Executive Summary

The City of Portland engaged ASCETA to undertake an independent and holistic assessment of the Office of Community and Civic Life ("Civic Life"). Since August 2020, ASCETA proceeded with:

- Assessing and clarifying the bureau's positioning and needs with respect to fulfilling its mission
- Evaluating the bureau's culture and employment practices to inform how best to create and maintain a healthy, respectful and productive work environment

Our approach to this assessment was collaborative and designed to welcome every participant's lived experience and honor each person's identity and perspective. Our priority was to support a thoughtful, human-centered process in which each person felt seen, heard and respected, and in which each had a voice in collaboratively creating possibilities and shaping recommendations for improvement.

We heard throughout our process expressions of frustration, sadness and also hope based on the perception that, while mired in current challenges, Civic Life is uniquely positioned to play a key role in helping to solve the City of Portland's most urgent challenges with an equity lens. Namely as the engagement arm of the City, it is poised to lead collaboration and co-creation directly with impacted communities and constituencies to generate important and innovative solutions to intractable challenges. In the Spring 2021 issue of the Stanford Social Innovation Review, an article titled "Building Cities' Collaborative Muscle" begins, "The most pressing social problems facing cities today require multi-agency and cross-sector solutions." It shares learnings from what the authors gleaned from studying 30 cross-boundary collaborations from cities tackling intractable problems. Their wisdom applies to ASCETA's key insight today, as we conclude our assessment: "Building collaborative capacity requires repeated practice, constant care, and iterative evaluation of progress and goals."

We found that fulfilling the bureau's collaborative promise will require its tackling key issues and revisioning historic structures - namely, redesigning systems and practices to be more human-centered, more inclusive and supportive, focusing on communities most impacted, prioritizing learning and development, with trauma-informed practices and new skills in listening and working together within the bureau, City, neighborhoods and communities to address urgent and emergent urban challenges. Collaborative, people-centered approaches will be crucial for the bureau to play its significant role in, as SSIR put it, "breaking down silos to build up cities."

This document summarizes the people, process and outcomes of our assessment, concluding eight months' continuous process. It also includes a framework for change and specific recommendations to the City of Portland.

Our hope is that this work, created to give voice to the many participants in this process, helps to clarify a path forward at a key time.
We sought to ensure inclusion of key perspectives, inviting the participation of all current and many former employees to share their lived experience and contribute thoughts, feelings, reflections and suggestions. As themes emerged, we sought other perspectives to help us understand root issues and to suggest possible solutions. We honor the confidentiality and anonymity of each individual by not listing each by name.

- At least 64% of Civic Life Current Employees *
- 12 Former Employees of Civic Life*
- 4 Current City Directors
- 7 Community Leaders and Partners
- 3 Current and Former City Commissioners

*This number does not include anonymous employee survey participants
APPROACH

ASCETA helps teams find their forward in a way that is transformative, inclusive and impactful. Our unique approach applies equity-based principles of human centered design, management expertise, and executive learning with organizational development theory to achieve alignment and inclusion across a diversity of perspectives, industries, demographics and agendas. Deep insights and powerful results emerge from thoughtful discovery, generative processes and the use of adaptive frameworks to drive information sharing, authentic adaptation and collaborative decision-making.

HUMAN
We approach every inquiry and encounter with the questions: What is essentially human? What do people really feel and think? What deep needs need to be addressed?

DEVELOPMENT
We optimize every encounter and activity to inspire creativity, stimulate insight, and engender reflection and transformative learning. We target the mechanisms that provoke or prevent adaptation, and address the interconnections between people, organizations, industries, culture, and society.

DESIGN
We start with the “end user,” the humans impacted by our work, in a way that is intentional, inclusive, collaborative, iterative, joyful, organic, and exploratory.
Activities and Timeline

Phase 1. Listening
- 22 Interviews by 12/4/20
- 60% EE Survey Participation
- 12 former EE Survey Participation
- Outcome: Themes

Phase 2. Learning
- 17 Interviews by 1/29/21
- 49% EE Survey Participation
- Outcome: Key Issues

Phase 3. Reflecting
- 1 Reflection Group on 1/14/21
- 8 Leader Interviews by 2/19/21
- Outcome: Suggestions

Phase 4. Designing
- 2 Design Workshops by 2/17/21
- Outcome: Solutions

Phase 5. Refining
- 66% EE Survey Participation
- Outcome: Recommendations
  (incorporating employee-generated suggestions and solutions)
PARTICIPATION. We acknowledge that our assessment does not reflect the views of all employees. While we estimate that at least 64% of all current Civic Life employees participated in this process, 36% either did not or participated anonymously.

- Many employees we spoke to had already shared their stories many times, but felt frustrated, unheard, and harmed by the process and/or inhibited by the threat of retaliation.
- We interviewed a dozen former employees and surveyed many more. There are many other former employees who chose not to interview with us.
- We received explanations and criticisms from employees and former employees who did not want to participate for reasons including distrust of the process and/or of our team, fear of retaliation, too much personal trauma in retelling, and a sense of uselessness of process. These we incorporated in our analysis.

POLARIZATION. We acknowledge the challenges of presenting a single story or synthesis from a highly polarized, intersectionality diverse group.

- In our findings, we selected a few dozen quotes among hundreds, including shades of a predominant perspective in pink, and where appropriate, voices we heard much less of in grey. The proportion of colors is approximate.

CHANGING CONTEXT. Our listening occurred within the context of significant events that indubitably influenced and shaped perspectives.

- We conducted interviews and surveys in the 7.5 month period between August 2020 to March 2021, a significant period of change in our nation and city, including a pandemic requiring social distancing, protests against racial injustice, systemic oppression and police brutality, an election and turnover in leadership nationally as well as in the bureau's Commissioner leadership.
- All this to say: this report represents a limited and very specific snapshot at a key point in the history of the nation, city and Civic Life. We also hope it represents a new beginning, in the way of listening to empathize, center and act based on shared understanding throughout.

PROCESS: Practices and process of listening and learning, course correcting and continuously improving based on all perspectives requires creation and commitment to fluid, in-time systems and inclusive structures, as well as a culture of trust and transparency.

- We are committed to every participant's feeling seen and heard, and work to value every individual perspective, especially those historically excluded.
- We acknowledge and underscore that this work reflects only what was shared by participants at a particular point in their own and this organization's journey.
- This process is not the revolution; but do we hope it furthers the bureau's evolution.
We recognize that globally to locally, systems and organizations are shifting with much urgency to address longstanding discrimination and overturn systemic oppression; and that the work of Civic Life, as well as this Assessment, is occurring in that continuing context. The challenges faced by Civic Life mirror the polarizing beliefs and complex dynamics that many organizations are facing in this process of ambitious and transformational change.

We acknowledge Civic Life’s efforts to move itself and to shift the City to live its equitable values by including many more diverse and intersectional voices; while also observing that this effort, like every effort at change, highlights unresolved tensions, historical distrust, and implicit biases across the organization. Without space and time to process, these undercurrents impact relationships and limit opportunities for healing and collaboration. It is our hope that helping participants feel seen and heard is a first important step in supporting progress.

Addressing systemic racism and issues of equity can be emotionally potent for all involved; and each person experiences efforts at change very differently depending on who they are and where they sit in a system. These differences in beliefs make it challenging to accomplish change “cleanly.” Our biases, and the competing and conflicting needs that arise, shape the way we experience change and how we express our discomfort and dissatisfaction. Some bit of messiness and chaos is a natural part of the transformation process. Thus, the continual creation of space, structures and approaches to support the personal and relational process of change is key to continual development. These practices are not yet common in traditional hierarchical organizations, particularly government entities, and yet as this Assessment confirms, are absolutely critical for effective functioning and adaptation. We hope that this report supports the creation of such supports in Civic Life (and the City of Portland) to achieve true equity transformation, and inclusive engagement of all Portlanders.

Our team was committed to including all perspectives, and mirroring these by synthesizing as best we could, all that we heard in this process. We hope that by doing so, we have made space for important conversations and Civic Life’s capacity to heal and move forward.
INVITATION TO BRAVE SPACE

Together we will create brave space
Because there is no such thing as "safe space"
We exist in the real world
We all carry scars and we have all caused wounds.
In this space
We seek to turn down the volume of the outside world,
We amplify voices that fight to be heard elsewhere,
We call each other to more truth and love
We have the right to start somewhere and continue to grow.
We have the responsibility to examine what we think we know.
We will not be perfect.
This space will not be perfect.
It will not always be what we wish it to be
But
It will be our brave space together,
And
We will work on it side by side.

by Micky ScottBey Jones
Findings
Findings: Key Issues

1. WORK CULTURE
   - Toxicity and dysfunction
   - Harm and turnover

2. LEADERSHIP + MANAGEMENT
   - Hierarchical and punitive
   - Skill gap

3. EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE
   - Polarized
   - Social and emotional harm

4. MISSION + VALUES
   - Disconnect between talk and walk
   - Contrary behavior

5. SCOPE OF WORK
   - Ambiguity ensures uncertainty
   - Lack of clarity = “kitchen sink” bureau

6. RESOURCES + SUPPORT
   - Mismatch of needs v. resources
   - BHR role + city coordination
Employees expressed a widespread sense of toxicity and dysfunction, with some points of satisfaction among a greater sense of pain and harm.

Polarized perspectives were shared between an “in” group who feel supported and those who feel silenced, fearful and isolated.

At Civic Life, we learned that many staff feel that:

- **Longstanding dysfunction** passed down from previous management (mass firing and unilateral reorganization) has festered and developed untreated into systemic distrust.

- **Specific individuals’ behaviors go unchecked**, even when in violation of city values, policies, and good practice, and when harmful to other individuals.

- **Many employees feel unheard and disrespected**, and without recourse to open conversation or other methods to improve or correct challenging work and personal situations, resort to official complaints and turnover.

- **Fear of retaliation**, and the regular experience of pain and harm, prevents many employees from speaking openly or sharing.

Large differences in perspective exist between a highly satisfied and supported “in” group and a larger number of those who feel excluded, silenced, fearful and isolated.
“There seems to be a definite lack of morale. We have a high employee turnover. There’s been lots of conversations from either current employees or previous employees about not feeling respected or heard.”

“We can’t even keep up with what we have in front of us. And that’s where I was referencing the burnout that people are feeling: coworkers crying in meetings, breaking down, asking for more information about why we are doing this.”

“There were a lot of people who I had worked with during my time there who I knew to be really skilled, really talented, really passionate, dedicated public servants and they left so unhappy. And that had an effect and an impact on the work environment.”

“The toxicity got so bad for me. I almost had a breakdown.”

“There seems to be a lot of putting people against each other that management seems to not care to hear from others, either community-level people or staff people. There seems to be a lot of stuff happening behind closed doors. There wasn’t a lot of open communication or transparency.”

“One of the biggest errors was change management. We hold historical knowledge of neighborhoods, communities we serve, we support community members, we are an impressive and vibrant group of diverse employees who bring so much to this program. I have watched this group fade into complacency and turn into a ‘yes, m’am’ group.”

“I know not everyone feels this, but this has been the best job I’ve ever had.”

