



CITY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO

INTERNAL DIVERSITY
AND EQUITY AUDIT
REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of San Luis Obispo (SLO) seeks to enhance its diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts in order to support and enhance its workforce as they serve the diverse needs of the community. The leadership seeks to attract diversity in its staff and create an inclusive work environment where all employees feel supported and are thus, able to perform to their highest potential. The organization also seeks to include diversity, equity, and inclusion in any and all decision making.

In order to evaluate and address areas where change is needed, the City hired a consultant with expertise in DEI, organizational change, and strategic planning. A Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Committee representing a cross-section of staff throughout the organization was formed. The DEI Committee conducted an Internal Diversity and Equity Audit that included 55 questions in five (5) key areas - Recruitment, Retention, Workplace Climate, Agency Operations, and Leadership.

Based on the audit results, the DEI Committee developed a set of recommendations on policies, programs, and practices through which the City can support the advancement of diversity, equity, and inclusion. The recommendations were vetted in two (2) focus groups, which were open to all employees. Participants in the focus groups reviewed the DEI Committee's recommendations, as well as proposed additional actions. From the numerous recommendations, suggestions, ideas, and feedback, the following themes emerged in each key area.

Emergent Themes:

- 1. Recruitment**
 - a. Outreach/Advertising
 - b. Evaluate and strengthen the selection process
 - c. Develop internal candidates
- 2. Retention**
 - a. Provide greater support for caretakers
 - b. Develop staff
 - c. Evaluate pay
- 3. Workplace Climate**
 - a. Provide trainings and professional development
 - b. Build interpersonal connections
 - c. Improve/Increase communication
- 4. Agency Operations**
 - a. Develop a diversity statement
 - b. Further define the role of the DEI Committee
 - c. Redesign marketing materials
 - d. Promote inclusive celebrations
 - e. Evaluate physical spaces
 - f. Review agency documents, forms, and publications
- 5. Leadership**
 - a. DEI trainings for management
 - b. Supportive behaviors and actions
 - c. Intervention and advocacy

The City recognizes that systemic barriers embedded within policies, practices, and programs inadvertently exclude individuals and whole communities. It acknowledges that deep structural transition and cultural shifts are necessary to support the well-being and empowerment of marginalized individuals and groups (June 2020, Meta Goal).

Achieving these goals requires support from senior management and equipping staff at all levels with the tools necessary to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion.

BACKGROUND

“The City of San Luis Obispo is a dynamic community embracing its future while respecting its past with core values of civility, sustainability, diversity, inclusivity, regionalism, partnership, and resiliency.”

In the 2019-21 Financial Plan the City Council adopted a vision stating, *“The City of San Luis Obispo is a dynamic community embracing its future while respecting its past with core values of civility, sustainability, diversity, inclusivity, regionalism, partnership, and resiliency.”* The City of San Luis Obispo (SLO) adopted a Meta Goal in June 2020 which states, *“The City recognizes that social, and economic inequality is embedded in our systems and culture, and that recovery must integrate deep structural transition to support the well-being and empowerment of marginalized communities.”* As an organization, the City of SLO is committed to aligning policies, practices, and programs that increase diversity, equity, and inclusion, resulting in a workforce that represents and serves the whole community, including historically marginalized populations.

In July 2020, the City formed a Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Committee to identify gaps and opportunities to advance DEI within the organization. A consultant was retained for their expertise in DEI, organizational change, and strategic planning, to support the DEI Committee in conducting an Internal Diversity and Equity Audit. The DEI Committee includes 17 employees from a large cross-section of the organization (see Appendix A). The audit included 55 questions and assessed the level of commitment – accountability, infrastructure, incentives, and resources – in the organization to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in five key areas – Recruitment, Retention, Workplace Climate, Operations, and Leadership.

To support the work of the Committee and to encourage dialogue and learning on DEI related topics within the organization, a 3-part series of DEI trainings was offered (and continues to be regularly offered), and an internal webpage containing resources, articles, and Committee agendas and work product was developed. Since forming the DEI Committee in 2020, several DEI initiatives have already been implemented. In addition to developing DEI recommendations, the DEI Committee has successfully provided employees the option of adding pronouns to their email signatures, launched a monthly DEI newsletter, and drafted a diversity statement.

