

## STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION – AUDIT SERVICES DIVISION REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

**Audit Report Title:** Minding the Gap: Employee Friendly County Policies Did Not Entirely Stem the Loss of Women of Color During Covid-19 and Will Require Efforts by the County to Achieve its Goal of Racial Equity

**File Number:** 22-797  
**Status Report Date:** June 2023

**Audit Issued:** June 2022  
**Department:** Department of Human Resources

### Open Recommendations

Recommendation #1	
<b>Recommendation - June 2022</b> DHR review all information available, including those contained in personnel files, exit interviews, and follow-up with direct supervisors to understand why these employees voluntarily separated and come back with a report on the results of this review and targeted retention strategies. DHR should report back to the County Board within one year with results and recommendations on how to increase retention of women of color.	
<b>Deadlines Established Y/N?</b>	No
Date	Management Comments:
Current - June 2023	<p><b>DHR Update:</b> A key tactic in evaluating and improving the employee experience is the use of all employee satisfaction and engagement surveys. The County has conducted these surveys on a biennial basis since 2016. The 2022 Employee Engagement Survey occurred from October 18 – November 14, 2022. Preliminary results were shared with leaders early in 2023 and a full results presentation to Cabinet level leaders occurred in February. All County Departments meeting the response threshold received departmental results reports in March.</p> <p>The survey provided results for the key drivers or elements of improving the employee experience. These drivers include Advancement, Compensation, Co-workers, Empowerment, Job, Leadership, Manager and Support. Improving the results for any of these areas would directly impact outcomes, like engagement, but analysis provided by the survey vendor determined that improving the results of these drivers would have the greatest impact on the key outcomes of “Intent to Stay” and “Willingness to Recommend Milwaukee County” as an employer. Improvements in these areas would have a direct impact on reducing turnover and improving retention. Departments are now tasked with using their survey results to develop action plans to improve satisfaction and engagement in their areas. The implementation of these plans is ongoing and are expected to continue through the end of 2023 and beyond. The Department of Human Resources is planning for a 2024 employee survey. The results of this survey will be used to evaluate progress and identify opportunities for improving the overall employee experience.</p> <p><b>Audit Services Division Comment:</b> Based on this update, DHR is requested to compile retention statistics for women of color to report back in one year (July 2024). An alternative agreed-upon</p>

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	<i>confirmation of targeted retention effort would also be acceptable. This information will provide us with reasonable assurance that the open recommendation, which focuses on efforts to retain women of color, has been met. We will facilitate efforts with DHR in this regard.</i>
December 2022	The Department of Human Resources (DHR) continues to work to ensure all current and future employees feel a sense of inclusion during their tenure at Milwaukee County. DHR continues to work diligently to understand the root cause of employee turnover to increase employee retention. On October 18, 2022, the most inclusive all-employee engagement survey was deployed across Milwaukee County. DHR will systematically review and analyze the 2022 employee engagement survey data, along with data from exit interviews, stay surveys, etc., to help develop targeted strategies to improve the employee experience and to help County's ability to retain all employees, including woman of color.
Audit response – June 2022	Department of Human Resources (DHR) is committed to partnering with Milwaukee County leaders to make Milwaukee County an “employer of choice” for all current and future employees. By identifying the key drivers of employee retention and the root causes of employee turnover, DHR can recommend the appropriate strategies and tactics to help promote and create a culture of engagement and inclusion for all employees. A variety of tools are used to identify these key drivers and root causes including all employee engagement surveys, employee focus groups, stay surveys, and the systematic review and analysis of other data like separation, absenteeism, and exit interview data, among others. Systematically analyzing employee engagement and inclusion related data will improve DHR's ability to improve the retention of women of color and contribute to making Milwaukee County an employer of choice for all employees.