“The bureau became a toxic work environment which is why there was 60-70% turnover every year the past three years. If you didn’t do exactly what [was] wanted you got on [a] list of people… actively iced out of doing their jobs, utilizing HR methods to scare people or threaten their jobs.”

“The leadership and management has done deep harm and it is too late for healing. All the hiring practices and people who were already in a tight-knit circle protect each other. There is no accountability.”

“There’s a lot of good people in this bureau trying to do really good work, and we continually face challenges, even externally, because of the climate that we live in.”

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At Civic Life, we learned that staff experience leadership approach as top-down. It feels authoritarian and punitive to many, while supportive and encouraging to a few.

- **Decision-making authority is experienced as unilateral** and top-down within the bureau, without listening for needs and concerns

- **Unquestioning loyalty is seen as rewarded** and there is a perception of favoritism in management and hiring practices

- **Questioning and criticism is felt to be discouraged** and in some cases, felt punished harshly

A gap in management skills and support exists with respect to:

- **Bureau-specific expertise** by elected and political appointees

- **Helping people navigate change**

- **Managing people and their behaviors**, in setting expectations, guiding and influencing behavior and supporting accountability within the bureau and in collaboration with BHR, OEHR and other agencies

Leadership is seen as **hierarchical** and feels **authoritarian** and punitive to many, while supportive and encouraging to a few

There is **gap** in management skills and support with respect to organizational change, collaborative management, and shared accountability, and a sense that employees don’t share personal responsibility
Quotes

These statements about Leadership Approach and Management Skills were shared in surveys, interviews, and emails. Identifying information has been removed unless with express permission has been given. Statements relating to particular individuals have also been removed.

“It is my hope that this crisis is viewed as a moment in time when the data can speak for itself and when a true leader can step in and turn it into an opportunity. This is an opportunity to support and empower the employees to serve Portland without fear, but with passion and enthusiasm in an unprecedented time Portlanders need their public servants more than ever.”

“I think [our leadership] is really awesome, and [they’ve] got a lot of energy and good ideas, so I would hope that wouldn’t change.”

“My manager has lied and instructed me to lie. I have been retaliated against multiple times. My manager complained about me, gave me the silent treatment, [excluded me from group activities] and gossiped about me.”

“I sort of was always under the impression that they were just really poor change managers and that the only way they could see to make changes - that they weren’t capable of bringing people along with a new idea. Instead, they would just get rid of people and replace them with people who were supportive of whatever idea it was.”

“My ideas, my professions and my experience isn’t wanted. What is wanted is my skill set to just deliver the agenda of the management. And the agenda of the management is defined by subjective ideas that aren’t given research or allowed to be - [or to] travel through the crucible of debate in conversation.”

“I think current management is paying for past management problems.”

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“‘I think the ombudsman found out as well that it didn’t seem like there was really a pattern with the staff of targeting people because of their ethnicity. It was more, are you loyal to [leadership] and whatever [their] often ill-informed and poorly explained ideas were? That was the main issue.”

“The biggest barriers to improvement I would have to say would be not listening to the concerns or feedback from the employees within the bureau.”
“I regularly work closely with leadership and find the team to be open, compassionate, and driven by our mission. What I will say is that our bureau feels as if we are in a state of flux. We have a lot of programs that are not fully defined or developed.

“People did not feel free to express ideas, opinions because there was retaliation and consequences for speaking out, asking clarifying questions.”

“A well-loved leader is somebody who inspires you to go to work every day. And you want to do a good job, not just for yourself, not just to help [them] make it look good, but check for the office environment because they do stressful work. But with [my manager], it’s like I didn’t trust [them]. So it’s like anytime [I] come into [their] office, I would get anxious because I didn’t know if [they were] going to ream me out or disparage my coworkers and stuff like that.”

“[In many years], I've never gotten a single review except the one that happened right after I'd filed a grievance...I filed a grievance against [ ] and boom...I get the worst performance review I've ever gotten in any job that I've worked.”

“I would say that the leadership team is very strong, very cohesive, people like each other, people support each other.”

“We wanted to feel competent. We were open to new system changes, learning new things. Instead we experienced a non supportive environment, hostile/punitive, no patience/grace, or new learning opportunities. Either we knew how to do something different or we were incompetent and this created a false narrative.”

“Civic Life management is toxic. This Bureau will not heal, unless that toxicity from the so called ‘leadership team’ is eliminated.... You can't clean a floor with a dirty mop.”

“It seems to me there was a desire by the new management to make sweeping changes without ever gaining a full understanding of what it was that they were changing, and without a clear plan of what they wanted to change to. There may be a ‘vision’ of what they want, but an inability to achieve it.”

“We wanted to feel connected to each other, a community, as such we were siloed as teams. In retaliation, I and other staff were isolated from their team or other coworkers which bred greater opportunities for supervisors to engage in additional retaliatory and harassing behavior. We experienced a climate of conquer and divide”

“Nothing is going to change until Management is held accountable for their horrific actions against employees. It is a hostile work environment more so now than it was let’s say 6 months ago. Because again, Management has not been held accountable for their destruction and belittling of employees and have allowed those in power to reduce and subject employees who they target to degradation and treating them like animals.”

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Employee Experience

While some employees felt satisfied, most shared that they feel a high degree of stress and trauma from their working experience. We heard that many people felt belittled and minimized.

Employees shared that their needs and lived experiences are not prioritized by the bureau, and many managers confirmed that this aspect of the employees’ working experience is not their organizational priority.

At Civic Life, we heard that many employees have felt that their experiences have been disregarded as a critical factor in change or effective management since prior to the current administration, with the result that:

- Employees sense a lack of trust and psychological safety required to engage meaningfully, especially in equity transformation and anti-racism
- Employees have not felt heard (nor their needs addressed) in times of critical organizational change, entrenching fear, distrust, uncertainty and oppression
- Polarization between management and employee experiences is extreme
“The way [leadership] presented the potential of me completely losing my job was very inhumane”

“There were concerns and complaints that leadership wasn’t either listening to or being told. So then individuals went to HR. Then HR wasn’t acting on it, so then they went to the city auditor’s office or the ombudsman’s office, and made complaints. So I think overall - yeah, overall people aren’t supported”

“And what eventually ended up happening was things really devolved between all of those teams and programs to the point where co-workers were crying at work, some individuals were so completely stressed out that they were taking a lot of mental health days.”

“The way [leadership] presented the potential of me completely losing my job was very inhumane”

“Staff need security to feel psychologically safe at work. When I suggested our bureau receive trauma informed training, [leadership] stated, “No, we are not going to do that.” This lack of security led to mistrust among staff with the director and supervisors.”

“I don’t expect that the Commissioners expect us to create the city for the comfort of its employees. They rightly should expect respect and to not be abused. But psychological comfort? Is that what my water bill pays for?”

“This lack of security led to mistrust among staff with the director and supervisors.”

“I talked to HR, talked to the union, went on record with BHR, talked to ombudsman and nothing has been resolved. I feel like no one is hearing what I have to say. Now with the new commissioner, their staff wants us to do the assessment to better understand how to move forward. I felt hopeless. I felt like no one cared.”

“There were people saying, ‘I’m sick. I’m getting sick. I can’t sleep at night. I am a nervous wreck. I have anxiety. I can’t eat. I just need to get out.’”

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“There was a lack of trust within the system, not just civic life, just within the city system that [BIPOC] voices are always asked to be lifted but not necessarily responded to.”

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“I think that institutional systemic issues around race and oppression exist throughout the city governance. And it's just sad that the one bureau that I think was doing more to challenge... My team was pushing other bureaus as well to change their structures, to change the way that they do community engagement. My team was already trying to move the needle, the same thing that the new leadership civic life wanted. I mean, yeah, for whatever reasons, they were just convinced. 'Nope, you guys must have baggage, and we can't trust. And we need to bring in new people to start over' sadly.”

“I feel lateral oppression: POC oppress POC. I feel like I have been targeted... [my manager] called me into [their] office and was questioning my involvement with a project. [They] started escalating and raising [their] voice. I walked out of the office and [they] started yelling at me. I felt intimidated, disrespected, and targeted. I filed a grievance... Nothing happened.”

“One thing that I really like about them is they provide flexibility. It might have been because I was not represented by a union, but they provided flexibility in my workday so I could continue further education and obtain a master's degree. So they were really supportive of that. So that's a bonus”

“[I was repeatedly told] that the bureau needed fresh blood, that there sure were a lot of people around here who'd been around for a very long time. We needed to get some young people in here who had new ideas... So it sort of had this vibe to it of age discrimination which felt really icky.”

“[a prior director] ultimately decided that [they] were going to reclassify all of our jobs, the manager's job. So reclassifying jobs is something you want to do when you want to get rid of people but you don't have any performance basis to do it. Because people cannot stay in the same position if it's re-classified. So it's a way to get rid of people and it was very apparent to us that that was what [they were] trying to do. And [their] reasoning for doing it [they] said was that the commissioner wanted it...And it was a really distressing experience. I just never felt so disregarded and humiliated.”

“I see it as management and employees that report to them. They both need a lot of work. They both need to do a lot of work in earning and keeping the trust of the other party. There seems to be a ton of mistrust or suspicion of intentions. And I think 'til that gap is bridged it's going to be really difficult for any progress to really be made by oversight.”

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“This bureau is truly in crisis. Employee complaints and grievances have gone ignored and management has been favored over employees... Filing a complaint or a grievance is no small act for an employee. It is a stressful, uncomfortable process in itself. Then, to have it go completely unanswered and to see absolutely no accountability is demoralizing. The employees are exhausted and just want to move on and get to work in a safe environment. If managers are kept in place, none of the proposed solutions will work. People won't talk or share openly. Managers will only become more angry and abusive. Employees will continue to shut down, some will look for work elsewhere, and those who don't have that option will just stay and suffer.”

“I also just want to reiterate I don't want direct examples that are clearly correlated with me with me and my program that could make me feel like I would be subject to the slow, slow, painful layoff that I witnessed some other program staff go through previously as they were kind of just pushed out the door”

“If you are saying little to no communication, listening, dialogue or acknowledgement of staff and their work, then I would strongly agree.”

“If there is no accountability for the abuse managers put their employees through these past few years, then this entire process has been nothing but a waste of taxpayer money. Real action needs to happen or this process is not real.”

“They fired everybody from management and reclassified positions at a lower level. So then, there were people who were put into supervisor positions that were not qualified for the position. And so after that, when you see mass firing, that automatically sets a tone on its own”

“I am aware that there are a lot of people in this bureau who have felt hurt and stifled by leadership team. I respect those experiences and feel a lot of compassion for those employees. I just wanted to state that personally, I have not experienced these harms.”
At Civic Life, we learned that many people experience:

- **Strong alignment between employees and managers** in supporting the stated mission of the bureau and the city’s values.

- **Deep disconnection in how the mission and values translate** into day-to-day work and behaviors.

- **Resentment in the perceived use of the mission and values** to justify actions and harmful behaviors.

Employees report a **deep disconnect** between what is said and what is lived and prioritized.

While almost everyone expressed **support** for the stated mission and City values, they also shared their sense that these are **unconnected to the direction and day-to-day behavior** of the bureau.
“When people asked questions about [the changes], they very quickly learned that they would be attacked for doing that and seen as disloyal, so it was a very toxic environment. And I mean, it’s one thing to do that in any other kind of public agency, but the public agency that’s supposed to be modeling code production, openness, transparency, doing things in partnership, it was just horribly shocking. At first, I think most of us couldn’t believe what was happening. And then it just got worse and worse.”