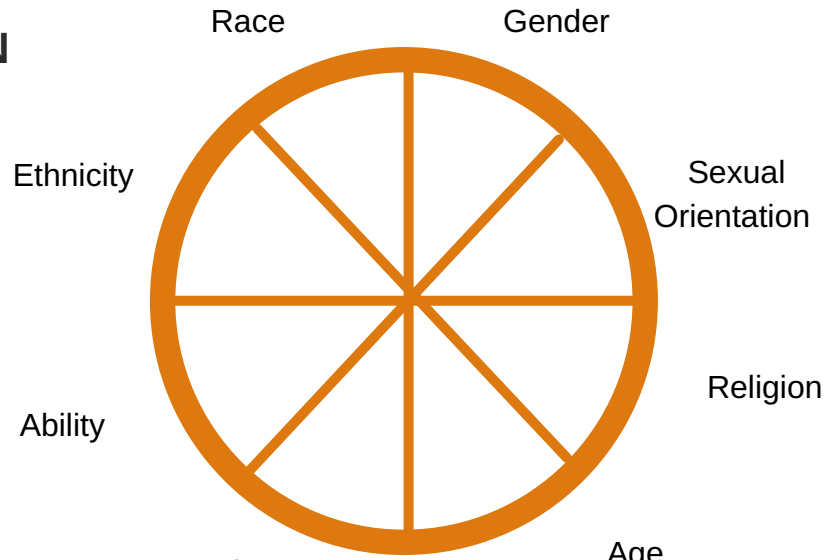
In the same month the City of SLO formed the DEI Committee (July 2020), the City Council approved the creation of a limited-term DEI Task Force as part of a wider effort to help make San Luis Obispo an inclusive community for everyone and to advise the City in developing recommendations that advance diversity, equity, and inclusion. The task force was comprised of 11 volunteer community members and a Councilmember. In addition to administering a grant process that awarded over \$100,000 for DEI High Impact programs, the task force put forward five (5) essential recommendations as first-step priorities for a comprehensive framework through which the City can systematically and structurally support the advancement of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

DEFINING OUR WORK

FOSTERING INCLUSION

The City has an emerging diversity of race, culture, religion, gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, ability, age, and more. The City is committed to ensuring all employees feel valued and can contribute in meaningful ways, which requires fostering an inclusive work environment. When all employees are able to fully express their authentic selves, they are more effective, creative, productive, and satisfied in their work.

The Social Identity Wheel demonstrates the various identities that individuals can hold. It also highlights that one's identities may differ from others in the workplace, and it shows where individuals may or may not have privilege.



Social Identity Wheel

TERMS

Building a shared vocabulary has been an important aspect of working collectively towards common DEI goals. These terms and definitions have been used throughout the organization's DEI trainings.

Diversity

The unique differences among individuals in a group based on which we may be treated differently in society.

Equity

Approach that ensures everyone is given equal opportunity; this means that resources may be divided and shared unequally to make sure that each person can access an opportunity.

Inclusion

Embracing, leveraging, and celebrating the strengths of our diversity and ensuring everyone feels welcomed and valued for who they are. Diversity is what we are, and inclusion is what we do.

Implicit Bias

Unconscious biases held towards others or associated with stereotypes.

Systemic Racism

Also known as institutional racism, it is a form of racism that is embedded in every social institution, including schools, workplaces, churches, and the justice system. Evidence includes the distribution of wealth, employment rates, education, housing, and health statistics.

METHODOLOGY

Acknowledging that systemic barriers to DEI may be embedded within policies, practices, and programs, the primary method used to assess the City's diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts was the Internal Diversity and Equity Audit (IDEA). The purpose of the audit was to identify policies, programs, and practices that support diversity, equity, and inclusion in the organization, as well as areas for improvement.

