

# City of Tacoma Workforce Equity Study



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## Study approach

- Keen Independent analyzed equity and fairness in the City of Tacoma's personnel policies and practices through:
  - Focus groups
  - In-depth interviews
  - Case studies
  - Disparity analysis
  - Literature review of workforce equity best practices
- Three themes emerged:
  - The geographic area from which the City hires
  - City outreach and hiring practices
  - Employee advancement, retention and inclusion

## Analysis of hiring, promotions and separations

- Analyzed employment actions for 2012-2019
- Examined results by Division and EEO-4 job group
- Compiled Census data on worker availability data for Pierce County
- Compared outcomes with benchmarks to identify substantial disparities

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## Key conclusions

- Efforts for diverse hiring at City have been successful
- Societal discrimination still limits the number of people of color and women available to be hired in certain fields
- People of color and women leave City jobs at a higher rate than non-minorities and men
- Retention of diverse employees is the greatest obstacle to increasing diversity and inclusion at the City

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## Key conclusions (continued)

- Disparities found in rates of promotions for people of color and women
- Lack of understanding and trust among employees about advancement at the City
- City work environment is not always welcoming to diverse workers
  - Uneven employee management skills among supervisors and managers
  - Overt discriminatory behavior by some employees
  - Some employees are unwilling to speak up
- Ultimately, more to do to achieve an inclusive environment for diverse workforce at the City

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## 1. Improve how encourage hiring of people living in the city

### Current status

- City Charter requires residency when start job at City
- Blanket residency waiver in place for appointed employees
- Individual residency waivers for classified employees must be approved by Civil Service Board

### Basis for recommendation

- Difficult to enforce
- Most current employees, including employees of color, lived outside the City when hired (and do now)
- Charter provision could hinder diversity and inclusion at City

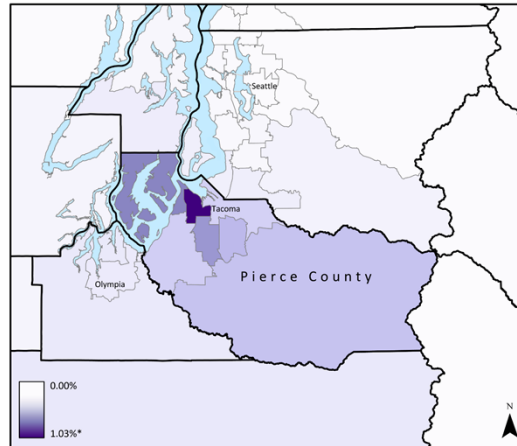
### Potential considerations

- City should consider a hiring preference for city residents instead of mandate

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## Geographic area from which the City hires

Percentage of area workforce employed by the City of Tacoma



\* Percentage calculated for each Public Use Micro Area (PUMA) by combining City employee data with 2017 American Community Survey (ACS) Census data.

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## 2. Employees should reflect diversity of local labor market (workers in specific occupations living in Pierce County)

### Current status

- City strives to reflect the community it serves

### Basis for recommendation

- City's labor market includes all of Pierce County, not just Tacoma

### Potential considerations

- Update benchmarks for reviewing applicant pools and other analyses

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### 3. Continue, strengthen general diversity outreach activities

#### Current status

- City has built relationships and established regular connections with underrepresented communities
- Human Resources Dept. sponsors recruiting events for women in jobs where underrepresented

#### Basis for recommendation

- City's current efforts appear to positively affect diversity of hiring

#### Potential considerations

- Continue and strengthen these general activities

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### 4. Continue to work with training partners to encourage diverse candidates for specialized entry level positions

#### Current status

- Human Resources Dept. sponsors informational and recruiting events for women in jobs where underrepresented

#### Basis for recommendation

- Some specialized entry level jobs have had little racial or gender diversity (i.e., women firefighters)

#### Potential considerations

- Build targeted pipelines in the community to recruit underrepresented candidates for entry level positions

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## 5. Reevaluate minimum qualifications and scoring of qualifications for entry-level positions

### Current status

- Non-represented positions are currently being reviewed in Classification and Compensation Study
- Represented positions are reviewed on as needed basis

### Basis for recommendation

- Current minimum qualifications may unnecessarily disadvantage potential applicants with less formal education or experience

### Potential considerations

- Start with entry-level jobs where City sees the least diversity in applicants

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## 6. Remove City Charter Section 6.3 requiring citizenship for eligibility for employment with the City

### Current status

- The City does not currently enforce this provision

### Basis for recommendation

- It violates federal law

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## 7. Reevaluate use of tests for entry level positions to ensure needed and accurately measure ability to perform