“The bureau that has a significant amount of community engagement, there was really no interest (leadership) in how to improve those relationships or to be involved with those communities or to take [their] recommendations seriously.”

“If [my manager] suddenly has a whim about something and says this should happen or that should happen without real thoughtful engagement and strategic direction. So to me, that’s one of the most important things is that we do a process with the community, update the strategic plan because the previous strategic plan has tremendous good stuff in it and it included many things about equity, strengthening the capacity and involvement of historically underrepresented communities in Portland.”

“I felt like there was a lot of language being used, a lot of the right language being used, but not a lot of demonstration of truly operationalizing it internally for us as staff. Externally I saw these wonderful, lengthy conversations happening with the community... but because there was so little communication happening within the Bureau, at least in my experience, it didn’t necessarily feel like we were reflective and reflecting in our internal practices aside from hiring people, the most wonderfully racially diverse body of staff that I’ve ever worked with. And yet that communication breakdown and that real adherence to a harsh kind of hierarchical decision-making structure was not in alignment with those principals and the values that we were kind of declaring and expecting in the work of the program.”

“The level of hypocrisy is vast and disturbing - management slaps themselves on the back for promulgating a mission wholly oppositional to their treatment of staff, which is fake and false, condescending and insincere.”

“I agree that these should be our values. But the reality is that these are the words that are often used to harm people. It seems like leadership thinks because we have ideas about how to get to the mission, based on the areas of expertise we were hired for, that it means we don’t understand them.”

“We are all very passionate about the work and find it super rewarding to connect with communities.”

“Most of employees believe in their work. They try to do what is right for the city. The employees are the best thing.”

Quotes

These statements about the Mission and Values Activation were shared in surveys, interviews, and emails. Identifying information has been removed unless with express permission has been given. Statements relating to particular individuals have also been removed.
"I support and agree with the stated mission. I disagree that the mission is actually being honored or woven into our work, both for employees of the bureau and the community members we are in service too. The employees in the bureau who do direct work within the community strive to create a culture of collaboration within their workgroups and within the community and expanding possibilities for all Portlanders to contribute. However, those employees and community members are often silenced, told their opinions are in fact not in line with the Bureau and its programs and that if a particular employee or community member or group does not like that perspective, than they are ousted and are dismissed. Collaboration does not come to fruition. The City values of equity, transparency, communication, collaboration are rarely seen within managers' treatment of direct-serving employees and leadership-level treatment of community members."

"Where is the evidence that we are achieving this Current Mission? It sounds like a nice slogan, but from a practical perspective the bureau has many different functions that should have a specific measurable, reasonable, time-bound and realistic mission that is fleshed out with a plan that includes a goal, objectives, activities and indicators that measure current reality to a desired stated improvement. Otherwise this sounds like sloganeering for a good t-shirt."

"The mission is being used as a vehicle for leadership to force groups to be in line with a more authoritarian way of doing things, rather than listening to the experts who are on the frontline doing the work and saying, "What can we be doing better to achieve our collective mission?"

"One of the best things you can do about wealth equity and racial justices is live the values. Engage with people. Listen to them. Treat them respectfully within the agency and outside the agency. Don't do this paternalistic top-down approach where you know better than those groups and you're going to save them. That is so disrespectful and - but, yeah. That has been the pattern. So they may think they're advancing equity and social justice, but they're not."

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"[A prior director] gave me a lot of freedom to do what I thought was best with the role that I was given because it was a new role. I was given a lot of intellectual freedom to do that work and a lot of support to do that work."
Many participants attributed some of the challenges of the bureau to the great ambiguity regarding what the bureau is or what it accomplishes. This leaves it vulnerable to wide swings in work priorities depending on who is in charge and what their priorities are.

At Civic Life, we learned that people experience:

- **Ambiguity regarding what the purpose and outcomes of work should be**
- **Vulnerability to wide swings in political and leadership shifts** depending on interpretation, especially with the City of Portland’s unique Commissioner form of government (where political leaders run departments as opposed to professional City Managers)
- **Overburdening with functions that don’t fit or aren’t wanted elsewhere** (“kitchen sink” or “junk drawer” bureau), due to the lack of clarity
- **Need for clarity and inclusiveness in defining and refining scope of work** (such as Code changes) in a way that allows for needed time, and helps to guide and support the bureau’s community engagement
"I was regularly directed, not by my supervisor but by [politically appointed staff], to do something or not do something in a way that was not aligned with how we would have done it operationally. I'm not saying in a unethical or illegal way, but in a way that really threw a wrench into the works of how the whole system was designed to function so that it could be done along a timeline in a way that was more advantageous politically [for the commissioner at the time]." 

"There's definitely this question mark for us as employees when we're given these assignments. We don't know why we're doing it. We don't think it's achieving anything other than busy work to make us look like we're doing work. And it's not in line with our jobs or our expertise. And when we ask about it further, we just get, "Just do it.""

"We need to be held accountable to our outcomes, and they need to be measured by neutral outside parties. Currently, we make up outcomes based on feel good stories. If we truly want to be better, the organization and leadership need to listen to people they disagree with." 

"We just don't have necessarily the capacity to accomplish all of those [bureau] goals and we need to update some of our basic codes within our programs to further those goals and undo the harms that are written into them now."

"There were a number of times... where I pulled all-nighters because I had been told one thing, and then suddenly I'm not hearing anything about what to do next. And I reached out a couple of times. And somewhere some conversation had happened in leadership that I was not informed about where the decision changed. The instruction or plan changed. And so, it was a very rough kind of [time]."

"I just think that the process for code updates, in general, needs to be transparent, it needs to be inclusive, and that takes a long time. And the larger code, the code change project, how that kind of fell flat, I feel like it's because it wasn't long enough and it wasn't thorough enough and it's annoying that bureaucracy takes so long."

"It's awfully hard to have a coherent mission with the things that are in there. They have functions that don't go together. Enforcement function like the livability group, doesn't go with the community engagement work that they do."

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"I think that part of what happened here was that we have this wacky system of government in which commissioners are ultimately the top managers at a bureau, and that we just happened to get a commissioner who had issues and didn't have any management experience, and that we just sort of fell victim to that.... a wholesale change of our structure of government would help so that we have a city manager instead of a rotating cast of commissioners that come in and completely change the focus of a bureau, whether they have the knowhow to do that or not."

"Here are some things at Civic Life that shouldn't be a part of Civic Life. If Civic Life could focus on mission of common good, there are so many weird things dumped on civic life: Noise [should go] over to licensing. Folks need to focus on community engagement. Cannabis to revenue. Crime prevention to police."

"The bureau should be combined with the Office of Equity and Human Rights. I think that there would be a really fruitful opportunity to create systemic change for staff who worked at the city, as well as systemic change for the way that the city worked on behalf of community with only needing to pay one director as opposed to two, because each bureau right now has their own director."

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"I feel like it's the 'junk drawer' and it's not their fault. The passing of bureaus among commissioners is challenging and problematic in general – most commissioners end up with bureaus that they don't have any experience in – sometimes there is a match, but most of the times there isn't. Unless it's a pet project, to a certain degree they're hands off because they're not subject matter experts. I feel badly b/c it's [Civic Life was] never setup for success.... It's at odds with itself. I mean I've heard horror stories from staff harassed and called names going to [external] meetings. 'Make it happen, you work for the city!' a lot of abuse."

"Stepping back, the city is long overdue for a look at its organizational structure, getting clear about its priorities, and combining smaller officers and not having them be their own independent entities. Civic Life, Equity and HR, Office of Community Technology, even the Bureau of Transportation - look at their agreements, rights of way of cell towers.... Look at budgeting, support staff, payroll – is there efficiency in combining these, division under a larger bureau."
At Civic Life, we learned that people shared experiences pointing to:

- **Lack of clarity and alignment between City needs, government goals and bureau work**, stemming from lack of listening, engagement and communication, and resulting in a mismatch between expectations and programming resources.

- **Historical reliance on a complaint-based system for governing behavior**, focusing personnel resources on reactive, punitive measures, exacerbating conflict and straining expectations regarding the role and capacity of BHR (Conversely, we heard many employees wish for an asset-based, strengths-focused system that supports developing working relationships and supporting learning.)

- **Gap in alignment regarding role of Civic Life and interdependencies with other City bureaus**, e.g. the role of BHR and OEHR in personnel development, and the role and responsiveness of Civic Life in supporting community and civic engagement for other departments.

Employees, Commissioners, Bureau Directors and others shared reflections regarding how current systems and practices perpetuate inequities, and called for re-examining and re-envisioning structures, systems, and expectations at Civic Life.

We also heard frustrations regarding a mismatch between expectations and resources at every level, especially those allocated to unpopular functions.
“People expect the city to be as quiet as it was 30 years ago – there’s more mixed use as part of City Council and of Sustainability, but nobody is carrying that message forward. They’ve got to develop a new expectation of (needs) in the city, it takes work to do that community engagement and try to get buy in, and there’s no funding.”

“We’re just hiring people who have theoretical experience as far as what community engagement could look like, but they don’t have any practical city experience, and they don’t necessarily have experience doing code work and making policy changes within the city’s framework”

“The kind of common denominator between both of my management experiences was very inexperienced managers being put in charge of either large, difficult teams or being put in charge of… an extremely politically sensitive [program that was] critical for the city but not being given enough support to do it really well, especially as an inexperienced manager. So it was very interesting to me to recognize how important what we were doing in [the program] was and how little support and guidance we got from both bureau leadership and city leadership and then how little support [the manager] got as the supervisor of the program.”

“Consistently there’s been concerns about the workforce and the lack of HR support to help solve the problems. But [BHR is] not staffed or equipped to be able to provide another headcount to help support [the] bureau….. Although the need is large, [BHR doesn’t] have the resources to give them another head to help support all their needs.”

“My issue with not going to HR is if someone makes a complaint before you, they look at your complaint, valid or not, as retaliation for the first complaint coming in, if that makes any sense whatsoever. Instead of looking at it on its merits, the stance was, “Oh, he who claims first is correct.” And that was the perception that’s out there.”

“Why would I go to HR when I’m afraid of taking heat rounds in my chest? And I have no place to go if I lose my job. So why the hell would I go to HR? Because HR may offer me some protection. But it’s not going to stop the shit that I would have to put up with on a minute by minute basis sitting in that corner.”

“HR does not help employees, only care about managers... HR makes [union complaints] go away. HR is clear that they support leadership, not employees”

“For staff who were represented and they take a grievance to their union, to have those grievances be totally disregarded by HR speaks to who leadership prioritizes. They prioritize their supervisors and managers above believing line staff. So I think that is a troubling pattern”
“A lot of people, especially those of us that are doing the work, are told by other people that most of the management is friends with [leadership]. And the reason they have a job that they have is because they were friends with [leadership]. And so, there is this suspicion from those of us actually on the ground doing the work that people telling us what to do are simply there because of nepotism.”

