

RACIAL AND SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMISSION OF PWC
GOVERNMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE FINDINGS AND
RECOMMENDATIONS DEC. 2021

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INTRODUCTION

A. Mission and Objectives: Government Services Committee

The Racial and Social Justice Commission Government Services Committee (GSC) mission is to examine the state of racial and social justice for people of color in the areas of government services. The Commission will assess how the county government delivers its services and the diversity and inclusion of the workforce providing these services. The objectives of the GSC were to:

1. Utilize surveys, focus groups, town hall meetings, hearings, and other methods to gather relevant information from the County's workforce.
2. Examine relevant data to assess the composition of the workforce and its relationship with the County's demographics
3. Examine the County's hiring and promotion practices and other personnel practices for equity and inclusion.
4. Hold listening sessions with Human Resources subject-matter-experts

B. Executive Summary

One initial objective for the GSC was to conduct listening sessions with Prince William County's (PWC) human resource subject-matter-experts. However, after reviewing the overall county government's organizational structure and connectivity between departments and guidance from Ex-Official member, Chris Martino, County Executive, the GSC concluded that it would be more judicious to have listening sessions with several major departments in the PWC government. As a result, the GWC held a listening session with the Human Resource Office, the Office of Housing and Development, the Planning Office, and the Department of Social Services. The GSC also analyzed the officials and administration workforce. Additionally, the GSC was present for the listening sessions and the presentations at the Racial and Social Justice Commission's public meetings. The majority of the presentations did not yield a sizable number of concerns for government services except for the briefing of a citizen on the preservation of slave cemeteries which the Board of County supervisors are fully aware of the current circumstances.

Our methodology for analyzing listening sessions and data gathering during the 2021 discovery period was the Equity Impact Analysis tool which was presented to the Racial Social Justice Commission by the Chief Equity Officer Ms. Maria Burgos. The tool targeted best practices (Strengths), areas of growth, opportunities to examine, and discovery questions. An additional bonus with this tool is that it could be completed online. The GSC review numerous demographic data as well as the Prince William County, Virginia 2018 Resident Satisfaction Survey Report July 2018, conducted by Issues and Answers Network, Inc.

Most disconcerting was that only 1573 residents participated which was a small sampling of the PWC population. PWC must find a way to obtain a larger participation rate for the survey of the County.

The following data was captured for satisfaction with County Services.

Overall, 55.7% of residents are “very satisfied” with services provided by the County. “Very satisfied” is a score of 8, 9, or 10 on the scale of 0 to 10 that is used in this report. A “10” is always the highest possible score.

On the scale of 0 to 10, where 10 is completely satisfied, there are seven items on which the County clearly excels. One item has an average rating of 9.03:

“Fire and emergency medical service responders are professional”

Six items have average ratings of between 8.10 and 8.85:

- “Fire and EMS responders provide high-quality service”
- “Your voting experience in Prince William County”
- “You feel safe in your neighborhood”
- “County library services including online services meet your needs”
- “Requests for police assistance receive a prompt response”
- “You feel safe when visiting commercial areas of the County”

Fifteen items score average ratings of between 7.14 and 7.98 – certainly, respectable scores.

The areas with the lowest scores are Human Services, Transportation, and Planning. However, satisfaction with almost all of the items that were measured in both 2016 and 2018 has risen this year.

With Human Services, a large number of respondents were unable to offer an opinion. For example, more than 600 people opted out of the question on addiction services, giving a “don’t know” response.

No average score for any items is below 5.72. There are no areas in which a majority of residents are dissatisfied.

Many of the objectives for the GSC were met; however, the immensity of the delivery of government service review exceeded the expectation of allotted time, thus, an internal review of the PWC workforce’s diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) climate was not conducted. The PWC Equity and Inclusion Officer (EIO) informed the GSC that an internal assessment of the PWC workforce will be conducted which will measure the overall workforce climate to include DEI. The GSC will conduct a comprehensive analysis of the assessment once results are received in the project time of 2022.

The GWC's overall assessment of the state of racial and social justice for people of color in the areas of government services determined that the programs and plans of the PWC services were mostly exceptional. We did not find any systemic/structural discrimination or social injustices. However, the GSC does not claim that systemic/structural discrimination or social injustices do not exist but only the data during this discovery did not yield such a claim. Nevertheless, we did find some inferences (triggers) that could escalate into barriers and social injustices such as affordable housing, the demography of the Juvenile Detention Center, capturing of veterans and individuals with disability data, and lower participation rates of people of color in higher pay bands which will be noted further in findings and analysis of this report. The GWC did not see any data on the LGBTQIA community. Accordingly, the GSC recommends further study and assessment in these areas.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE'S FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Human Resource Office (HRO)

The Human Resource Office (HRO) briefed that they are committed to identifying and removing barriers to employment with the County. They have a partnership with the job board DiversityJobs.com which will increase their visibility with diverse groups including LGBTQ, Veterans, women, and people of color. The county website is viewable in numerous languages. HRO Has plans within the next five years to redesign professional development opportunities, implement a new human capital management system, evaluate health and retirement benefits, and plan for transition in key leadership roles.

