommendations in the Shaw Law Group report & general workplace related questions in Shaw Law Group survey.

The 2024 Workplace Assessment expanded on the Shaw survey and collected comprehensive information on:

- Employee Engagement
- Performance (Driving Results, Competency Building, Continuous Improvement)
- MWD Culture (Trust & Ethics)
- Strategic Alignment with MWD Goals
- Leadership

August 2024 Workplace Assessment

Workplace
Assessment:
Conducted by
Quantum Workplace

November 19, 2024: Quantum presented the quantitative workplace assessment results to EOP

Today (February 10, 2025):

1. Share Summary of Confidential Employee Comments
2. Discuss Next Steps

Next Steps Focus on the Consultant's Two Strategic Recommendations & Opportunities:

1. Trust in Leadership and Future Outlook
2. Career Outlook and Burnout

Director Request

Response Statistics

<u>Location</u>	<u>Responses</u>	<u>Response Rate</u>
Diamond Valley Lake	22	56%
Eagle Mountain	5	31%
Eagle Rock	9	45%
F E Weymouth	217	54%
Gene Camp	49	45%
Henry J Mills	30	53%
Intake	7	70%
Iron Mountain	9	41%
Joseph Jensen	35	51%
Lake Mathews	32	44%
Robert Diemer	27	36%
Robert Skinner	27	40%
Sacramento	10	37%
Soto Street	23	62%
Union Station	535	59%
Hinds	Insufficient Results	Insufficient Results
Washington, DC	Insufficient Results	Insufficient Results

Confidential Employee Comments

8 Questions: option to add confidential comments if provided a negative response.

- By design, the majority of the comments provided were critical of the District.
 - This helps capture the areas of most concern to employees.
- The comments do not reflect the full picture of employee sentiments about the District.
 - Those who provided a positive reaction to the questions were not given the opportunity to add comments.

While the focus of District's work is on Trust in Leadership and Moving Forward in addition to Career Outlook and Burnout, there are a number of initiatives already underway to address employee concerns shared in the summary comments.

Confidential Employee Comments

Response to statement: I receive the training I need to perform my job effectively. (273)

Employees raised a variety of concerns and suggestions, including complaints about insufficient training and desire for increased communication and better, more formal onboarding processes.

There is widespread concern that training opportunities are inadequate, particularly in job-specific technical skills and software applications. Many employees report having to learn on the job without sufficient guidance and expressed a need for more formal, up-to-date, and personalized training programs that align with both individual and departmental goals.

Employees noted a gap in personnel training for new managers and a lack of job-specific training opportunities that would enhance skills within their trade to help them compete for promotional opportunities or continually develop within their current role. This was one of several specific complaints about an overall lack of support for career advancement at Metropolitan.

Some employees feel the current training methods are ineffective, with much of learning occurring informally. The absence of formal onboarding into a new position, guidance, and feedback from management has led to concerns about employees being left to independently figure out how to be successful, which can hinder career progress and decrease morale. Additionally, employees have expressed frustration with budget constraints that limit access to necessary tools, support for innovative efforts, and opportunities to attend conferences and seminars. There are also concerns about the lack of training in policies, procedures, and safety.

There is also a desire for better communication between Metropolitan's departmental groups, especially where responsibilities are shared, to ensure employees understand all aspects of their work, can make better decisions, and know who to go to for what.

In conclusion, employees suggest that MWD should prioritize a more structured, consistent, and position specific training approach, with a dedicated budget for professional development and a stronger emphasis on ongoing education.

Response to statement: My team as a whole has the required skills to perform our work effectively. (185)

The comments indicate teams face a variety of challenges related to skill levels, staffing, and management.

Some employees feel members of their team lack necessary technical skills, hindering overall team performance, while others feel overwhelmed due to being the sole team member in their area of responsibility. While the technical skills of the team are generally present, there is a lack of real-life experience in completing the work assigned. In addition, some employees said that some senior staff and management lack essential management and people skills, creating a toxic and defensive dynamic. Suggestions for improvement include cross-training; updated training on new equipment, processes, and software; more opportunities to attend conferences; ensuring appropriate staffing levels, and more mentoring.

Despite some resistance to change and reliance on outdated methods, there is a desire for improvement and growth within the organization.

