Port of Seattle Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Organizational Assessment 2021

Executive Summary

Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (OEDI)

January 2022

The Port of Seattle is committed to working both regionally and nationally to achieve equity and justice for all. The Port recognizes our essential role in building a socially just institution by dismantling the structural barriers that have prevented the full participation of our most marginalized communities.

Since 2017, the Port has stepped up efforts to integrate equity into its work including by creating a standalone Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (OEDI) in 2019. OEDI's mission is to build capacity across the organization to address institutional oppression and to transform Port policies, practices, and processes. OEDI has used the three-pronged framework outlined in the Port's Equity Strategic Plan to 1) normalize, 2) organize, and 3) operationalize equity Port-wide.

Already, OEDI has made major progress in its first few years of existence, from trainings and assessments focused on improving equity within the Port to shaping the implementation of externally facing efforts like the South King County Fund and the development of the Port's Equity Index. However, there is clearly more work to be done, and so, on October 13, 2020, the Port of Seattle Commission adopted Motion 2020-19, known as the Racial Bias & Equity Motion, "[t]o direct the Executive Director to examine Port operations and policies for sources of racial bias and discrimination and to develop programs and policies eliminating inequity in all aspects of the organization." This document reports back on the tasks contained in the Motion.

The findings and recommendations contained in this report draw on input gathered from several employee engagement efforts – ranging from Port-wide initiatives, such as the 2021 Equity Survey, to focused gatherings to solicit feedback from specific groups of employees, like EDI Assessment Listening Sessions. Each of these efforts is described, along with a summary of the results, in the report and its appendices. OEDI also utilized employee feedback to vet and finalize this report document, ensuring that it accurately reflected the inputs received.

The results of this effort are fifteen key issues grouped into six focus areas.

- Workplace Culture
- Operations and Processes
- Employment
- Equity Capacity Building
- Engaging WMBEs and Small Businesses
- Engaging Impacted Communities

Each of these focus areas represent an opportunity to address concerns and make progress in key areas of Port-wide equity. Furthermore, to ensure that the Port turns issues into action, this report lists 50 clear, tangible next steps that can be implemented beginning in 2022, beyond the steps already taken on each of these fronts. The full report contains additional details on each of these recommended actions, including further discussion of the issues and concerns raised by Port employees on each topic as well as existing progress to date on the issues identified.

Finally, it is critical to note that this report reflects a synthesis of input and key issues expressed by all employees and drawing from multiple sources of evidence as described above. However, the data also indicate that individual experiences of equity, diversity, and inclusion across the Port vary widely.

Specifically, issues and concerns often fall along *racial and gender lines*, with some employees indicating satisfaction with the status quo and/or less concern, while others face greater barriers, have comparatively greater concerns, and/or are more negatively impacted by racism and other inequities. The latter groups include Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), women, and represented employees. As one employee noted, "It's a tale of two Ports."

> **Black, Indigenous and People of Color.** A recurrent pattern was that BIPOC employees, especially Black/African American workers, expressed greater concerns about racism and other inequities, across almost all topical issues, whether hiring or compensation or workplace culture. This was especially evidenced in the qualitative data of the Equity Survey.

> **Women, with a focus on women of color**. Women employees also shared gender-based concerns across several of the employee engagement activities. In the Equity Survey, for example, respondents called for consideration of other aspects of equity besides race, with gender equity mentioned most often.

> **Represented and off-shift workers**. This group of employees expressed unique challenges, including lack of access to professional development opportunities, inadequate support for participation in equity activities from their supervisors, and often not being included in or provided meaningful access to Port-wide equity or professional development activities.

> Additionally*, intersectionality compounds inequities*. For example, women of color, or Black represented workers, expressed even greater barriers and inequities.

> Informed by the experiences of these specific groups, this report intentionally strives to recognize these inequities and take a proactive, racial equity centered approach. In the report, this is done by spotlighting perspectives from these groups, and integrating Recommended Actions specific to these groups throughout the Recommendations.

Table of Issues and Recommendations

Fifteen key issues were identified from the various sources of input previously described. These are grouped into six focus areas: Workplace Culture, Operations and Processes, Employment, Equity Capacity Building, Engaging WMBEs and Small Businesses, and Engaging Impacted Communities. These are shown below along with a Summary of Recommended Actions for each issue.