1. **Best Practices/Strengths** - In 2014, Prince William County began a series of changes to promote inclusivity in employment: Notable changes include
 - a) Implementation of Ban the Box (removal of questions regarding criminal history from the employment applications to allow offenders to compete for jobs without the stigma of their past mistakes).
 - b) The revision of our Personnel Policies to be more adaptive to allow managers the flexibility to work with employees to change their behavior and improve performance
2. **Additional Best Practices/Strengths Noted from Equity Impact Analysis**

Aside from the strengths note from 2014, the GSC, through their Equity Impact Analysis captured the following additional best practices/strengths:

- a) Offer the ability to fill an application out in person if they cannot use a

computer. Personal identification information is not visible on an application which allows for a more objective review from panel members and hiring officials. Hiring managers also must justify the reasons for hiring the selected applicant.

- b) Removed the requirement of a degree on positions that do not have a mandated education requirement
- c) Prepares clear performance profile of each position at the start of the recruitment process.
- d) The hiring manager must justify hiring to
- e) HR use several mediums to attract and hire a diverse talent pool of candidates.
- f) Diverse selection panels
- g) HRO does not ask for salary because it is not a basis for hiring
- h) Provides interpreters and application assistance for an individual with disabilities
- i) County turnover rate is low at 8% (minus retirement) and 11% (plus retirement) in comparison to the Bureau of Labor Statistics rate for turnover is 12%-15%)
- j) Reviewed all classifications (Bands are consistent across the board based on the criteria.

B. Human Resource Office – Challenges (Areas to grow/Opportunities to examine)

Challenge 1. Currently, HRO does not track or give Veteran Preference to applicants which has been yielded positive selection practices for federal government agencies. There is a large pool of Veterans in Prince William County who have retired or were honorably discharged from military service. Veterans' preference applies to all new appointments in the competitive service and many in the excepted service. Veterans' preference does not guarantee veterans a job and it does not apply to internal agency actions such as promotions, transfers, reassignments, and reinstatements (www.opm.gov)

Recommendations

Establish a Veteran preference for hiring which gives eligible veterans preference in appointment over many other applicants.

Challenge 2. No notable preferences or tracking systems for hiring individuals with a disability.

Although the HRO stated that they provide reasonable accommodations when requested, there was no preference given for individuals with a targeted disability nor any tracking mechanism for capturing hiring data on this category. Thus, there is no data available to analyze PWC hiring behavior for individuals with a disability.

In 2020, 17.9 percent of persons with a disability were employed, down from 19.3 percent in 2019. For persons without a disability, 61.8 percent were employed in 2020, down from 66.3 percent in the prior year. The unemployment rates for persons with and without a disability both increased from 2019 to 2020, to 12.6 percent and 7.9 percent, respectively. Data on both groups for 2020 reflect the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and efforts to contain it.

Recommendations

To continue to be a model employer the GSC recommends taking proactive measures to ensure that people with disabilities are considered for employment, promotion, transfer, and training without regard to physical, mental, or sensory disability, and continue to provide an interactive process to evaluate requests for reasonable accommodation.

Additionally, we recommend developing a tracking system that includes individuals with a disability (IWD) hire. Currently, the national participation rate is 22.36%, however, since the PWC does not track IWDs in the hiring process to see if PWC is in parity with the national labor force. (<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/odep>)

The GSC also recommends we model the Federal government's practices for hiring individuals with a disability. The federal government hires each person using a hiring authority (the term comes from the federal regulation that describes it). Federal agencies can use the Schedule a Hiring Authority to hire an individual with a disability (IWD). (<https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/disability-employment/getting-a-job/#url=Schedule-A-Hiring-Authority>)

For recruitment, outreach, and best practices we recommend partnering with organizations such as the Job Accommodation Network (JAN), the Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion (EARN), and the Partnership on Employment and Accessible Technology.

Challenge 3. Hispanic PWC workforce demographics yielded a low participation rate of 10.75 compared to the overall County demographics of 23.5%.

Recommendations

Develop a diverse recruitment outreach plan between HR and departments. The Government Alliance on Race and Equity acknowledged Snohomish County, WA, for its approach to outreach in their DEI Assessment. The County specifics were to enhance recruitment to increase a diverse applicant pool. This can be done in a variety of ways, such as new strategies for outreach, updated job posting listservs, and participation in career fairs beyond the set standard.