Employees expressed the need for stable training budgets and better resources to support staff development.

In addition, staff raised concerns about understaffing and imbalances in output, coupled with a lack of clarity in guidance and frequent finger-pointing, and said these issues are contributing to inefficiencies and accountability challenges. However, overall, employees feel most team members possess the necessary skills to perform effectively and there is a feeling that efforts are being made to ensure everyone is up to speed on policy procedures, Administrative Code, and relevant state and federal laws.

Response to statement: I trust that management has the best interest of Metropolitan's employees in mind. (413)

The comments reveal a significant lack of trust in the ability of certain members of upper management to prioritize the best interests of Metropolitan employees.

Employees expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of transparency, communication, and accountability in decision-making processes, favoritism, and alleged misuse of authority. As in previous responses, concerns raised in this section also included working with outdated equipment, understaffing, poor workload distribution, and insufficient professional development opportunities. Some employees feel certain members of management prioritize the interests of board members and public perception over employee safety and well-being. They also raised issue with delayed performance reviews and raises. While positive experiences with individual managers exist, employees want improved cohesion, transparency, and a clearer focus on Metropolitan's overall interests. A codified telecommute policy and better support for mental health and career advancement are also desired improvements.

Response to statement: Executive leadership communicates effectively with the rest of the organization. (403)

Employees expressed widespread concerns about the lack of effective communication from executive leadership. Some feel disconnected and believe methods such as emailed memos and coffee chats are inadequate – either too infrequent, irrelevant, or lacking in transparency and authenticity. However, some appreciate recent communications from the interim general manager as clear and effective.

Many feel excluded from communications outside of their immediate managers, and there is a strong call for more personal, transparent, and timely exchanges, including regular town hall meetings for sharing updates and ideas with all employees.

Concerns also center on favoritism, unaddressed requests for resources, poor hiring practices, and a perceived lack of response to employee feedback, particularly on human resources-related issues. Employees expressed a desire for greater transparency and authenticity from leadership, with a call for more meaningful engagement on workplace challenges. There is a general sentiment that leadership communications often feel disconnected from the daily realities of staff, while other senior leaders are seen as more actively engaged in operational concerns. Employees emphasized the importance of clear, consistent, and responsive leadership to build trust and improve workplace culture.

Employees also highlighted issues with DEI initiatives and the role of sustainability, suggesting that more frequent, succinct, and transparent communications about how these areas connect to the organization's purpose would help improve alignment, trust, and motivation across the organization.

Many employees feel that important decisions are being made without their input, resulting in a lack of understanding and disengagement. Effective communication is recognized as a shared responsibility between executive leadership and employees, and there is a strong desire for internal communication to improve, with some suggesting regular all-hands meetings to address upcoming changes and ensure better communication across the organization.

Response to statement: Please share any further thoughts on Metropolitan's leadership. (560)

The feedback on Metropolitan's leadership is mixed, with both praise and criticism. Some employees appreciate the changes made by the board and the interim general manager's efforts to improve morale, foster a better atmosphere, and promote effective communication.

However, concerns persist regarding favoritism, lack of transparency, and a toxic culture created by certain leaders. There are complaints about human resources' ability to recruit and hire in a timely manner, unfair treatment of employees, and a lack of collaboration and accountability across the organization.

Many employees suggest focusing on internal promotion, updating standard operating procedures, increasing field visits, and supporting middle managers. Some employees feel that there needs to be a top-down and bottom-up evaluation of staffing, while others suggest hiring managers who have worked their way up from within the organization. Finally, employees expressed a need for executive management who can lead from the front and focus on water delivery.

There are prominent concerns about infrastructure maintenance, the absence of a finalized telework policy, and staffing issues. Despite these challenges, many employees acknowledge the positive impact of the interim general manager (Upadhyay) in improving morale. Overall, employees remain hopeful for a better future brought upon by a cultural shift and improvements in leadership transparency and accountability.

Response to statement: In what ways has the requirements of your work or work group changed, and what has been the cause and effect of this change? (511)

Employees report a range of significant changes in their work requirements, team dynamics, and organizational structure. These changes include retirements, reorganizations, new hires, and shifts in management.