### Current status

- Tests are regularly used to evaluate and score applicants for classified positions

### Basis for recommendation

- Some evidence that current tests are out of date and/or negatively affect certain groups
- Most tests are developed internally and are not typically “validated”

### Potential considerations

- By law, testing must be related to requirements of the job

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## 8. Consider more flexibility in application acceptance periods and better communicate the application process

### Current status

- Personnel Rules currently require establishment of an eligibility list, which remains valid for one year
- Recruitments for classified positions often only accept applications once a year

### Basis for recommendation

- Current process only allows applications once a year for brief window, potentially leaving out qualified applicants
- Unless candidate signed up for Job Interest Card, may not realize a recruitment is underway

### Potential considerations

- Consider recruiting by position rather than classification (multiple opportunities to apply vs. one opportunity)

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## 9. Build pipelines of diverse workers for jobs where labor pool not diverse

### Current status

- Development of a City-wide internship program is under way

### Basis for recommendation

- For some jobs, few diverse workers available in local labor market

### Potential considerations

- City has had success with similar efforts

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## 10. Ensure mandatory qualifications and testing for advanced positions are non-discriminatory, including written exams

### Current status

- Non-represented classifications are currently being evaluated in Classification and Compensation Study

### Basis for recommendation

- Some evidence of disparities in promotions for women and people of color
- Keen Independent's case study of promotions found disparities in written exam scores

### Potential considerations

- Need critical review of tools used to hire for advanced positions

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## 11. Proactively communicate, prepare employees for career advancement

### Current status

- Initial pilot of an Aspiring Leader's Program
- City has invested in leadership training for current and aspiring leaders

### Basis for recommendation

- Feedback from employees and disparities in promotion

### Potential considerations

- Consider development of succession planning program
- Leadership training should include managing diverse teams

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## 12. Encourage individuals eligible for advancement to apply

### Current status

- Promotion opportunities announced internally or as part of an open recruitment

### Basis for recommendation

- Identified some disparities in promotions because women eligible to advance did not apply

### Potential considerations

- City should monitor rates of applications by race/gender and explore reasons behind any underrepresentation

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### 13. Explore opportunities, remove barriers to advancement outside of one's department or bargaining unit

#### Current status

- Employees can apply for jobs outside their department or bargaining unit but some reported barriers

#### Basis for recommendation

- Maximize opportunities for internal hiring for advanced City positions

#### Potential considerations

- Will need greater communication and encouragement for internal promotion outside own department

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### 14. Invest in effective talent management training across all departments

#### Current status

- City has invested in leadership training for current and aspiring leaders

#### Basis for recommendation

- Some of the issues concerning "culture" may be due to inadequate management skills
- Some employees reported that they want training before becoming a supervisor or manager, but found it difficult to receive

#### Potential considerations

- Recommendation would expand access to management training

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## 15. Review, enforce consistency in hiring processes for advanced positions

### Current status

- Hiring for advanced positions handled by individual departments

### Basis for recommendation

- Employees report inconsistencies and inadequacies in how departments handle hiring

### Potential considerations

- Human Resources Dept. should further review and enforce consistency across departments

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## 16. Encourage Employee Resource Groups and other cross-department employee groups

### Current status

- The City currently supports affinity groups that have formed at the grass-roots level

### Basis for recommendation

- Employees reported “silos” that made it difficult to connect to others
- Cross-department groups can enhance sense of belonging, especially for those not in the majority group in their workplace

### Potential considerations

- Groups can be but do not need to be race-, ethnicity- or gender-specific

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## 17. Deploy regular, consistent employee satisfaction surveys

### Current status

- The City conducted surveys in 2019 and 2020

### Basis for recommendation

- Need tools to consistently measure employee perceptions of fairness

### Potential considerations

- From surveys, City should continue to track differences in employee satisfaction based on race, ethnicity and gender

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## 18. Explore new ways for employees to bring discriminatory actions to light without fear of retribution

### Current status

- Employees currently can report concerns of harassment and/or discrimination to their supervisor, a City leader, Human Resources or the Equal Employment Opportunity Officer

### Basis for recommendation

- Some employees of color and women said they did not feel comfortable reporting abusive or other improper behavior

### Potential considerations

- Fear of retribution for bringing up discriminatory actions is common issue for large organizations

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## 19. Focus on eliminating disparities in retention of employees

### Current status

- City's retention workgroup is developing strategies to address these issues

### Basis for recommendation

- Disparities in rates of separation for people of color and women
- Employee feedback on culture of organization

### Potential considerations

- City needs accurate metrics
- Culture of inclusion and belonging needs to improve across the City

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## Q&A

Questions or comments?



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