(<https://snohomishcountywa.gov/DocumentCenter/View/69149/Snohomish-County-DEI-Assessment---Equity-and-Inclusion-Task-Force>).

Develop a recruitment plan that would enhance diversity recruitment. Partner with affinity groups, such as LULAC, local Hispanic center churches, and activities.

Provide targeted outreach to under-represented communities. (City of Seattle Race & Social Justice Initiative).

Challenge 4. Minimum outreach to affinity organizations.

America is one of the most diverse countries in the world. As the United States logo, E Pluribus Unum (Out of Many One) we as a county must strive to become more culturally competent.

Recommendations

Partner with local affinity groups for all categories of people noted in demographics of PWC for their input on government programs and concerns. (City of Seattle Race & Social Justice Initiative)

C. The Office of Housing and Community Development (OHCD)

The OHCD's mission statement says OHCD will develop affordable housing opportunities and neighborhood resources for low and moderate-income residents by implementing appropriate policies and programs, which provide a safe and healthy environment in which to work and play.

The 2018 Satisfaction survey revealed that more housing/affordable housing/senior housing rated 2.0 for most important things the County should do to make PWC a better place to live compared to improving traffic flow which received the highest rating of 6.0.

OHCD has a 5-year consolidated plan (Action Plan) and annually plan to determine goals to approach. They currently administer two federal programs through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) – The Community Block Grant program and the Emergency Solutions Grant program. The County has a

Cooperative Agreement with the Cities of Manassas and Manassas Park

1. **Best Practices/Strengths**

- a) Provide training to help people to manage loans they receive
- b) Negotiate with builders of new developments to provide units for affordable housing
- c) Fair housing testing – systemic in PWC issues
- d) Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) goes to 1/3 to 1/2 disabled or elderly
- e) Affordable housing monitored 50 properties on an annual basis, monitoring criteria
- f) Dawson Beach transitional housing helps the homeless to become self-sufficient. The goal is to help the homeless to move permanent housing.

D. **The Office of Housing and Community Development (OHCD) (Areas to grow/Opportunities to examine)**

Challenge. Outreach-Public hearings (Lacked participation from the public) and Community housing action plan meetings-Low Attendance.

Recommendations

Establish liaisons with affinity groups for maximizing participation from the public. The liaisons will have the pulse and trust of their community and could encourage participation.

Use all available media possible.

E. **Planning Office**

The Planning Office's mission is to implement the County's Zoning Ordinance and Comprehensive Plan goals.

The Planning Office collaborates with the community and its customers to achieve a high quality of life and regional identity through innovative land use planning. They have a 20 Year Comprehensive Plan forthcoming and expected to be completed in 2022. (Source: Land Use Chapter, Housing Chapter, and the Mobility Chapter). The Planning Office's goal is to revitalize and grow communities without displacing the current population. The median household incomes are \$107,132.

1. Best Practices/Strengths

- a) Community engagement- The Planning office use town hall meetings, public hearings on land use items, and there is information on the PWC website.
- b) The Comprehensive Plan will consider the County's vision to be a "Community of Choice" for families, businesses, and workers in the region. It will also consider housing options that go beyond a sole focus on affordability and implicit in the idea of attainability is the idea that a range of housing options (type, size, tenure, cost) exists in the local market for a range of household incomes and preferences and affordable dwelling unit ordinance.
- c) The planning office engages the people of color population and the appropriate languages aside from English.
- d) Plan to include preservation of historical and cultural sites i.e., slave cemeteries

F. Planning Office (Areas to grow/Opportunities to examine)

Challenge: The rising cost of housing.

Recommendation:

The Planning Office acknowledges the rising cost and GSC expects the forthcoming Comprehensive Plan will considerations state early will be an asset in addressing the rising cost of affordable housing.

G. Department of Social Services (DSS)

The DSS had a simplistic mission statement which says the DSS transforms lives through safety, support, and self-reliance. DSS's overall focus is on individuals' families. The DSS Advisory Board was appointed by the Prince William Board of County Supervisors and chartered in November 2014.

The DSS gave one of the most comprehensive presentations which included a presentation from the Family Support Services, Public Assistance, Homeless Services, Protective Services, and Juvenile Services divisions. DSS- Have 79% women and 73% people of color, employees in PWC government services. Homeless navigation center is included in the Capital Improvement Plan. DSS served over 159,510 residents of all ages and their families in FY 2020. A homeless Services racial equity study is being done to take a look at data. Juvenile Services has a new Public Defender's office. The Juvenile Services Center is in Capital Improvement Plan and a Comprehensive Services Plan was submitted to

build a center for trauma and collocated with the Juvenile Detention Center. The PWC Child Advocacy Center will open in late 2021.

1. **Best Practices/Strengths**

Because of the vastness of the DSS, there were a plethora of best practices/strengths.