The DEI Committee worked in subgroups to research and respond to the audit questions, to reach out to other staff to understand what is and is not in place, to discuss and consider best practices, and formulate actions. Based on the results of the audit, the DEI Committee developed a set of potential actions for the City. The recommended actions were shared in focus groups that took place in January/February 2021. Twenty (20) employees attended the two (2) focus group sessions.

The following examples demonstrate the types of questions in each section of the audit.

Recruitment

- How does the agency attract a diverse applicant pool?
- Is cultural competence a required qualification for all jobs?
- Do applicants submit a diversity statement?

Retention

- How does the agency ensure that projects and assignments are allocated equitably?
- Does the agency have a mentorship program?
- How is DEI incorporated in the onboarding practice?

Workplace Climate

- Does your agency conduct regular climate surveys?
- What opportunities does your agency have for employees to participate in discussions about race, privilege, and implicit bias?
- How are complaints handled?

Agency Operations

- Is diversity, equity, and inclusion part of your mission statement?
- How is diversity, equity, and inclusion reflected in your marketing materials?

Leadership

- To what degree does the leadership of your agency represent the diversity of the community being served?

METHODOLOGY

cont'd

In addition to developing potential actions, the DEI Committee and focus groups engaged in a visioning activity. They were asked, “Imagine the City of SLO is leading the way in diversity, equity, and inclusion. It’s a diverse and thriving organization where everyone feels valued and a sense of belonging. What would that look like? How would it feel? What would need to change?”

“Imagine the City of SLO is leading the way in diversity, equity, and inclusion. It’s a diverse and thriving organization where everyone feels valued and a sense of belonging.”

Responses included:

- DEI is included in any and all decision making
- DEI is foundational in all projects
- We are an organization that represents the community
- We are all working towards a goal together
- All are included in communications and celebrations and various cultures are understood and appreciated
- Employees can and do reach out to each other
- Visible diversity
- Management supports employees who are subjected to discrimination
- A workplace that is friendly, inclusive, diverse, safe, vibrant, creative, free from judgment, improving, supportive and encouraging, open and affirming, respectful dissent with passion for the issues, not with anger, hate, or distrust
- We continue to learn and develop in various aspects of DEI; valuing differences, exhibiting compassion, demonstrating allyship
- The value of organizational diversity will be recognized and appreciated in its positive impact on serving our community
- There is clear succession planning that supports the hopes, dreams, and aspirations of all regardless of color, age, disability, religion, gender identity, etc. to attain their hopes and dreams

RECOMMENDATIONS

The DEI Committee and focus groups generated numerous potential actions and recommendations. From the comprehensive list of ideas put forward (see Appendix B), the following themes emerged in the five key areas of Recruitment, Retention, Workplace Climate, Agency Operations, and Leadership. Recommendations were formed in each category after considering areas where forward progress could be made within existing resources, where resources may need to be added, and where forward progress is in motion.

RECRUITMENT

The City has the goal of recruiting a diverse pool of applicants and hiring candidates who advance diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts in the organization. The City advertises job postings in a wide variety of publications and sources. Significant recruitment challenges include housing affordability and relocation costs as well as availability of head of household jobs for spouses and partners. Additional challenges facing the organization in achieving diverse representation are the systemic and social conditions that impact diversity within the local population. While state demographics indicate 36.5% of the population of California identifies as white, in the City of San Luis Obispo 70.7% identifies as white, and 77% of City employees identify as White. Preliminary analysis of a small sample size of recruitments indicates that diversity of candidates diminishes during the selection process. The three areas of improvement that emerged in recruitment are **outreach/advertising, evaluating and strengthening the selection process, and developing internal candidates.**

Recommendations included:

- Promote diversity through advertising images and words
- Develop a recruitment video with focus on DEI (resource dependent)
- Broaden recruitment outreach to more diverse sources
- Provide training on DEI/implicit bias to interview panels
- Using draft “FIT Guide” as a foundation, implement second or final interview training to support DEI objectives (in progress)
- Consistently fund internships throughout all City Departments (resource dependent)