“Would like to tell the story of the bureau where we see how individual exchanges /programmatic work are shaped by the structures. Deeper structural or systemic reasons—for what we are experiencing. There are reasons why changes have been impossible for decades, not because people not talented, structures make it hard to change—want those things to be exposed.”

“I think there needs to be some serious consideration about the value of institutional knowledge and promotion and bringing people from other bureaus into our bureau who have leadership or management experience rather than just hiring somebody because of their accolades that looks like they’d be a great fit, I just feel like what we’ve been missing over the past couple years is that institutional knowledge in a lot of ways.”

“We do not have a home, with 65 people 5 sites, programs don’t naturally relate, no practice of collaboration, physically we’re siloed internally and city-wide”

“The biggest errors that our leadership has made...was this constant hiring of upper managers and leadership roles at the cost of smaller program support.”

“If the City really cared about the goals and values of an engaged community, we would be the largest bureau, not a rounding error in a $5B budget. We would have the best partners from other bureaus, twice the support from commissioners. Instead, because we are the bureau that attempts to include and involve ALL PORTLANDERS, those who think this means they will lose are crying foul.”

“In this period where you’re [leadership are] listening, you need to tell me more about what some of the reform is, and structural barriers. What is the accountability mechanisms we’re supposed to implemented, and barriers and challenges. And 100% supervisors of color and leaders of color—need to tell me about what it actually looks like, when reform and accountability are being brought by leaders of color, and within all those dynamics.”
“Community isn’t always synonymous with warmth and harmony. Politeness is often a veneer for understanding, when in reality it masks uncovered territory, the unspeakable pit that we turn from because we know the pain and anger that can dwell there. It is important to remind ourselves that real community is forged out of struggle.

This is the crucible from which a real community grows.”

Linda Christensen, Reading, Writing & Rising Up
Looking forward

Some employees shared hopes and suggestions for Civic Life.
Employee Hopes for Civic Life

A Good Place to Do Good Work
- “I just want it to be a good place to work.”
- “To uncover the dysfunction among bureau leadership and muckraking employees. Improve the culture. For people to just do their jobs.”
- “The office politics are looked at so we can get back to doing our jobs. Employees do this work for the heart of it and we are public servants who want to do good work. The office politics do not serve anybody.”

Trust and Teamwork
- “Change the culture of blaming the people, the mean spirited attacks on leadership, and shift to broader vision.”
- “…Developing greater trust across the many layers of our hierarchy”
- “Help us understand each other better …there are things that we could do to kind of surface shared values, build trust, and come to a recognition that, yeah, none of us has a right to know everything that’s going on at every moment, but we can still trust each other.”
- “Healthy and safe work environment where people are valued and setup for success”
- “We need to really focus on solving the culture challenges we have within the bureau together instead of separately in little pockets. So you gain some, everybody being on board and working against a common cause, and I think admitting there’s an issue is the first step in that.”

Open communications
- “Interfering needs to happen. I hope people will come forward and share.”
- “People are able to express their needs and challenges honestly, feel like they have a process that they can trust and share openly.”
- “I’m am excited as anyone to daylight the dysfunction.”

Practices and Behaviors that Support a Healthy Culture
- “I think there needs to be some real clarity on, again, “This is how we’re going to treat each other as colleagues. This is how we’re going to resolve problems as a workgroup.”
- “It sounds like there’s already some discussion about shared values. I think that’s really important to define what those are, integrate decision-making back to those, and behaviors back to those, and recognition back to those. So I think those are sort of the keys to turning this into a more healthy work environment”

Leadership and Management Approach
- “They need to be warm and welcoming and open-minded and flexible, logical, educated, knowledgeable.”
- “To value employees who are already there, they have meaning in their position, promote growth.”
- “[My hope is that the leadership team will say] ‘Here is what we are going to do to address the themes we heard.’ I’d love the leadership to show, not just tell.”
- “It is important for leadership to be given not a surface level introduction to each program. And part of acclimating to the work within the city is you come in and you observe and you just become a sponge … just absorb, to observe, to build relationships”
- “An example of what we need for change is [a particular leader who] created office morale. Instead of bullying. Made you want to go to work everyday. Great manager example. Had information and referrals. [Their] employees stayed with [them].”
Employee Hopes for Civic Life

Vision of Impact
- "Civic Life has great potential"
- "To do even greater work within the community. I feel like we have made great strides. We have a heart to serve. We have a desire to serve. We are serving. But I am all about growth and I think we can do it in such a greater and more impactful way."
- "Potential for bureau to be relevant in the region. Especially those oppressed by the current system. To the people we haven't served, we can be. We can be on the right side of history. That's my biggest hope."
- "If we just focus on building community and making sure that all voices are heard then we're good. And it's a good mission because there are too many voices that have not traditionally been heard in Portland and we're trying to change that."
- "I think there's great opportunity to expand what we're doing--what we're currently doing at the program, especially with not just us, but across the country, trying to reimagine what safety looks like. I think we have a lot of opportunity to do the work differently, but hopefully, without people that are constantly undermining the work and making it so difficult."

Alignment Around Shared Purpose
- "My assumption is this effort will have us identify areas we can improve, changes smoother, inclusive, more buy-in from staff."
- "If people could find it in their hearts to connect with what we're really supposed to be doing which is being public servants... that would be a whole new day for our bureau."
- "For us to be able to really take a hardcore look at self and to not see our areas that need improvement as weaknesses, but to see them as opportunity for growth for us to be able to examine our practices, to examine our culture, to examine how we operate from the framework in which we operate."
- "My greatest hope is that civic life would be receptive to any and all results and feedback and that we will receive this as an opportunity to flourish, that we will see this as not a ding or not as someone pointing the finger."
- "I believe that we actually need to lay out a plan and we need to actually drill down into that plan. So I think it would (be) like multiple perspectives at the table, multiple voices at the table, and also doing a piece where we actually include the people that we serve."
- "The biggest thing is looking at self and truly doing a deep examination of what we do, how we do it, what we've done, how we did it, then, and what we want to do, and how we plan to do it in the future."

External Collaboration
- "I would say [we need] more collaboration between our partners and our actual administration."
- "Repairing that partnership feeling, that collaborative feeling between the neighborhood system and the bureau."
- "If we are able to connect with one another in areas of expertise, in areas of strength, that that would make our bureau that much more stronger, that we will be more cohesive and more knowledgeable, but we will have a sense of togetherness, more of a team within the Bureau."

Restructuring
- "Not personally convinced that it should be its own bureau. But if it does exist--a more cohesive mission, switch out a few functions."
- "The bureau should be combined with the Office of Equity and Human Rights. I think that there would be a really fruitful opportunity to create systemic change for staff who worked at the city, as well as systemic change for the way that the city worked on behalf of community with only needing to pay one director as opposed to two, because each bureau right now has their own director."
“If we want people to fully show up, to bring their whole selves including their unarmored, whole hearts ~ so that we can innovate, solve problems, and serve people ~ we have to be vigilant about creating a culture in which people feel safe, seen, heard, and respected.”

Overview

During the assessment process, our team included questions regarding what participants desired, hoped and wished. We also asked what suggestions they might have for themes and issues that were emerging. The following section summarizes recommendations developed by the ASCETA team in consideration of:

- Participant input and feedback
- Team research, experience and expertise

Many participants indicated that they were not ready to engage in larger “wishful thinking” questions, saying that these would be useless given the current challenges at Civic Life. Therefore, our first recommendation focuses on culture development, our second on leadership and personnel considerations, and finally collaborative alignment on purpose, strategy, shape and direction, including exploring restructuring, for this important bureau.

We reiterate our shared belief (heard from participants and strengthened throughout our process) that Civic Life occupies an extraordinarily important position and opportunity as the City of Portland strives to solve urgent issues and develop more equitable processes and outcomes. These require increasing engagement, open collaboration, and co-creation of plans and decisions with communities and constituencies, especially those historically excluded from access.

Civic Life promises to provide that engagement - and we hope our suggestions might provide a path to progress at this important time.
4 Recommendations

1 Pivot CULTURE
- Acknowledge Issues + Take Responsibility
- Address Harms
- Build Trust
- Cocreate Community

2 Reset MANAGEMENT
- Personnel Report + Recommendations
- Cocreate Systemic Accountability with an Equity Lens

3 Align PURPOSE
- Align on Vision and Priorities
- Deliver Results and Outcomes

4 Shift SYSTEMS
- Create empowering structures
Suggested Approach

Use an inclusive, trauma-informed, design-based approach to help people and systems adapt

**GROUND**
Baseline alignment of stakeholder groups as to our approach, including how we will proceed, what to expect, and how to prepare.

**DISCOVER**
During this phase, come to mutual understanding of challenges, aspirations, needs, work done so far, resources, gaps and perspectives.

**DESIGN-BUILD**
Test and align on approach, key commitments and shared direction. Prototype deliverables.

**ITERATE**
Stimulate reflection and awareness, iteration and input among the ecosystem. Co-create an effective path and practices.

**IMPLEMENT**
Compilation and synthesis of all outputs into a “capture” doc, plan presentation. Refinement and recommendations to “practice” and align next steps with decisions and new direction.

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# Key Questions at Each Phase

Using an inclusive, trauma-informed, design-based approach to help people and systems adapt

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<tr>
<td>learnings?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
1. Pivot Culture

Many employees reported being unable to participate in process, share solutions or consider moving forward due to the depth, longevity and potential of personal trauma and harm they experience in their employment at Civic Life, including retraumatization and fears of retaliation.

Employees supported our city values (anti-racism, equity, transparency, communication, collaboration, fiscal responsibility), but challenged the bureau to “walk the talk”

Pivot Culture

We Heard that People Want:

Open Communications
- “Interfering needs to happen. I hope people will come forward and share.”
- “People are able to express their needs and challenges honestly, feel like they have process that they can trust and share openly.”
- “I’m am excited as anyone to daylight the dysfunction.”

A Good Place to Do Good Work
- “I just want it to be a good place to work.”
- “To uncover the dysfunction among bureau leadership and muckraking employees. Improve the culture. For people to just do their jobs.”
- “The office politics are looked at so we can get back to doing our jobs. Employees do this work for the heart of it and we are public servants who want to do good work. The office politics do not serve anybody.”

Trust and Teamwork
- “Change the culture of blaming the people, the mean spirited attacks on leadership, and shift to broader vision.”
- “…Developing greater trust across the many layers of our hierarchy”
- “Help us understand each other better …there are things that we could do to kind of surface shared values, build trust, and come to a recognition that, yeah, none of us has a right to know everything that’s going on at every moment, but we can still trust each other.”
- “Healthy and safe work environment where people are valued and setup for success”
- “We need to really focus on solving the culture challenges we have within the bureau together instead of separately in little pockets. So you gain some, everybody being on board and working against a common cause, and I think admitting there’s an issue is the first step in that.”