- a) 25% of occupants residing in Birmingham Green are from PWC and most have Medicare.
- b) DSS interview panels are diverse and reflect the community.
- c) DSS network with HBCUs and alumni associations.
- d) Children Services Act Division serves over 570 youth and has the largest expenditure in the DSS budget at \$27M.
- e) Assist PWC Schools Special Needs Division when needed.
- f) Customer Support and Services has a dedicated phone line for Spanish-speaking residents.
- g) Customer Support and services provide clothing for residents going on interviews and will assist those with or without jobs with childcare.
- h) Juvenile Services developed programs for intervention.
- i) DSS requires that they have a Spanish speaker at their front desk and makes an effort to recruit Spanish speakers
- j) Customer Support Services reduced the childcare assistance waitlist from 14,000 to 0
- k) VDSS (protective services) child advocacy center is opening this year as a safe place for kids to come
- l) VDSS (protective services) Fatherhood initiative helps dads by offering groups events and book series to encourage them in their role
- m) Juvenile Services full team of educators that also cater to IEPS in the JDC and JUV Shelter
- n) Juvenile Services CPP (community placement program) helps with the connection to the community and getting a GED or diploma
- o) Juvenile Services wants to shift the lens to figure out what happened to

youth rather than subject them to more trauma

- p) Juvenile Services working with the court on classrooms not courtrooms
- q) Juvenile Services developed a committee (Juvenile justice improvement committee) that works with local agencies and policing

2. **DSS (Areas to grow/Opportunities to examine)**

The GSC was briefed by the Juvenile Detention Center (JDC) and also took a tour of the center. Although, we know the BOC, DSS and the County Executive are aware of the inadequate conditions of the PWC Juvenile Detention Center, the GSC desire to reiterate the significant importance to construct a new facility for our youth that does not look and sound like a prison. The current facility does provide an environment of rehabilitation. Unfortunately, the staff has to manage with what they have.

Challenge 1. JDC is inadequate and needs to be remodeled, upgraded, and or build a new facility. JDC Doors throughout the facility slam shut creating a trauma effect. JDC outdoor is insufficient and currently is not being used by tenants. JDC visiting is unsatisfactory because it is difficult to maintain security.

Recommendations

GSC recommends that building a more modern Youth Detention Facility should be of the highest priority for PWC. It is having been proven when the facilities are appointed with comfortable homelike furnishings, creating an atmosphere more like a school dormitory than a prison creates a better climate for rehabilitation. (Missouri Model: Reinventing the Practice of Rehabilitating Youthful Offenders). Inside the facilities, Missouri young people wear their own clothes and keep personal effects in their rooms and on their dressers. In general, Missouri designs the treatment environment to normalize the experience for youth, to the extent possible, based on its belief that the less they treat a young person like a criminal, the less likely he or she will be to feel and behave like a criminal.

Challenge 2. Most residents in the JDC are people of color. Currently, the GSC had no data to answer the “why” for this challenge.

Recommendations

Conduct a comprehensive equity study to determine the root cause.

H. Officials and Administration Workforce

The GSC conduct a review of the County Workforce Report (December 31, 2020). The County's Demographer informed the Racial and Social Justice Commission that Prince William County was 10th in ranking as one of the most diverse counties in the Nation which is very impressive. The PWC workforce has a 53% rating for female participation, African Americans =19.6%, American Indian/American Native =0.5%, Asian=4.0%, Two or more races =2.7%, Hispanic or Latino (of any race) 10.7% and White=62.3%. The overall PWC workforce people of color representation are 37.7%. The PWC overall people of color participation is 57% however, this number does give the percentage of what of this 57% is at the age to enter the workforce. (Source: PWC)

1. Best Practices/Strengths

- a) A large participation rate of people of color in DSS
- b) Women = 53% of the workforce

2. Areas of growth/Opportunities to examine

Challenge 1. Lack of participation of people of color in the higher pay bands (D&E)

Recommendations

- a) Examine current position descriptions to ensure no barriers or biases exist. Establish career development programs to increase the competencies levels.
- b) Establish an employee resource group to assist with reviewing data with promotions.
- c) Establish formal mentorship programs and coaching for employees in lower pay bands.

I. Additional PWC Areas of growth/Opportunities to examine

GSC recommends that PWC collaborate with OmniRide to improve transit stops and times in PWC. Prioritize active transportation projects and public transit near low-income housing. Ensure that representatives of racial/ethnic communities who use public transit the most are at the table when discussing current and future public transit options.

Recommendations

Establish more community centers. The spirit of this center is to address the need for public spaces for communities of color, immigrants, and refugees to congregate, organize, openly foster cultural expression, and create an intentional space for cross-cultural exchange. A community center exists where members of all racial/ethnic communities in PWC feel welcome and utilize it regularly. (Source: City of Beaverton DEI Plan)