RECOMMENDATIONS cont'd

RETENTION

While recruitment and hiring play a key role in increasing diversity in the organization, retention is critical to the organization's success and sustainability, especially as the organization makes strides in attracting diverse employees. The City provides advancement opportunities for employees through the Employment Opportunity Program (EOP) that allows current employees to apply for openings prior to an external recruitment, and the Temporary Assignment Opportunity (TAO) process that allows for an employee to experience a different job or assignment and expand skills and abilities in preparation for future job openings. The City also has a comprehensive onboarding program that includes new employee training, a Day of Welcome (DOW), and a Peer Advisor Liaison (PAL) program that pairs a current employee with a new employee for mentorship and support. A major challenge for employees in the organization is infant childcare and balancing work/life responsibilities. The themes that emerged from the proposed actions are **providing greater support for caretakers, developing staff, and evaluating pay.**

Recommendations included:

- Identify and publish career ladders (i.e. City of Santa Barbara) identifying paths for progression within the organization
- Add DEI to the performance evaluation process
- Conduct a pay equity audit with a DEI analysis (resource dependent)
- Implement exit surveys to identify barriers to DEI and validate supportive measures within the organization
- Add a DEI focus on the Onboard Day of Welcome Program
- Review and update Human Resources forms to ensure they support DEI (e.g. gender options, names, fields)

RECOMMENDATIONS cont'd

WORKPLACE CLIMATE

The City seeks to create an environment where all employees feel valued and included. The City conducts an Employee Engagement Survey every three years that provides valuable insights into the measures of inclusion. They have also developed a resource page to provide employees with tools and resources pertaining to diversity, equity, and inclusion, supporting workshops, panel discussions, speakers, and open forums related to racial equity. Emerging themes in the areas of workplace climate are **providing trainings and professional development, building interpersonal connections, and improving/increasing communication.**

Recommendations included:

- Continue DEI Training (in progress) and make it mandatory for all employees (resource dependent)
- Open informal opportunities for conversation and networking (i.e., parents of teens)
- Develop DEI Communications newsletter (completed)
- Include pronouns in email signatures (completed)
- Regularly share and update diversity data (completed)

RECOMMENDATIONS cont'd

AGENCY OPERATIONS

In order to create an inclusive workplace climate, it is critical that the City has an organizational structure that supports diversity, equity, and inclusion. There are several areas of growth within agency operations, including **developing a diversity statement, further defining the role of the DEI Committee, redesigning marketing materials, promoting inclusive celebrations, evaluating physical spaces, and reviewing agency documents, forms, and publications.**

Recommendations included:

- Develop diversity statement (in progress)
- Continue to develop the DEI Committee, including identifying purpose, mission and required resources/budget (in progress)
- Include all levels of the organization in celebrations
- Offer marketing materials and public information in languages other than English
- As feasible, move to gender neutral bathrooms
- Update the Public Engagement and Noticing (PEN) manual to support DEI efforts

RECOMMENDATIONS cont'd

LEADERSHIP

Achieving deep structural transition and cultural shifts requires strong leadership. Support from senior management is essential to the success of DEI efforts. While there is evidence of commitment to DEI among senior leadership, there are still opportunities for growth in this area. Based on the audit findings and recommendations, staff would like to see **DEI trainings for management, as well as supportive behaviors and actions, intervention, and advocacy by senior leadership.**

Recommendations included:

- Engage in DEI efforts, including ensuring DEI is a priority
- Lead by example in supporting an inclusive work environment; call out inappropriate comments and behaviors
- Positively reinforce bystanders and others who speak up in support of inclusion
- Regularly contribute to the DEI newsletter (in progress)

NEXT STEPS

Success will require commitment, sacrifice, resources, and collaboration, like any journey.

Awakened by the killing of George Floyd in May of 2020 and the racial revolution that followed, organizations across the country have sought to better understand how structural and systemic racism manifest in their workplace, identify strategies for more effective dialogue, recognize what behaviors and actions to avoid, adopt ways to support marginalized employees and communities, and find answers to frequently asked questions about diversity, equity, and inclusion. The answers to these questions are still being defined, as organizational leaders struggle to understand what is needed to achieve racial understanding and reconciliation.