Equity Assessment Focus Areas, Key Issues and Summary of Recommended Actions		
Focus Areas	**Key Issues**	**Summary of Recommended Actions**
Workplace Culture	1. Inconsistencies in Port-wide vision for and commitment to equity	1. *Ongoing racial equity training and development for Port of Seattle's leadership.* 2. *Policy Directive to codify equity* 3. *Continue communication efforts to make information accessible* 4. *OEDI on-site presence at SEA Airport Office Building (AOB) and maritime locations*
	2. Lack of open dialog about equity and racism	5. *OEDI continues EDI learning opportunities (e.g., book clubs, caucusing, etc.) to normalize racial equity, including accessible training opportunities for represented and shift employees.* 6. *Language and Meaning Initiative on how to use language that is equitable and inclusive.* 7. *Uplift examples of supervisors and employees who are advancing racial equity.* 8. *Targeted caucuses.* 9. *Strengthen the Change Team's impact.* 10. *Identify and address equity and anti-racism as central to the Port's Special initiative to address anti-black racism.*
	3. Lack of BIPOC representation and voice in decision making	11. *Each year, ERGs, D&D Council, Change Team, and OEDI review and coordinate annual work plans and priorities including budgeting needs.* 12. *Develop organizational policies, practices, and mechanisms for participation in decision making tailored to specific groups.*

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		13. *Town Hall briefing for new Commissioners to discuss potential collaboration and partnership.* 14. *Set baseline for, track progress on, and publish data on racial and gender diversity in senior level positions and higher.*
	4. Lack of safety and a fear of retaliation when reporting racism and discrimination	15. *Curriculum and training for supervisors that increases supervisors' comfort with addressing issues of race and gender.* 16. *Training to increase supervisors' awareness of what constitutes retaliation.* 17. *Human Resources to offer training on the fair and consistent application of HR-18 and Code of Conduct policy.*
Operations and Processes	5. Unclear discrimination reporting process	18. *Workplace Responsibility and Employee Relations continue process improvement and report back in 2022.* 19. *Increase communication and clarity about how Workplace Responsibility and Employee Relations processes work.* 20. *Workplace Responsibility and Employee Relations will publish an annual report.* 21. *Title VI reporting issues will be clarified by OEDI, Legal, and Employee Relations.* 22. *Develop a process for consultants and contractors to report issues of discrimination.* 23. *Additional training for represented workers on reporting discrimination.* 24. *Port-wide dialogue about reporting discrimination and manager accountability.*

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	6. Gaps in critical role of supervisors[1]	*25. Executive Director, Commission, Executive Leadership Team lead by example.* *26. Consistent and on-going messaging from Port leadership to all supervisors about the importance of leaders' accountability to Port values and EDI.* *27. Foundational EDI training for all new supervisors and additional advanced racial equity training for all supervisors.* *28. Develop EDI performance goals, competency, and evaluation best practices for all supervisors.*
	7. Inconsistent integration of equity in key Port-wide processes	*29. Trainings and technical assistance on how to integrate equity into department budgeting processes.* *30. Training and working group to develop skills, expertise, and capacity on using data with an equity lens.* *31. Starting in 2022, all departments set annual EDI goals.*
Employment	8. Inequities in recruitment, hiring, and qualifications	*32. Integrate equity considerations more deeply into the interview and hiring process.* *33. Develop system to track equity indicators in hiring processes.* *34. Increase BIPOC representation in leadership positions.*
	9. Inequities in compensation	*35. Make salary information more accessible and easier to find.* *36. Additional work on compensation equity: complete Port-wide analysis, establish a definition and philosophy for pay equity, determine potential remediation, and implement a new pay program.*

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[1] In this report, "supervisors" includes employees with at least one direct report.

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	10. Barriers to advancement for internal candidates	*37. Performance Link goal for all supervisors to provide training and development opportunities to all employees interested in advancing.* *38. Assess if certain formal education or credentials are needed to perform the essential functions of open jobs.* *39. Develop system to track promotion of internal candidates.* *40. Increase staff awareness about the Port's internal mentorship program.* *41. Improved supervisor training on how to use coaching and mentoring as a management practice.*
Equity Capacity Building	11. Barriers to participation - resources and resistance	*42. Expand equity-related training activities.* *43. Explore the need to create dedicated funding to support employee participation in EDI efforts, especially for represented workers.* *44. Explore development of a policy to allow and support employee participation in equity learning activities.*
Engaging WMBEs and Small Businesses	12. Barriers for WMBEs and small businesses	*45. Assessment of barriers for small businesses and WMBEs to contract with the Port.* *46. Strengthen internal communication and training about contracting processes with WMBEs and small businesses.*
	13. Barriers in procurement processes	*47. For all new contracts, add provisions for language services, anti-harassment language, and integrate anti-bias video review and discussion in contract evaluation panels.* *48. Support community partnerships by reducing paperwork, expediting contracts, and creating feedback loops and a dedicated CPO team for CBO engagement.*

Equity Assessment Focus Areas, Key Issues and Summary of Recommended Actions		
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Engaging Impacted Communities	14. Lack of empowered and meaningful ways for external stakeholders to engage with the Port	*49. Continue work to stand up and operationalize the Community Equity Board.* *50. Create processes and best practices for how the Port engages communities.* *51. Ongoing training and support to develop employees' skills to navigate power dynamics, build authentic relationships, and engage communities in inclusive, meaningful ways.* *52. Create dedicated funding to support and remove barriers for community engagement.*
	15. Challenging processes for community-based organizations to contract with the Port	*53. Continue process and system improvements in Port's community investment programs.*