Practices and Behaviors that Support a Healthy Culture
- “I think there needs to be some real clarity on, ‘This is how we’re going to treat each other as colleagues. This is how we’re going to resolve problems as a workgroup.’”
- “It sounds like there’s already some discussion about shared values. I think that’s really important to define what those are, integrate decision-making back to those, and behaviors back to those, and recognition back to those. So I think those are sort of the keys to turning this into a more healthy work environment”

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# Possible Action Steps to

**PIVOT CULTURE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHASE</th>
<th>Immediate Actions (0-6 mos)</th>
<th>Next Steps (6-12 mos)</th>
<th>OUTCOMES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>GROUND</strong></td>
<td><strong>A. ACKNOWLEDGE ISSUES + TAKE RESPONSIBILITY</strong> by Commissioner Hardesty, Mayor and City Council</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Provide <strong>systemic acknowledgement</strong> (public and private) of the harms in Civic Life, including grievances and complaints, with the endorsement of those with positional power with oversight of Civic Life and credibility. This might include Commissioner Hardesty, but should also indicate that this acknowledgment will extend beyond political shifts, e.g. endorsement by the Mayor and Council as a whole.</td>
<td>1. Practice consistency in acknowledging issues that arise, and taking responsibility</td>
<td><strong>Employee have confidence in the possibility and direction of change</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Acknowledge the need to address systemic oppression and develop clear actions steps for working towards dismantling unjust systems; recognize the complexity and move from rhetoric to action.</td>
<td>2. Preempt complaints through effective management; continue to take responsibility</td>
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<td>3. Commit to building a “healthy, productive workplace culture aligned with City Values.” Announce next steps and process for achieving this</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>B. ADDRESS HARMS</strong> by Third Party Facilitator + Trusted Oversight (e.g. Comm., City Attorney, BHR, Council)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Leverage the communication and listening that has begun, and provide appropriate resources, safety, space and mental health support for staff to continuously heal from past and emergent harms and to address core needs not being met and/or violated: Identify and cultivate a third-party trusted 1:1 resource for employees to go to, empowered to listen and shift the culture and system e.g. OEHR, non-city facilitators like ASCETA or others specializing in healing and emergent change</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>DISCOVER</strong></td>
<td><strong>C. BUILD TRUST</strong> by Third Party Facilitator + Trusted Oversight</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Assess if/how current bureau leadership could create a more collaborative work culture</td>
<td>1. Continue to support structures for open, honest dialogue, including:</td>
<td><strong>Employees feel supported in processing change</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Assess effectiveness of current communication and collaboration approaches, where multiple perspectives are valued, and disagreement is seen as an opportunity for learning and improvement.</td>
<td>● Implement a detailed employee engagement survey and process in the bureau ● Develop opportunities to create a feedback loop for staff and leadership (i.e. 360 performance reviews, consistent, frequent, and mandatory 1:1s with staff and direct managers, etc.)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. Review exit interview data and conduct “stay” interviews (what keeps you here, and what needs to be done to keep you here)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. Value employee engagement: develop tools to specially recognize, attract and retain high-performers</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5. Facilitate group listening sessions internally, focused on City Values and learning what is and is not working to live these out, what stands in the way, and what opportunities there might be</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Facilitate listening sessions externally, focused on City Values and learning what is and is not working to live these out, what stands in the way, and what opportunities there might be</td>
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<tr>
<td>PHASE</td>
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<tr>
<td>DESIGN</td>
<td><strong>D. COCREATE COMMUNITY</strong> By Comm., Director and Third-Party Facilitator</td>
<td></td>
<td>Employees feel safe in communicating and sharing their perspectives and experiences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| | 1. Co-Create community team agreements for behavior moving forward (adopted and signed) | 1. Work with Office of Equity and Human Rights and/or BHR to:  
   - Install an experienced, highly skilled equity manager and/or culture partner to co-lead the bureau  
   - Collaborate in creating and supporting a positive, diverse employee journeys to increase satisfaction and retention, and reduce turnover and complaint  
   - Activate and empower support systems, e.g. the City of Portland Affinity Groups  
   - Pilot an action plan that reorients bureau behavior to align with City Values | |
| | 2. Align on competencies required among managers and between employees, including trauma-informed, inclusive, trust-based, competencies |  | |
| | 3. Identify effective feedback loops inside and outside the bureau |  | |
| | 4. Inclusive, collaborative design of culture rebuilding plan internally and among key partners |  | |
| | 5. Define process for applying constructive listening in meetings |  | |
| | **1.** Work with Office of Equity and Human Rights and/or BHR to:  
   - Install an experienced, highly skilled equity manager and/or culture partner to co-lead the bureau  
   - Collaborate in creating and supporting a positive, diverse employee journeys to increase satisfaction and retention, and reduce turnover and complaint  
   - Activate and empower support systems, e.g. the City of Portland Affinity Groups  
   - Pilot an action plan that reorients bureau behavior to align with City Values | | |
| | **2.** Implement continuous feedback and improvement processes, including reflections, celebrations and adjustments across the system (in strategy, practices, and structural changes if needed) |  | |
| ITERATE | **E. ENSURE SAFETY AND CONTINUOUS LEARNING** By Comm. + Director | | Employees feel valued, supported, and that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. |
| | 1. Share learning and insights back with employees, managers and stakeholders for feedback and/or validation, and refinement | 1. Implement continuous feedback and improvement processes, including reflections, celebrations and adjustments across the system (in strategy, practices, and structural changes if needed) | |
| |  | 1. Implement continuous feedback and improvement processes, including reflections, celebrations and adjustments across the system (in strategy, practices, and structural changes if needed) | |
| IMPLEMENT | 1. Offer development and collaborative skills training, including:  
   - transparent and inclusive communication  
   - conflict resolution  
   - courageous conversations  
   - trust-building and relationship focus  
   - skill building techniques to build behaviors (e.g. constructive listening, listening with shared voice, public engagement)  
   - inclusive engagement and facilitation. | 1. Pilot an action plan that reorients bureau behavior to align with City Values  
   2. Work with director and every people manager in the bureau to develop SMART goals that will help build a more collaborative work culture; Commissioner or BHR work collaboratively with director to hold/assess leaders to those goals  
   3. Implement continuous feedback and improvement processes, including reflections, celebrations and adjustments across the system (in strategy, practices, and structural changes if needed)  
   4. Reward and recognize mission and values aligned collaborative and impactful work across the bureau. Create a monthly recognition process showcasing collaborative work within and through the bureau. | |
| |  |  | |
We Heard that People Want Managers and Leaders that:

- “They need to be warm and welcoming and open-minded and flexible, logical, educated, knowledgeable.”
- “To value employees who are already there, they have meaning in their position, promote growth.”
- “[My hope is that the leadership team will say] ‘Here is what we are going to do to address the themes we heard.’ I’d love the leadership to show, not just tell.”
- “It is important for leadership to be given not a surface level introduction to each program. And part of acclimating to the work within the city is you come in and you observe and you just become a sponge ... just absorb, to observe, to build relationships”
- “[an example of what we need for change is [ a particular leader who] created office morale. Instead of bullying. Made you want to go to work everyday. Great manager example. Had information and referrals. [Their] employees stayed with [them].”

BHR and Leadership:

- “I think that is one missed perception that I think that it’s helpful for people to understand we just haven’t shouted it from the rooftops which is HR is a tool of assistance to managers in these bureaus. [BHR is] not properly staffed to investigate every single issue or be the sole source of investigation throughout the city, [only] 2.02 investigations which are those that are claims of discrimination, retaliation or harassment. [BHR has] no authority to take actions on the findings, [just] “Here is what we discovered” and usually that’s in concert with the manager within that bureau. Performance-related investigations, behaviour related investigations, [BHR plays] sort of second chair and we support the bureaus in researching those and we provide council and advice- here’s what we do in other bureaus or here’s what we’ve seen in other bureaus, and make sure the investigation is done properly but we’re not the lead on those.”

- “I would love to see [the director] send an email to all saying, this is a clean slate, this is how we are moving forward: If you have an issue, address it at lowest level possible and copy the next level up. If you feel it necessary, copy me. Supervisors will meet on a weekly basis to address all of the concerns brought up, and uniformly work with BHR and OEHR on actively pursuing a healthy, safe work environment. If you have an issue that needs to be resolved, you need to do that with me. [the director] needs to take hold of her bureau.”

Many reported specific experiences with particular employees and/or managers whose behaviors felt harmful. They also expressed frustration at the continuing behaviors, and how ineffective current management methods are, for curbing unwanted and encouraging healthy behaviors.

The individuals named reported not receiving the support they felt they needed to be successful.

We recommend taking into account personnel considerations and shifting from traditional (punitive) to a human development approach (support for systems change).

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"RESET"
Change from Traditional to Collaborative, Equity-Focused Systems

FROM: Traditional, Top-Down Leadership
- Order and control
- Top-down: leadership role is concentrated in senior management
- Set goals, identify strategies, roll out plans to get "buy-in" - then direct plans

TO: Collaborative, Equity-Focused Leadership
- Recognize all perspectives, and how inequities are products of systemic oppression
- Build partnerships with those most impacted
- Collective experimentation and learning, collaborative (re)design of opportunity structures

"Belonging is where people co-create the future together."
-John A. Powell, Othering and Belonging Institute
New Leadership Traits to Consider

“We know a great deal about what leaders do and how they do it. But we know very little about the inner place, the source from which they operate. And it is this source that we attempt to explore.” - Otto Scharmer

To support collaboration, as well as equity and inclusion and other City Values, employees must be managed in a collaborative, inclusive way. Therefore, in addition to other professional competencies, key characteristics to include in job descriptions to align with City Values are:

- They believe power is greatest in a collective team and see the employee experience as priority
- They understand the impact of oppression & privilege and own responsibility for leading equity efforts
- They openly share information and knowledge
- They encourage suggestions and ideas from their team, and facilitate brainstorming
- They lead and help staff at all levels through change, communicating the vision and the “why”
- They recognize, attract and retain talent and are effective at employee engagement, management and coaching
- They are experienced at leading and empowering staff to build and deliver impactful programs

In collaborative working environments, managers work alongside employees and in collaboration with other teams and departments to accomplish shared goals. This can mean a few things, depending on the organization:

- Managers don't simply oversee projects and ensure goals are met.
- Information is shared freely, across all levels of the organization
- Teams are cross-functional and interdisciplinary
- Each employee is heard and given pathways to contribute to success
- Decisions are team-based through consensus or co-creation
- Managers prevent siloes and bridge gaps between departments

In a traditional top-down org structure, information is often closed and kept to the the upper echelons of the organizations.

Important inclusive leadership traits also include: Authenticity, Emotional Resilience, Self-assurance, Inquisitive, Flexibility. And the following five competencies: Builds Interpersonal Trust, Integrate Diverse Perspective, Optimizes Talent, Applies and Adaptive Mindset, Achieves Transformation.
NOTES FOR CONSIDERATION

Personnel Report

All throughout our process, we heard a deep desire among many employees to heal from felt harm and improve the work environment and culture and a need from city collaborators and communities to improve working relationships and collaboration. To support these aims, we reviewed the following:

- Survey data from three anonymous surveys (estimated 62% employee participation)
- 1:1 interviews with direct reports, colleagues, and wherever possible the employee themselves
- Review of confidential human resources complaints
- Report regarding 18 employees' complaints to the Ombudsman

In our assessment process, we discovered repetitive complaints concerning five particular employees' behavior. These continued to emerge, showing actions, behaviors and impacts that contributed to dissonance and dysfunction in the work culture. In our review, common themes also emerged concerning behavior that posed obstacles to future reconciliation and progress, and that are not in alignment with many City of Portland values (Anti-Racism, Equity, Transparency, Communication, Collaboration, Fiscal Responsibility). We have summarized what we heard on the following slide.