Like many organizations, the City of SLO is navigating uncharted waters. While these issues are not new, discussions about diversity, equity, and inclusion have not always been welcomed in the workplace. Terms like implicit bias, privilege, and systemic racism have been reserved for ethnic studies classrooms. And, it is important not to shy away from these conversations because of fears of offending others or doing it wrong. The City commitment to training, and the DEI Committee's commitment to moving this important work forward is commendable. It is to be expected that the City may encounter some stormy seas, as it continues the work.

This report of the Internal Diversity and Equity Audit recommendations, along with the DEI Task Force Recommendations for Advancing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, sets the City up for clarity of purpose and direction to support the anticipated adoption by Council of a Major City Goal of Diversity Equity and Inclusion as part of the 2021-23 Financial Plan. The major city goal workplans should reflect this foundational work, prioritize and timeframe it, and request necessary resources to support it. Although some of the identified recommendations may be initially additive or project-oriented, they should quickly become embedded in the culture of the organization.

Using DEI as a North Star, the City can move collectively towards common goals - increasing diversity within the organization, creating an inclusive work environment, serving the diverse needs of the whole community, and including DEI in any and all decision making. Success will require commitment, sacrifice, resources, and collaboration, like any journey. The City may have to rely on guides and experts along the way. There will be barriers and challenges, and the organization will need to equip staff at all levels with the tools necessary. But, every leg of the journey will bring the organization closer to its destination – a diverse and thriving organization where everyone feels valued and a sense of belonging.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A - DEI COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Gamaliel Anguiano, Transit Manager

Mayra Alia, Administrative Assistant

Esteban Cano, Financial Analyst

Christina Claxton, Environmental Programs Manager

Cassia Cocina, Code Enforcement Supervisor

Vlahdemir Cruz, Golf Coordinator

Lademiro Garcia, Facilities Maintenance Technician

Miguel Guardado, Information Technology Manager

Natalie Harnett, Budget Analyst

Sophia Matthews, Training and Hiring Manager (Police Department)

Chris Read, Sustainability Manager

Keith Schwanemann, Environmental Compliance Inspector

Lindsey Stephenson, Recreation Manager

John Stevens, Police Officer

Jennifer Thompson, Utilities Business Manager

Victoria Tonikian, Interim Executive Assistant to the City Manager/Fiscal Officer

Elizabeth Turbow, Administrative Assistant II

APPENDIX B - COMPREHENSIVE LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations, suggestions, ideas, and actions were generated by the DEI Committee and two (2) focus groups. The list represents changes to policies, programs, and practices through which the City can support the advancement of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Recruitment

1. Outreach/Advertising
 - a. Promote diversity through advertising images and words
 - b. Outreach to high schools, Cuesta College, Allan Hancock, Cal Poly (targeted)
 - c. Develop a recruitment video with focus on DEI
 - d. Use social media platforms
 - e. Look for opportunities to reach target audiences – like California Conservation Corps
 - f. Public safety leaders outreach to high schools and community colleges
 - g. Develop diverse recruitment ambassadors to attract more diversity
 - h. Give tours (invite diverse groups)
2. Evaluate and strengthen the selection process
 - a. Modify the “fit” (second or final) interview (in progress)
 - b. Provide training on DEI/implicit bias to hiring committees
 - c. Develop interview standards
 - d. Implement employee equity facilitator
 - e. Add cultural competence questions
 - f. Add cultural competence as a required qualification
 - g. Require applicants to submit a diversity statement
 - h. Second interview panels should be diverse
 - i. Blind application screening
3. Developing internal candidates
 - a. Provide feedback to candidates who were not selected
 - b. Job share/shadow opportunities, interim positions
 - c. Fund internships
4. Other
 - a. Fewer EOPS, more external recruitments
 - b. Provide relocation incentives