### Newly Closed Recommendations

Recommendation #2
<b>Recommendation – June 2022</b> DHR should work with the Office of Corporation Counsel to craft a plan to contact impacted County employees who have unknown listed as their race/ethnicity to request that they update the data. DHR

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should report back with an updated report on 2021 hiring data as soon as practicable but no later than within one year.	
<b>Deadlines Established Y/N?</b>	No
<b>Date</b>	<b>Management Comments:</b>
Current – June 2023	<p><b>DHR Update:</b></p> <p>DHR remains vigilant encouraging all employees to self-identify and to voluntarily update their confidential demographic information within Dayforce. Because this information is voluntary, DHR has been mindful about how this information is communicated. During the Countywide Employee Engagement Survey, the County Executive included a reminder and instructions on how to add/correct employee information in Dayforce. DHR also included a communication in the weekly What's Up communication encouraging all employees to check their demographic information in Dayforce informing them all 'blank' fields related to race/ethnicity will default to 'decline to answer.' Additional measure to gather this information include adding the importance of complete and accurate demographic information to the New Employee Orientation, including slides and instructions on how to complete and/or update.</p> <p>Although disclosing this information is voluntary, DHR has also worked with IMSD to set the race/ethnicity field to a required field within the system. Applicants will still be able to voluntarily decline to answer the question related to race/ethnicity, however, DHR wants to ensure the field can no longer be left blank. DHR has worked diligently with Payroll/IMSD to update the process. As of March 10, 2023, the Rehire Form was updated to include the ethnicity field. This field update took longer for the Recruiting – Candidate Hire form requiring some additional testing. As of June 12, 2023, the Recruiting – Candidate Hire form has been updated and is currently in the testing phase. As soon as test is complete and the form is fully functioning, all blank fields for race/ethnicity will default to 'decline to answer.'</p> <p>As of May 31, 2023, Milwaukee County's workforce data for full-time, non-elected officials, show a total of 115 employees or 3.5% of the County's workforce that falls into the Unknown or blank category. This is a significant decrease from the first quarter of 2022, which indicated it was 6.0%.</p>
December 2022	The Department of Human Resources (DHR) remains committed to encouraging all employees to self-identify and to voluntarily update their confidential demographic information in Dayforce. As previously reported, individual outreach to current

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	employees who have “unknown” listed for their race/ethnicity will not occur as this information is voluntary and employees can decline to answer. As such, DHR is committed to ensuring employees have information regarding the importance of why Milwaukee County collects race/ethnicity information. To help employees understand the collection of this data, DHR will deploy several communications encouraging employees to update and ensure accuracy of all demographic information, including race/ethnicity. DHR is also working internally to update the applicant process to ensure race/ethnicity are required fields that can’t be left blank. If an employee opts out of providing their demographic information, the option will default to “decline to answer” as opposed to being left blank. DHR should finalize this process within the next few months.
Audit response – June 2022	DHR is committed to encouraging employees to self-identify and to voluntarily update their confidential demographic information in Dayforce. Significant steps have already been taken to reduce the number of employees classified as “unknown” including a video from the County Executive encouraging employees to update their information and other messaging. DHR will continue to support communication and marketing campaigns encouraging employees to provide their demographic information. Critical to the success of this effort is also helping employees understand the importance of collecting this demographic data. DHR and all County leaders must work to create an environment of trust where employees feel comfortable providing this information. DHR will work to communicate how self-identification and collecting demographic information are aligned with the mission and vision of Milwaukee County.

Recommendation #3	
<b>Recommendation - June 2022</b> DHR should review employee testimonial excerpts contained in the audit and evaluate whether the proposals could be implemented and studied further and report back to the County Board in six months with the results of the review.	
<b>Deadlines Established Y/N?</b>	No
<b>Date</b>	<b>Management Comments:</b>
Current - June 2023	<b>DHR Update:</b> Comments provided through the employee testimonials are overwhelmingly positive regarding the actions the County took to address the unprecedented