Some employees have experienced an increased workload and new responsibilities, while others have faced no change at all. Concerns about staffing shortages, difficulties with procurement processes, and the introduction of new initiatives have contributed to instability. The implementation of new policies due to COVID-19, such as telecommuting, has also added complexity.

While some changes have been positive, such as opportunities for growth and increased responsibility, others have been challenging. For some employees, Metropolitan's response to climate change, aging infrastructure, regulatory changes and limited resources have resulted in employee morale problems, safety concerns, and employee relations challenges. Employees said a lack of transparency in decision-making, inadequate consideration for existing workloads, and increased pressure to meet goals without additional support have led to longer working hours, stress, and feelings of being undervalued.

Furthermore, employees reported frustration with the recruitment process, concerns about ineffective leadership, and a lack of trust in certain executive management. Many employees feel overburdened with responsibilities, particularly due to limited staffing and inadequate training. The introduction of new initiatives has also led to a culture of survival rather than growth, further contributing to a negative atmosphere. Some employees have expressed dissatisfaction with new hires and the perceived decline in morale and productivity.

Despite these challenges, many employees remain confident in their direct leadership and continue to meet their goals, though the overall feedback reflects a mixed response to the ongoing changes.

Response to statement: What do you think Metropolitan can do to improve employee engagement? (560)

To improve employee engagement, employees suggest that Metropolitan implement a combination of initiatives aimed at fostering recognition, fair treatment, communication, and growth opportunities.

Key measures could include employee recognition programs, information campaigns, and team-building opportunities around common goals. Metropolitan should focus on ensuring fair wages, work-life balance, and opportunities for career development.

Suggestions from employees to further improve engagement include providing regular leadership workshops, refining the onboarding process for employees who take on new roles within the organization, increasing opportunities for feedback (two-way communication), and fostering transparent operating processes.

Employees also advocate for a more open sharing of results, opportunities for anonymous feedback like this survey, and a stronger sense of community through employee events and all-hands meetings. Emulating the positive behaviors of leaders who engage directly with staff, such as maintaining an open-door policy, being present on-site, and attending department meetings would help build trust and make employees feel more valued.

To address concerns around accountability, transparency, and fairness, employees recommend implementing better communication channels for reporting concerns, and recognizing those who go above and beyond. They also suggest that Metropolitan prioritize hiring strong talent, improving decision-making, and enhancing communication between management and staff to ensure a more engaged and motivated workforce.

Please share any additional thoughts or feedback. (401)

Employees provided a mix of positive feedback and concerns, highlighting areas for appreciation and improvement.

On the positive side, employees are grateful for the opportunity to work at Metropolitan, and they value the organization's highly qualified individuals, the potential for career advancement, as well as mentoring programs currently available in certain groups. Employees recognize and appreciate Metropolitan's commitment to its mission and the people who execute the work.

However, there are notable concerns regarding transparency, accountability, and the effectiveness of management. Some employees feel that certain managers, particularly middle managers, could improve communication and decision-making. Employees also expressed frustration with negative individuals impacting the company culture and suggested a more assertive approach to addressing underperformance. They called for better staffing levels, increased training opportunities for all employees, and a stronger emphasis on preventing silos within the organization.

Additional concerns include favoritism, bias, and inconsistencies in promotions and job responsibilities across the organization. Employees suggested a renewed focus on the company's core business and prioritizing cost-effectiveness to avoid wasteful spending. To address these issues, employees recommend that senior management increase support for employees, who are considered the district's biggest strategic asset, and adopt a more sincere, transparent leadership style rooted in integrity.

Overall, while there are positive aspects to working at Metropolitan, employees believe a more transparent, accountable, and supportive environment is needed to foster a more respectful and professional culture, leading to greater overall success.

Next Steps:

Quantum Workplace Identified Two Strategic Recommendations & Opportunities:

1. **Trust in Leadership and Future Outlook:**

Lean into conversations related to trust in leaders (competence, reliability, empathy, and integrity), and future outlook across all levels of the organization. Ensure everyone has a good understanding of changes made at the leadership level and how those will continue to support the mission and vision of the organization.

Additionally...

Encourage leaders and managers to discuss with their team ways to rebuild trust throughout the organization.