The themes that emerged are:

1. **Hostile Working Environment**: These employees were identified as contributing to continual creation of a hostile working environment especially for protected classes, including but not limited to trauma (BIPOC, women, veterans, seniors)
2. **Abuse of Power**: Acts and behaviors in self-interest that cause unnecessary harm to other employees
3. **Leadership and Management Style**: Leadership and management style not aligned with City of Portland values, and/or counterproductive in serving city needs, supporting employees and carrying out the bureau's mission and collaborative community promise
4. **Lack of Systemic Support**: Personnel across every level of the organization expressed disappointment and frustration with the lack of prioritization, resources and support to help them with their work, with their teams, and with helping the culture of Civic Life be a more humane and empathetic experience

**IMPORTANT NOTE: THIS IS NOT A JOB PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT.** Evaluating employees for their effectiveness and job performance was outside the scope of this assessment. What we are reporting is the recurrence of reported behaviors and felt impacts from others in the bureau, which we summarily checked against what was provided in BHR and Ombudsman reports. We are also reporting findings regarding what these reports show about the system of personnel management at the Bureau, and its failure to provide processes, guidance, correction and support for struggling employees and managers.
## Personnel Report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERSONNEL</th>
<th>POSITION</th>
<th>Reported Employee Experience</th>
<th>Employee Confidence in Capacity to Support Recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suk Rhee*</td>
<td>Bureau Director</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meg Juarez*</td>
<td>Supervisor II Community Safety</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dianne Riley*</td>
<td>Supervisor II District Coalition Offices</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Van Orden</td>
<td>Noise Control Officer</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacob Brostoff</td>
<td>Crime Prevention Administrator</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
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</table>

*Subjects of Ombudsman Report (18 complainants)
## Personnel Report

Note that the below employee perspectives emerged from responses to open-ended questions such as, “What is really working at Civic Life?” or “What can improve at the bureau?” We did not ask specific questions about any individual.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERSONNEL</th>
<th>Reported Employee Perspectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Suk Rhee*        | - Most interviewees and survey participants felt the bureau cannot move forward with Suk as director citing her lack of concern for employee experience, bullying behavior, and hierarchical and condescending style of leadership  
                    - All bureau leaders and some employees who participated in this assessment support Suk’s vision and value her approach                                                                                     |
| Meg Juarez*      | - Most (6/9) team members feel the program cannot move forward with Meg as supervisor due to harms caused  
                    - Some (2/9) team members feel the tension with Meg is solvable, if conflicting opinions on new program direction are resolved  
                    - One (1/9) team member believes an opportunity to openly share with Meg without fear of retaliation would promote healing (+3rd party or Equity Manager)  
                    - Several team members (BIPOC and white employees) report that Meg discriminates, disrespects, and targets women of color under her                                                                            |
| Dianne Riley*    | - Three former employees who participated in this assessment felt unsafe, harassed, and unable to remain in their positions due to Dianne's behavior as their supervisor  
                    - Some employees reported abuse to ombudsman because their official complaints against Dianne were not taken seriously by HR or the director  
                    - Employees particularly objected to Dianne's repeated use of “motherfucker” when referring to employees                                                                                          |
| Paul Van Orden   | - Participants at every levels reported that fear of Paul's influence, power and capacity to use the system to punish opposition silenced complaints regarding his behavior: three employees report transferring to elsewhere due to Paul's behavior and treatment, and one employee is currently seeking transfer due to Paul's treatment and ongoing fear and stress related to his behavior  
                    - Some employees feel a full review of Paul's previous transfers and backlog of concerns and complaints is necessary  
                    - A former supervisor describes his behavior as “toxic, corrupt, and entrenched in white supremacist and sexist behavior.”                                                                 |
| Jacob Brostoff   | - Concerns about Jacob focused on his position as union steward and “weaponization” of that position and related processes to target and harm others. Namely:  
                    - One member of COMSAF team feels specifically targeted by Jacob and perceives his goal is for them to be terminated  
                    - Two perspectives outside COMSAF team and one member of COMSAF team are concerned the union grievance process is being weaponized  
                    - Three interviewees and many survey responses expressed concerns that the union and Union Steward responsibilities contradict Civic Life values  
                    - One interview recommended a new Livability supervisor to provide active management (“to manage the hell out of”) this employee's behavior                                                  |

*Subjects of Ombudsman Report

### Notes for Consideration

Personnel Perspectives

Four of the five persons on this list were interviewed and shared their personal experience and perspective with ASCETA.

General themes that emerged were that individuals felt targeted, bullied, disrespected, and not supported in their roles by traditional systems including upper management and BHR. Also, some perceived these behaviors to be racially motivated and/or a product of racial stereotyping.

(Due to confidentiality, each individual perspective cannot be shared, though they are equally as important and valid.)
Personnel Recommendations

For the City of Portland to create a culture centered in City Values, especially Anti-Racism, Equity, Transparency, Communication, and Collaboration* - and not to perpetuate the very harm and toxicity confirmed by this Assessment, ASCETA strongly recommends shifting from a traditional approach to personnel management based on complaints, individual failings and the threat of termination - to a future developmental approach based in the City's Values, with a trauma-informed equity lens. The following slides summarize our recommended approach.

1. **SHIFT THE SYSTEM, NOT ONLY THE PERSON. SYSTEMIC PATTERNS WILL NOT BE RESOLVED BY PERSONNEL CHANGES ALONE**

Civic Life’s traditional approach to leadership and personnel fixes responsibility for behavior chiefly on the individual: it is complaints-based, with the threat of termination as the primary tool for controlling behavior. When taken to the extreme (as has currently happened), this approach exacerbates fears and distrust, as well as unhealthy and toxic behaviors that now are the norm in the culture. Without greater cultural, strategic and structural shifts, removal alone of any particular person will not fix these issues. Incentives, motivations and biases are embedded in the system and will shape and influence incoming personnel. A holistic approach to change and equity transformation is required to ensure that harm does not continue, behaviors do not repeat, and new leaders and employees are supported in effecting and experiencing change.

*All of these values were viewed as requiring work to achieve. The last City Value, Fiscal Responsibility, did not emerge as an issue in this Assessment that needs to be addressed.
QUESTIONS TO HELP GUIDE PERSONNEL DECISIONS AND SYSTEMS CHANGE AT CIVIC LIFE

1. What accountability measures are in place to respond to longtime, ongoing complaints about and evidence of harm caused by this person?

2. What kind of feedback, supervision, or training were received to fulfill roles and responsibilities?

3. How has the person experienced racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination in the role they are playing? How have they perpetuated racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination in the role they are playing? How are these experiences acknowledged and addressed systemically? And how are all supported in developing awareness and new behaviors?

4. Are there other, more human ways of addressing to create healthy and inclusive checks and balances, rather than complaint and punish (e.g. reflection questions, feedback loops, facilitated collaborative process)?

5. How might we hold these folks accountable and uphold their integrity as human beings?

The above visual is one of many examples of how systems support personal behavioral change. It is a visual from the management firm Partnering Resources based on Grenny, Maxfield & Shimberg, “How to Have Influence,” MIT Sloan Management Review, Fall 2008. We recommend undertaking a human-centered approach like this or others, alongside the key questions listed here to elevate anti-racism and equity in the process.
## Personnel Recommendations

### 3. SHIFT HR POLICIES AND PRACTICES.

We recognize that transformation is not possible overnight, that current structures are entrenched and that challenges are significant. Progress is incremental and important, and flexible thinking is key. The following are examples of possible shifts in HR and personnel policies and approaches.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership Communication and Action</th>
<th>Hiring and Selection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Communicate commitment and undertake immediate action to address key issues (address harms, culture pivot, management reset, purpose alignment, and systems shift)</td>
<td>• Examine hiring process for bias (job description, interview questions and panel)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Share with personnel regarding commitment to new direction - with coaching and support</td>
<td>• Clearly define what “cultural fit” means.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Careful public communications acknowledging issues and committing to path forward</td>
<td>• Assess where and how you source candidates to ensure you have a diverse pool. Are you attracting experienced and diverse candidates?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Leadership and management communicate and act with accountability to leadership traits, values, goals, and outcomes for Civic Life</td>
<td>• Ensure you have a standard process and criteria for objectively evaluating candidates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Leadership and management communicate and act with accountability to leadership traits, values, goals, and outcomes for Civic Life</td>
<td>• Train interviewers in unconscious bias.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance Management</th>
<th>Compensation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Evaluate performance management process and ratings. Make sure managers are evaluating performance without bias. Train and coach.</td>
<td>• Make sure to have diversity, inclusion, and equity in your compensation and reward programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Are the goals, expectations, and performance evaluation criteria clear, objective and aligned with the bureaus missions and values?</td>
<td>• Assess and identify pay inequities between: men and women, BIPOC employees?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Assess overall performance ratings (by manager, team, tenure, race) Are any employee groups scored lower?</td>
<td>• Ensure clear performance metrics are defined to ensure unconscious biases doesn't affect pay equity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Do your diverse employees have similar performance rating averages as your non-diverse employees?</td>
<td>• Do all employees have the opportunity to drive their own Learning and Development through online resources?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Are high achieving employees recognized and retained?</td>
<td>• Do all employees have development plans that point out learning resources the employee can use to complete their development plan?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Are coaching and probation plans clear and followed up on?</td>
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</table>