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	<p>challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Under the direction of the County Executive, the County's approach was always to focus on keeping its employees and the people they serve safe, while continuing to provide critical County services. Key take aways learned through these testimonials include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide clear, easy to understand communications and directions.</li><li>• Recognize the considerable stress employees were facing and ensure a support structure exists to mitigate those stresses.</li><li>• Remain agile and open to creative ideas.</li></ul> <p>Milwaukee County has taken and continues to take a variety of actions to support the emotional wellbeing of its employees. In addition to the support provided through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) the County implemented the Optum EAP Talkspace App. Through this online application employees can connect virtually or in-person with a trained professional to identify ways to improve their well-being. In addition, employees can access Health and Wellbeing Coaching through the County's partnership with Froedtert Workforce Health. Froedtert coaches are available to help employees reduce stress, determine an appropriate exercise regimen, improve nutrition, or address other concerns. Also, through the County's health insurance provider employees have access to the Sanvello app. Using this application employees can connect with a behavioral Health expert to address concerns about depression, anxiety, or other concerns. The COVID-19 pandemic was incredibly stressful for all Americans. It clearly accelerated the need for employers to provide emotional wellbeing support. Milwaukee County responded and continues to respond to this need. It is committed to supporting and improving the emotional wellbeing of its employees.</p> <p>In summary, the world had not faced a pandemic the size and scope and severity of COVID-19 since the great influenza pandemic of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Milwaukee County is committed to improving the employee experience and leveraging the voice of the employee will play a critical role in effectively addressing similar challenges in the future.</p>
December 2022	The Department of Human Resources (DHR) deployed the most inclusive all employee engagement survey in October 2022. Gathering the voice of Milwaukee

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	County employees will be critical as we enhance the employee experience for current employees and for future changemakers. Action Planning, based on survey feedback, will begin once the survey data is analyzed. DHR will continue to analyze all employee data and feedback, including feedback/testimonials captured in this report, to help identify activities that will positively impact employee engagement and retention.
Audit response – June 2022	Gathering “voice of the employee” feedback is critical to identifying actionable process improvement ideas and to ensure employees feel that their concerns are being heard. DHR is committed to further analyzing the voice of the employee themes identified in this audit and to identifying any potential actions to help improve retention of all employees.

Recommendation #4	
<b>Recommendation – June 2022</b> DHR should pull together a pandemic lessons learned from the last two years and issue a guide for future actions including a review of communication of policies to managers and staff.	
<b>Deadlines Established Y/N?</b>	No
Date	Management Comments:
Current – June 2023	<b>DHR Update:</b> While DHR played a key role in the implementation of many of the COVID mitigation approaches, the strategic direction for these actions came from the County Executive’s Office. The drafting and implementation of Administrative Orders and other mitigation guidelines were entirely under the direction of the CEX Office. The actions taken were designed to address the challenges posed by COVID-19, and may not be applicable to other crises or similar situations Nonetheless there are a variety of lessons learned since March 2020, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide clear direction and leadership – when changes were implemented the communication on those changes came from the CEX.</li><li>• Leverage public health experts – Dr. Weston, and other public health experts played a critical role in advising the CEX and others.</li></ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Agility – the County was able to pivot and provide the support structures to allow employees to work remotely without interrupting service delivery.</li><li>• Commitment to keeping employees safe - implementing the vaccine mandate, providing masking and capacity guidelines, and PPE support among other approaches were key to keeping employees safe and reduce the impact of the pandemic.</li><li>• Cross-functional teams – the CEX office brought together a cross-functional group of employees to design, implement and monitor results. In addition to the CEX office and DHR, employees from DAS, IMSD, OCC and other departments played a key role in the County’s ongoing COVID mitigation efforts.</li><li>• Ongoing communication and support materials – in addition to numerous CEX videos and email messages, the County provided a variety of different tools to help leaders and all employees address COVID challenges. Examples include decision tree documents on County Connect, procedure documents and an email inbox dedicated to COVID related questions, among other approaches.</li></ul> <p>The COVID-19 pandemic impacted Milwaukee County and all organizations in many significant ways. The lessons learned outlined in this response provide a framework for future actions to address potential health emergencies and other crises.</p>
December 2022	The Department of Human Resources (DHR), along with other departments, will continue monitoring the risk of Covid-19, and other related pandemics, and how to best respond relative to the workforce. Systematically analyzing these lessons

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	learned may better inform the County's ongoing response to the pandemic and identify a more effective response to similar challenges in the future. This work will continue into 2023.
Audit response – June 2022	DHR will partner with leaders from throughout the County to conduct a hindsight review of the steps taken since March 2020 to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 to Milwaukee County employees and the people they serve. This wide-ranging review will include a review of various employee related communications, policies, and procedures. Systematically analyzing these lessons learned may better inform the County's ongoing response to the pandemic and identify a more effective response to similar challenges in the future.

### Closed Recommendations

None