Increase leadership visibility throughout the organization through both in-person and virtual moments.

2. **Career Outlook and Burnout:**

If teams feel overloaded, ensure leaders solidify the main priorities/goals and discuss areas that can be deprioritized.

Encourage regular 1-on-1 meetings between managers and front-line employees aimed at discussing career progress and goals. Regular career conversations can lead to better retention and higher engagement.

Next Steps (Communication):

- Memo to all employee with link to the dedicated IntraMET page for Workplace Assessment
- Manager Support:
 - Toolkits
 - Group Manger 1:1 Meetings with Quantum Consultant
- Annual Surveys
- Adjustment Based on Needed and Results



Questions





Monthly Report

EDUCATION Program

The Ethics Office welcomed Hiroshi Ishikawa, who will serve as Ethics Educator, in a district temporary position. Ishikawa's professional and educational background includes the field of governmental ethics and water and roles with local government agencies, including the Los Angeles City Ethics Commission. Ishikawa will develop written educational materials and deliver live and online training for directors, employees, and other stakeholders.

Ethics staff presented an Ethics Office overview at new employee orientations hosted by Human Resources, held a tailored training session for a Human Resources workgroup, and issued its third Quarterly newsletter to employees.

COMPLIANCE Program

Form 700/Filing Officer Duties – Pursuant to state law and the Administrative Code, Compliance staff assisted directors and employees with their Annual, Assuming Office, and Leaving Office Form 700 filings. Assistance included transitioning into the new state filing system for certain officials, including directors, troubleshooting the electronic filing system, and notifications of deadlines. Staff also evaluated which new Metropolitan positions must file Form 700 and the appropriate level of disclosure for each position.

AB 1234 compliance – Managed AB 1234 state ethics training compliance for Metropolitan and Metropolitan officials required to take the biennial training. As of January 26, 2025, 50 Metropolitan officials have complied with this state ethics training requirement. Nineteen officials still need to take the training. Staff will continue efforts to seek 100% compliance from Metropolitan officials. As part of our continued transparency and compliance efforts, Directors’ AB 1234 training certificates will soon be available on Metropolitan’s website.

Staff also assisted on 55 compliance-related matters for Metropolitan Directors and staff.

ADVICE Program

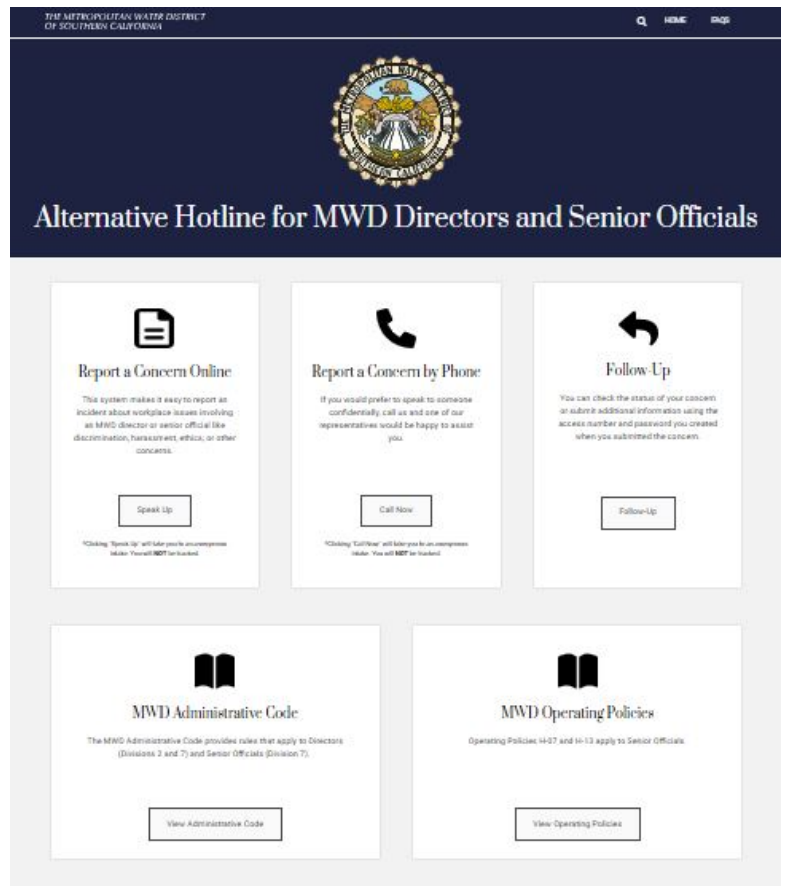
Advice staff responded to 18 new advice matters for Metropolitan officials related to the following ethics laws and policies: conflicts of interest, financial disclosure, gifts, outside employment, and other ethics-related topics. Advice requested included:

- Whether Metropolitan officials must disclose meals provided by other government agencies, severance payments from private employers, cryptocurrency, and other financial interests on Form 700.
- Whether several contractors’ prior work on Metropolitan projects precluded them from obtaining additional contracts involving the same project.
- Whether an employee may accept outside employment where the employer’s client is a government agency involved in projects with Metropolitan.

Staff also helped identify and advise on potential conflicts of interest in upcoming Committee and Board agenda items.

INVESTIGATION Program

New Alternative Reporting Hotline –
As directed by the Board of Directors, the Ethics Office established a new hotline for reporting concerns about Directors and Senior Officials as an alternative to filing complaints directly with the existing Ethics Office or EEO Office hotlines. Complaints submitted to the alternative hotline will be assessed by an outside law firm contracted by Metropolitan and routed to the appropriate Metropolitan office for investigation. Information on the alternative hotline can be found on the IntraMet home page.



Complaints – The Ethics Office received five new complaints involving the following allegations:

- Unfair hiring based on a protected class.
- Retaliation by a manager for reporting potential misconduct.
- Misuse of authority for personal gain by a manager.
- Discrimination and retaliation by Metropolitan officials.
- Prohibited outside employment activity by an employee.

Open Complaints and Investigations – As of January 31, 2025, the Investigations Program is managing a total of 17 open complaints and one open ethics investigation.

SNAPSHOT for January 2025

Advice Matters 18	Pending Complaints 17
Compliance Assistance 55	Investigations Opened 0
New Complaints Received 5	Pending Investigations 1

Mission

The Ethics Office promotes the highest standards of government integrity to support Metropolitan's mission through an independent and comprehensive program that enhances trust, transparency, and accountability for the benefit of the workforce and the public it serves.

Vision

Our vision is to be a leader in governmental ethics with an unparalleled commitment to supporting an ethical organizational culture.



Equal Employment Opportunity Group

- **Equal Employment Opportunity January 2025 Monthly Activity Report**

Summary

This report provides a summary of Equal Employment Opportunity January 2025 Monthly Activities.

Purpose

Informational

Attachments

None

Detailed Report

Activity Report

On January 13, 2025, EEO conducted an educational and interactive presentation for supervisory and non-supervisory employees at the F.E. Weymouth Water Treatment Plant in La Verne. The presentation included an overview of Metropolitan's EEO policies, EEO protected categories, retaliation, a manager's obligation to immediately report EEO-related incidents, and the EEO complaint process. The training also included in-depth information on age-related discrimination and harassment in the workplace. The training is in alignment with the EEO Office's goals to increase employee awareness of and access to EEO.

On January 13, 2025, EEO provided an update on Metropolitan's Non-discrimination Program (NDP) results for fiscal year 2024 at the EOP Committee. The informational update provided background on Metropolitan's legal obligations as they relate to NDP and Affirmative Action requirements. As a state contractor, Metropolitan is subject to the state NDP requirements of Title 2 CCR § 11103 due to its ongoing contract to provide services to the state Department of Water Resources. As a federal contractor, Metropolitan has an obligation to prepare a written affirmative action plan for covered veterans and individuals with disabilities and comply with other requirements of 41 CFR §§ 60-250.44, 60-300.44, and 60-741.44, as well as 41 CFR §§ 60-250.21, 60-300.21, and 60-741.21. EEO partnered with Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) to provide an overview of efforts DEI is working on to support Metropolitan's NDP underutilization results and affirmative action requirements for covered veterans and individuals. Efforts include community engagement, collaborating with schools, engaging with career development organizations, and partnering with educational institutions to develop training programs and grant funding initiatives.