**NOTES FOR CONSIDERATION**
### Personnel Recommendations

4. MAKE PERSONNEL DECISIONS THAT ALIGN WITH THE FUTURE STATE, AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE.

We acknowledge that change takes time, and that pragmatic considerations including impact, cost and personnel policies inform the capacity of the City of Portland to immediately adopt the “Future State.” We have sketched other options, including transitional steps, to consider.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personnel</th>
<th>Current State</th>
<th>Transitional State</th>
<th>Recommended Future/Ideal State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Suk Rhee            | TERMINATE + REPLACE (expect leader to solve for all issues) | TERMINATE + HIRE NEW LEADERSHIP with key skills, supports restorative work, and committed to making key structural changes | 1. ACCOUNTABILITY CONVERSATION AND COACHING  
- Keep personnel in the role with discussion, reflection and reexamination including:  
- Agreement with new leadership/behavioral expectations (see Slides 43-44) and shared decision on immediate actions (see #2 below)  
- Management skills reflection (based on this Assessment and other relevant reports)  
- Management skills self-evaluation  
- Assess condition of relationships and potential and requirements for relational repair  
- Articulate needs to address gaps and build strengths |
| Meg Juarez          | REMOVE FROM POSITIONS TO NON-MANAGEMENT replacement has key skills, support restorative work, and committed to making key structural changes | MANAGEMENT CONVERSATION focused on review of roles, responsibilities and capacity to serve union function with behavioral alignment with city values | 2. SHARED DECISION  
- Mutually determine appropriate fit and/or path forward  
- May include administrative leave with time to reflect, or a temporary separation (sabbatical)  
- May include agreement to Separate (with severance offered as appropriate)  
- Continue with trauma-informed, equity-based coaching and training where needed  
- Commit to shared leadership model (co-leaders w/complementary skills) |
| Dianne Riley       | TERMINATE replacement has key skills, commitment to restorative work, and alignment with systems shifts | PERFORMANCE PLAN focused on behavior with OBSERVATION | 3. FACILITATED GROUP PROCESS  
- Promote reconciliation and relational repair and trust-building among employees and work groups -work with an external third party (outside the system not experiencing harm directly) to guide collaborative process of setting, enforcing and supporting expectations |
| Paul Van Orden     |                                        |                    | 4. CLEAR PLAN  
- If personnel is continuing, commit to:  
- Agreement with milestones regarding new behavioral expectations  
- Continuing relational repair (including whether and how they recognize harm, what they and others believe root causes are, and steps forward |
<p>| Jacob Brostoff     | PERFORMANCE PLAN focused on behavior with OBSERVATION | + PERFORMANCE PLAN with OBSERVATION |                                    |</p>
<table>
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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GROUND</td>
<td>A. <strong>ACKNOWLEDGE NEEDS</strong> by Comm. Hardesty, Mayor and City Council</td>
<td>Continuous acknowledgement of accountability and commitment to leadership definition and development</td>
<td>Employees trust and share expectations</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Review this Assessment, Personnel Report and Recommendations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Provide <strong>systemic acknowledgement and commitment</strong> to change</td>
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<td>3. Hire a Third Party Facilitator to support systems personnel and systems shifts.</td>
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<td>DISCOVER</td>
<td>B. <strong>ASSESS</strong> by Third Party Facilitator + Trusted Oversight (e.g. Comm., City Attorney, BHR, Council)</td>
<td>1. Identify <strong>effective feedback loops</strong>, identify what is and isn't working in management and leadership</td>
<td>Leadership requirements satisfy stakeholder needs and expectations</td>
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<td>2. Identify possible models of leadership from which to build, e.g.</td>
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<td>● 10 Steps of Leading with Dignity</td>
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<td>● Five Disciplines of Inclusive Leaders</td>
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<td>● Seven Leadership Capacities</td>
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<tr>
<td>DESIGN</td>
<td>C. <strong>SHARED DECISION-MAKING</strong> by Third Party Facilitator + Trusted Oversight</td>
<td>Collaboratively Define Pathway: Develop framework and model of leadership that works best for Civic Life, including engagement needs and systemic/structural supports</td>
<td>Civic Life leadership framework and pathway defined</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Define management competencies and bias awareness of all leaders: prioritizing collaboration, team building skills, performance management and coaching abilities, and overall leadership skills of existing and new leaders</td>
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<td>2. <strong>Designate organizational systems and partnerships</strong> to support collaborative leadership, especially with BHR and OEHR</td>
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<td>3. Summarize job requirements based on the Key Issues and Recommendations, and install an experienced, highly skilled temporary or transitional leaders (1-2Y), equity manager and/or culture partner to co-lead the bureau</td>
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<td></td>
<td>● Collaboratively Define Pathway: Develop framework and model of leadership that works best for Civic Life, including engagement needs and systemic/structural supports</td>
<td>Civic Life leadership framework and pathway defined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITERATE + IMPLEMENT</td>
<td>D. <strong>CLARIFY PLAN</strong></td>
<td>Implement effective communication and collaboration approaches, where multiple perspectives are valued, and disagreement is seen as an opportunity for learning and improvement.</td>
<td>Trusted and collaborative leadership</td>
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<td>● Create agreement regarding new behavioral expectations</td>
<td>● Hold leadership accountable to new direction</td>
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<td>● Plan for relational repair (including whether and how they recognize harm, what they and others believe root causes are, and steps forward)</td>
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<td>● Ensure management training and employee support/training as needed</td>
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</table>
3. Align on Purpose

Confirm and co-create the shared vision, direction, outcomes and priorities of Civic Life through an inclusive process of strategic design, ensuring integration of all stakeholder needs and perspectives, and the collaborative co-creation of Civic Life’s direction and purpose with the ecosystem.

What We Heard People Want:

Clear Priorities:
- “My assumption is this effort will have us identify areas we can improve, changes smoother, inclusive, more buy-in from staff.”
- “If people could find it in their hearts to connect with what we’re really supposed to be doing which is being public servants... that would be a whole new day for our bureau.”
- “For us to be able to really take a hardcore look at self and to not see our areas that need improvement as weaknesses, but to see them as opportunity for growth for us to be able to examine our practices, to examine our culture, to examine how we operate from the framework in which we operate.”
- “My greatest hope is that civic life would be receptive to any and all results and feedback and that we will receive this as an opportunity to flourish, that we will see this as not a ding or not as someone pointing the finger.”
- “I believe that we actually need to lay out a plan and we need to actually drill down into that plan. So I think it would (be) like multiple perspectives at the table, multiple voices at the table, and also doing a piece where we actually include the people that we serve.”
- “The biggest thing is looking at self and truly doing a deep examination of what we do, how we do it, what we’ve done, how we did it, then, and what we want to do, and how we plan to do it in the future.”

Focus on a Meaningful Shared Purpose:
- “Civic Life has great potential”
- “To do even greater work within the community. I feel like we have made great strides. We have a heart to serve. We have a desire to serve. We are serving. But I am all about growth and I think we can do it in such a greater and more impactful way.”
- “Potential for bureau to be relevant in region. Especially those oppressed by the current system. To the people we haven’t served, and we can be. We can be on the right side of history. That’s my biggest hope.”
- “If we just focus on building community and making sure that all voices are heard then we’re good. And it’s a good mission because there are too many voices that have not traditionally been heard in Portland and we’re trying to change that.”
- “I think there’s great opportunity to expand what we’re doing—what we’re currently doing at the program, especially with not just us, but across the country, trying to reimagine what safety looks like. I think we have a lot of opportunity to do the work differently, but hopefully, without people that are constantly undermining the work and making it so difficult.”
- “Reimagine Oregon picked us to work with as the bureau along with Office of equity and Human Rights [to work with on a participatory budgeting process] most telling of attributes I can say.”
## Possible Action Steps to: ALIGN ON PURPOSE

### Issues Addressed:
- MISSION + VALUES
- SCOPE OF WORK

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GROUND</td>
<td>A. ACKNOWLEDGE GAP by Comm. Hardesty, Mayor and City Council</td>
<td></td>
<td>Alignment around need and approach for strategic planning</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1. Provide <strong>systemic commitment</strong> (public and private) of the need for reexamination and redesign of Civic Life to best ensure engagement for emerging needs, with the endorsement of those with positional power with oversight of Civic Life and credibility.</td>
<td>1. Name which City entity holds accountability for restructuring and a multi-stakeholder “Redesign Team” to coordinate and steward the process</td>
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<td>2. Define goals for this project, including building on what has emerged already, i.e.:</td>
<td>2. Hire equity-informed, inclusive third party management consultants (as PBOT, Parks and Rec did) to collaboratively design and develop new structures and practices to achieve the above goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>DISCOVER</td>
<td>B. LISTEN by Third Party Facilitator + Trusted Oversight (e.g. Comm., City Attorney, BHR, Council)</td>
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<td>1. Identify and cultivate a third-party trusted 1:1 resource to build on the listening begun in this process and as the other recommended workstreams progress and begin to define and refine key problems and solutions engage stakeholders in defining their needs and vision, as well as obstacles and opportunities.</td>
<td>1. Map the ecosystem of City Government and Civic Life, and roadmap a process for intentional engagement, inquiry and iteration. Stakeholders might include:</td>
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<td>2. Develop effective and relevant engagement for all stakeholders in the Civic Life ecosystem, including the general public and especially historically excluded communities, to address concerns together in a way that is constructive.</td>
<td>● (Affinity and/or Intersectionality-based) Community Organizations</td>
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<td>3. Consider building a diverse and intersectional Civic Life <strong>Advisory Board</strong> to help inform decision-making and ensure stakeholder needs, shared outcomes, and community inclusion and collaboration. Characteristics of members include: open-minded, adaptive, empathic and connected, understand gaps and opportunities, key influencers, communicators, strategic thinkers, diverse and representative of impacted communities (students, others)</td>
<td>● (Geographically-based) Neighborhood Associations and Coalitions</td>
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<td>● Civic Life Management and Staff</td>
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<td>● Other City Government Collaborators (Mayor, Commissioners, Directors, Staff)</td>
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<td>2. Come to mutual understanding of challenges, aspirations, needs, work needed to be done, resources, gaps and perspective</td>
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Alignment around shared understanding of context and key challenges, opportunities and possible directions for Civic Life.
**PHASE + FOCUS**

<table>
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<td><strong>C. COCREATE by Third Party Facilitator + Trusted Oversight</strong></td>
<td><strong>D. IMPROVE + TRUST by Third Party Facilitator + Trusted Oversight</strong></td>
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**DESIGN:**

1. **Create a Design Plan.** Stimulate reflection and generate awareness, iteration and input among the ecosystem. Co-create an effective path and practices, including new systems as needed.

**OUTCOMES**

Alignment on key commitments and shared direction.

**ITERATE + IMPLEMENT**

1. **Test and Align.** Prototype deliverables and test approach with stakeholder groups and in pilot programs, initial ideas and approaches, including:
   - Obstacles, problems, opportunities and aspirations
   - What success looks like
   - Assignations for ownership and accountability.
   - Prototype deliverables.

2. **Continuous Improvement.** Develop initial systems, practices and processes for evaluation, reporting, and improving the strategic approach

Coral-colored text connotes discovery and recommendations that have emerged so far from this assessment, to be carried forward if a process continues.

1. **Develop Strategy Components Centering Impacted Communities and Stakeholder Groups.** Building on prior work, be sure to:
   - Collaboratively define the roles of BHR and OEHR in addressing internal and external needs, and the city's collective goals.

2. **Clarify the Strategic Framework,**
   - Clarify the roles of our partners in City Government, to make sure we work in tandem (with, not against) other bureaus and the mayor in serving communities, neighborhoods and Portlanders, especially those most marginalized

   - Build and use individual accountability frameworks and practices based on community outcomes.

1. Continuously share learning and insights back with employees, managers and stakeholders for feedback and/or validation, and refinement.

2. Give stakeholders real choice and actual voice, especially those historically excluded.

Continuous support, feedback and partnership in achieving purpose and priorities for Civic Life.
4. Shift Systems

While this assessment focused on the employee experience, it became clear throughout the process that historic structures, processes and procedures no longer support the values, culture and needs of the City of Portland, especially those relating to diversity, inclusion, equity and anti-racism, and solving for systemic oppression.

The recommendations here build upon the listening and reflections begun in this process.

What We Heard (Suggestions):

Restructuring the Bureau

- “Not personally convinced that it should be its own bureau. But if it does exist—a more cohesive mission, switch out a few functions”
- “The bureau should be combined with the Office of Equity and Human Rights. I think that there would be a really fruitful opportunity to create systemic change for staff who worked at the city, as well as systemic change for the way that the city worked on behalf of community with only needing to pay one director as opposed to two, because each bureau right now has their own director.”
- [From Survey] “(Structure suggestion) Noise → Permitting/BDS, Cannabis→Tax & Revenue, Graffiti→ (unless it’s art and murals) contracts to Procurement or different bureaus and right of ways depending on bureau. Crime Prevention & Community Safety to police bureau.”