Retention

1. Provide greater support for caretakers
 - a. Provide childcare or offer financial stipends
 - b. Increase flexibility
 - c. Offer paid maternity leave
 - d. Pay into social security for state disability benefit
 - e. Extend paternal leave policies
2. Developing staff
 - a. Provide career ladders (i.e. City of Santa Barbara)
 - b. Explore process for announcing opportunities and how they are compensated
 - c. Add DEI to the performance evaluation process
 - d. Develop a reverse mentorship program
 - e. Address burnout – employees doing double job description
 - f. Provide on the job training, skill building opportunities

APPENDIX B - COMPREHENSIVE LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS cont'd

Retention cont'd

3. Pay
 - a. Provide bilingual pay
 - b. Conduct pay audit with DEI lens
4. Other
 - a. Implement exit survey
 - b. Re-examine practice of rewarding referrals
 - c. Add a DEI focus on the Onboard Day of Welcome Program
 - d. Review and update HR forms (gender options, names, fields)

Workplace Climate

1. Recognition
 - a. Give DEI Awards
2. Trainings and professional development
 - a. Provide allyship training
 - b. Provide DEI Trainings
 - c. Provide DEI Trainings tailored to specific fields of work
 - d. Make mandatory DEI Training
 - e. Create Learning Sessions – safe spaces to become more educated on DEI topics
3. Build interpersonal connections
 - a. Support affinity groups
 - b. Learn more about different departments – build empathy
 - c. Open informal spaces for conversation and networking (i.e parents of teens)
 - d. Create opportunities to celebrate diversity through sharing
4. Improve/Increase Communication
 - a. Build DEI Website
 - b. Conduct visual images audit
 - c. Give updates at All Employee meetings (in progress)
 - d. Send all agency email updates on DEI (in progress)
 - e. Develop DEI Communications newsletter (completed)
 - f. Present DEI updates to departmental meetings
 - g. Present DEI updates to PACE
 - h. how we embrace diversity as a city
5. Strengthen sense of belonging
 - a. Include pronouns in email signatures (completed)
 - b. Learn more about what types of benefits, policies, practices diverse groups want
6. Other
 - a. Summarize and share # of DHR reports
 - b. Regularly update diversity data
 - c. Educate employees on how to file a complaint

APPENDIX B - COMPREHENSIVE LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS cont'd

Agency Operations

1. Mission Statement
 - a. Develop diversity statement (in progress)
 - b. Add diversity, equity, and inclusion in general mission statement
2. Diversity Committee
 - a. Develop mission
 - b. Identify budget
3. Promote inclusive celebrations
 - a. Designate number of holidays and let people choose
 - b. Provide more food options, spec. for vegetarians
 - c. Assess how we decorate our physical space
 - d. Make celebrations accessible to all work schedules
 - e. Have celebrations across departments
 - f. Move away from traditional holidays
 - g. Include all levels of the organization in celebrations
4. Marketing materials
 - a. Increase diverse representation – mostly buildings and parks
 - b. Offer versions in other languages
 - c. Identify ways to get more diverse attendance
5. Space
 - a. Gender neutral bathrooms
 - b. Culturally diverse art
 - c. Inclusive reading materials
6. Agency forms and paperwork
 - a. Review documents to make them more inclusive
 - b. Update Public Engagement and Noticing (PEN) manual
 - c. Public information in languages other than English

Leadership

1. DEI Training
 - a. Tailor DEI training to leaders/managers
 - b. Require DEI Training
 - c. DEI training built in for new hires
2. Behaviors and actions
 - a. Stronger commitment from department heads and managers
 - b. Awareness of implicit bias
 - c. Localization from management that DEI is a priority
 - d. Need supervisor to raise importance when there are competing priorities
 - e. Leadership engaged in DEI efforts
 - f. Leadership contributes to DEI newsletter (in progress)
3. Intervention & advocacy
 - a. Managers step in when they see a problem
 - b. Call out inappropriate comments and behaviors
 - c. Be aware of how jokes are impacting all
 - d. Positively reinforce bystanders and others who speak up in support of inclusion