Restructuring Commissioner Oversight

- “[It’s an] issue only if we don’t have politicians running City Bureaus. A Commissioner [is] a subject matter expert, and [should not report to the mayor directly.] Most Mayors are happy to have a Commissioner that knows their work. Elected officials should represent the people, not city agencies”
- “[There should be a] Community Affairs Division who deals with public-facing non-crime or low-level crime quality of life issues such as the noise complaints, graffiti abatement, livability – it belongs in one place, and I don’t know what PPB is doing in terms of reimagining.”
- “[Other bureaus] are changing their cultures and it’s slow going. You can’t just up and change everything without bringing your stakeholders along. [Other bureaus are] planning to do an enormous amount of community engagement.”
- “I think that part of what happened here was that we have this wacky system of government in which commissioners are ultimately the top managers at a bureau…. So wholesale change of our structure of government would help so that we have a city manager instead of a rotating cast of commissioners that come in and completely change the focus of a bureau, whether they have the knowhow to do that or not.”
- “We’re the last city in the United States–where you don’t have bureaucrats in charge… any other major city has a city manager, and the bureau directors report to the city manager. The City of Portland does not.”

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<td>GROUND</td>
<td><strong>ACKNOWLEDGE CHALLENGES</strong> by Comm. Hardesty, Mayor and City Council</td>
<td></td>
<td>Alignment on systemic needs and collective responsibility for addressing them</td>
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</table>

1. Provide **systemic acknowledgement** (public and private) of the special vulnerability of Civic Life to political swings and power shifts due to the nature of its work (engaging communities and constituencies).
2. Announce commitment to:
   - Protecting the staff and work of the bureau from political swings and power shifts.
   - Creating structures to support accountability and engagement to lived City Values as well as emergent purpose and priorities
   - Exploring and redefining interrelationships with the Council structure and other bureaus, e.g. BHR and OEHR
   - Ensuring active and relevant community engagement and citizen input
3. Share results with the Charter Review Commission, regarding impacts of the City Commissioner structure on defining Civic Life, and barriers to its being community and constituent-centered within the current framework.

| DISCOVER | **ASSESS** by Management Consultant and/or Third Party Facilitator + Trusted Oversight (e.g. Comm., City Attorney, BHR, Council) | | Trusted process for restructuring City to collaborate on complex challenges |

1. Engage Third Party Facilitator and/or management consultants, to develop research and insights, and recommendations regarding what the governance and accountability, as well as procedural systems for Civic Life.
2. Conduct an analysis and synthesize research regarding emergent models of civic and community engagement at the city level.
   - Name and engage key perspectives and recommending movement of departments based on emergent mission and purpose
   - With key stakeholders, identify "silos, constraints and barriers of working collaboratively and effectively within the City and in the Community. Clarify shared goals and identify strategies to coordinate and collaborate (both short-term and long-term).
Systems Insights

to help inform continued work on restructuring and redesign of Civic Life

ENGAGEMENT IS EVERYTHING. We learned that the greatest challenges for Civic Life occur when relevant constituencies and impacted communities were not included in learning, about, designing, iterating or refining key decisions. (e.g. Code Change, departmental restructuring).

COUNT VOICES, NOT FTE’S. Civic Life is often criticized for the resources it requires compared to its relatively small FTEs; however, as the community and civic engagement arm of the city, its “personnel” includes not just its employees, but also community partners, associations, nonprofits and residents, all of whom require empathy, understanding and engagement. In addition, its work is relational, suggesting that appropriate evaluation of resources is required to support building and maintain relationships.

BREAK BUREAU SILOES, AND BUILD ENVIRONMENTS AND EXPERIENCES. Use collaborative design approaches to clarify role of Civic Life, OEHR and BHR in building welcoming work environments and ensuring a positive employee experience, and utilize all behavioral supports in developing work culture, such as: individual commitment and accountability plan and practices, shifting performance evaluations into regular behavioral feedback with support, and building peer reward systems for how to live the values.

PROTECT CIVIC LIFE FROM POLITICAL SWINGS. The Commissioner-led bureau system (rather than City Managers) profoundly impacts Civic Life for reasons stated above relating to the ambiguity of its purpose relative to other departments, and also because its focus is engagement and relationships, predisposing Commissioners to swing the bureau to support their own causes. Research and thought are recommended to develop governance, management and evaluation structures that preserve Civic Life’s long-term effectiveness as the engagement arm of the City of Portland. Suggestions for solutions to carry forward include the creation of a Civic Life Board to share governance with a Commissioner, along with the development of City Management alternatives to a Commissioner-led structure.

CENTER PEOPLE. (See Recommendations 1 and 2 above.) The biggest challenges to Civic Life stem from its lack of people and culture focus alongside significant social shifts. Focusing on employee experience and pivoting culture through centering on people will support the bureau’s reconciliation, progress and potential.
Immediate Next Steps

RECOMMENDATION TO COMMISSIONER HARDESTY
Suggested Timeline

Discover
Now to next six months

Ground
Immediately
Confirm receipt of report
Acknowledge harms
Share the plan
Indicate next steps

Assess personnel considerations and recommendations
With 3rd-party partners (strategy, culture, restructuring):
Listen and learn needs

Design
Within the year
Make personnel and systems shifts (provide training, support)
Cocreate decision-making frameworks, plans and the pathway forward

Iterate / Implement
Ongoing
Pilot, test and align plans
Give and provide feedback
Continuously iterate and improve

Discover
Assess personnel considerations and recommendations
With 3rd-party partners (strategy, culture, restructuring):
Listen and learn needs

Design
Make personnel and systems shifts (provide training, support)
Cocreate decision-making frameworks, plans and the pathway forward

Iterate / Implement
Pilot, test and align plans
Give and provide feedback
Continuously iterate and improve
## What Employees Need

*Empathy, Action and Commitment to Change*

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<tr>
<th>GROUND</th>
<th>Confirmation of receipt of report by those with positional power with oversight of Civic Life, at a Staff meeting</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 1</strong></td>
<td><strong>THANK YOU.</strong> Express gratitude for participating in this process, bravery in sharing, know how terrified people felt, and patience for how long it took.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Step 2</strong></td>
<td><strong>ACKNOWLEDGE</strong> that on a personal level, it sounds like a lot of people have been harmed. I hear you. I’m so sorry that you have experienced this. I feel strongly that we can get through this, and I believe we can</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| **Step 3** | **TAKE RESPONSIBILITY + OWN THIS**  
- We are taking complaints (HR, Ombudsman, lawsuits, etc.) and ASCETA assessment seriously  
- We are working on identifying ideas and areas on where to start  
- We know that work is needed to  
  - Pivot the culture of Civic Life to align with the City's Core Values, and Civic Life 'score role in inclusive engagement for the City  
  - Reset management and personnel approaches to be trauma-informed, and equitable  
  - Reexamine and redesign Civic Life to best ensure inclusive engagement for the City's emerging needs  
- special vulnerability of Civic Life to political swings and power shifts due to the nature of its work |
| **Step 4** | **PROVIDE RESOURCE FOR QUESTIONS**  
- Recognize that they may have questions or concerns and advise whom they should contact with questions (Karly?) |
What Employees Need

Empathy, Action and Commitment to Change

**DISCOVER**
Assess confidentially, with those with expertise in City Government personnel possibilities

| Step 1 | REVIEW AND ASSESS Personnel Report and Recommendations. Begin Internal process understanding possibilities for: a) personnel changes, given diverse employment status issues, and b) support and resources needed. |
| Step 2 | BEGIN INTERNAL PROCESS for:  
1. Scoping (temporary) leadership and/or personnel to support the culture pivot, management reset, purpose alignment and systems shift  
2. Identifying and cultivating an experienced, highly skilled equity manager and/or third-party trusted resource for  
   - Supporting employees’ healing and development, e.g. OEHR, non-city facilitators like ASCETA or others specializing in healing and emergent change, including trainings  
   - Collaboratively assessing, recommending and supporting implementation for changes to support culture shift to reflect City Values  
   - Co-creating shared purpose, and priorities, community outcomes, collaborative position in government, and roadmap (strategic framework)  
3. Building a diverse and intersectional Civic Life Advisory Board to help inform and design the culture, strategy, structure and direction of Civic Life according to stakeholder needs, shared outcomes, and community inclusion and collaboration. Characteristics of members include: open-minded, adaptive, empathic and connected, understand gaps and opportunities, key influencers, communicators, strategic thinkers, diverse and representative of impacted communities (students, others) |
| Step 3 | WORK WITH TRANSITIONAL LEADER to design and implement a plan for staff development and limiting harmful impacts to every extent possible (including restructuring) regarding remaining personnel with ruptured relationships, who require greater management and accountability |

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As soon as any significant change is made, join a staff meeting (following up with an email) sharing changes and committing to path forward, healing, building trust and collaboration, and offering listening and learning (directly or through third party).

- **Note awareness of the particular challenges faced by leadership, especially by women of color**, when they are charged with leading equity efforts and significant change in historic institutions. You are sensitive to the prevalence of bias, and also recognize the positionality of being a leader intending change who, given only the inherited tools available to them, may unintentionally perpetuate the harms they mean to challenge.

- **Note that changing systemic patterns will require everyone's effort and commitment.** A holistic, inclusive approach to change and equity transformation is required to heal. It requires each person’s learning and new awareness to shift old habits and behaviors. And your intention is to build systems of support and sharing for everyone to experience and participate in the necessary change.

- **Pledge to work towards the systemic supports** it might offer as it undertakes its actions, and commits to deep reevaluation and redesign of bureau culture, structure and systems, namely by addressing the following questions:
  - What accountability measures are in place to respond to longtime, ongoing complaints about and evidence of harm caused by this person?
  - What kind of feedback, supervision, or training were received to fulfill roles and responsibilities?
  - How has the person experienced racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination in the role they are playing? How have they perpetuated racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination in the role they are playing? How are these experiences acknowledged and addressed systemically? And how are all supported in developing awareness and new behaviors?
  - Are there other, more human centered ways to create healthy and inclusive checks and balances, rather than complaint and punish (reflection questions, feedback loops, facilitated collaborative process)?
  - How might we hold these folks accountable and uphold their integrity as human beings?

- **Acknowledge the historic moment and context** recognizing the hard work, emotional impact, and deep challenges of shifting systemic oppression and historic practices, while committing to this course, and address the:
  - Potential and importance of Civic Life as the engagement arm of City Government: that Civic Life is positioned to play a key role in generating important and innovative, equitable solutions. We believe Civic Life is critical to supporting continued collaboration between the government and the people of Portland, especially those historically excluded from access.
  - Public and private commitment to
    - City Values and transforming City Government and especially Civic Life to walk the talk
    - Re-examination and redesign of Civic Life to best ensure engagement for emerging needs
    - Listening and learning to employees, partners, communities, neighborhoods and individual residents in designing the path forward, and co-creating solutions
“The human heart is the first home of democracy. It is where we embrace our questions. Can we be equitable? Can we be generous?

Can we listen with our whole beings, not just our minds, and offer our attention rather than just our opinions?

And do we have enough resolve in our hearts to act courageously, relentlessly, without giving up—ever—trusting our fellow citizens to join with us in our determined pursuit of a living democracy?”

— Terry Tempest Williams
Thank You

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