

Port of Seattle

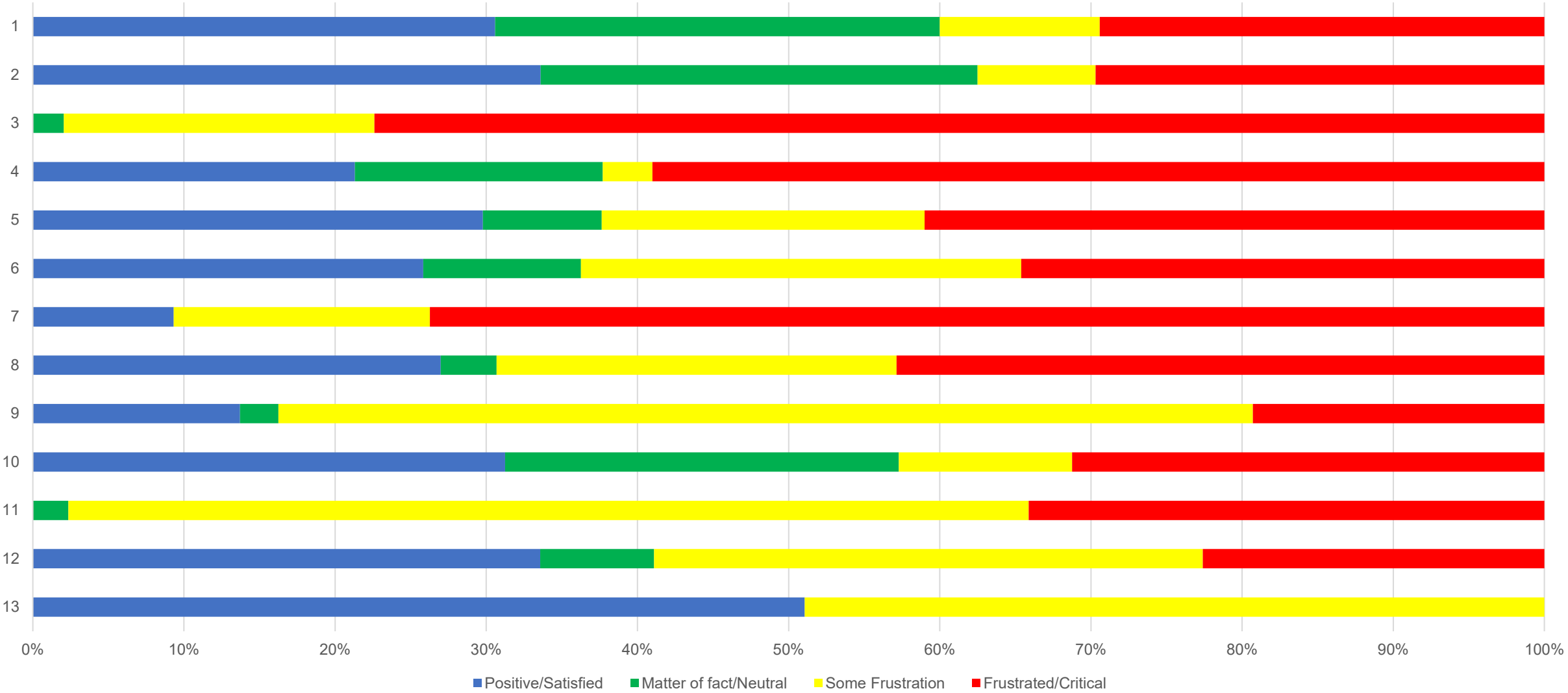
2021 Workplace Culture Assessment



Understanding one's current organizational culture is essential for determining how to move forward internal people and culture efforts. Oftentimes, top management and leaders within an organization miss the simple nuances that contribute to staff dissatisfaction and feelings of exclusion or marginalization. When companies are considering expanding Diversity, Equity and Inclusion efforts — specifically hiring more historically underrepresented employees — we encourage our partners to start first by asking their current workforce questions about their experiences, which is what the Port of Seattle has done. Asking the current workforce about their experiences helps eliminate current workplace tensions, helps refine practices that affirm the workforce, and helps reduce the probability of immediate tension when historically underrepresented staff are introduced into the workplace.

Workplace Change conducted individual interviews with 55 employees, focus groups with 46 employees, and 41 survey responses to create this report you are about to review. What follows is a summary of the direct feedback provided by the workforce, facilitator observations, and recommendations.

Port of Seattle 2021 Workplace Culture Assessment Heat Map



Port of Seattle 2021 Workplace Culture Assessment Questions

- 1) Do you feel like the Port of Seattle is a welcoming and inclusive work environment for Women of Color (WOC)? If not, why not?
- 2) The Port's equity goal in the Century Agenda is to develop a Port that mirrors the diversity of our community, instills principles of equity in its culture, and ensures a fair and intentional distribution of opportunities to expand economic development and quality of life for all. How well do you feel that the Port is demonstrating this goal? Please share one or two examples to support your thought.
- 3) Are there any barriers to people's success at the Port of Seattle? If so, please describe the barriers. Do barriers disproportionately affect some employees and not others? What does the Port do to remove barriers to success?
- 4) Describe the culture of the Port of Seattle (if the Port were a friend, how would you describe him/her/them?).
- 5) In what ways do you see the Port of Seattle investing in your professional development? Do you feel they invest in all employees the same way they've engaged you?
- 6) From a HR systems standpoint (e.g., leave, recruitment, benefits, compensation, flexible work arrangements, position descriptions, evaluations, employee relations, policies and procedures), what systems do you feel are strong, which systems would you like to see created? How could the Port better make these resources available to you?
- 7) Do you feel you are appropriately compensated and acknowledged for your contributions at the Port of Seattle? Please elaborate.
- 8) It is proven that when employees can be their authentic selves at their job, they are more satisfied. Are you able to be your full, authentic self in your current role at the Port? Why or why not?
- 9) What, if anything, could the Port do to make you more satisfied in your job or in being a member of the Port community?
- 10) Would you leave the Port if a comparable position came up at another company? Why or why not?
- 11) What are one or two things you would like to see changed at the Port of Seattle as it pertains to WOC, compensation and potential for development?
- 12) How does the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) reflect the Port's equity goals and objectives? Please describe your perception of the team's capacity and inclination to advance those objectives.
- 13) Please provide any further information that you feel would be helpful in advancing equity for WOC at the Port.

Question 1: Do you feel like the Port of Seattle is a welcoming and inclusive work environment for Women of Color (WOC)? If not, why not?

30.59%

(45) It is inclusive and welcoming for me, I can't speak for others. **Yes**, there are a lot of women of color (WOC) hired at the Port. **We're** getting there, I appreciate that the Port has taken steps to bring awareness and equity. **The** Equity department is working on trying to make it more equitable. **The** Port is showing commitment with Supervisor Equity training. **Yes**, but they still need to promote WOC.

29.41%

(30) I have seen work to improve a not-perfect system, they have made steps in the right direction; it may have been a different story a few years ago. **(15)** I feel the Port is starting to build awareness and make change with these focus groups, surveys and interviews. **Research** should be done to assess breakdown of WOC wages and leadership at the Port/within its departments.

10.59%

(10) Yes, inclusive, though not everyone is welcoming. **(2)** I believe there is a ceiling by which it is welcoming and inclusive; the Port has policies in place, but it doesn't always live by those values.

29.41%

(42) I don't think the Port is there yet. **The** Port is a difficult place for any woman, not just WOC. **As** a Latina Sr. Manager, I have experienced unwelcoming, offensive, and disrespectful behavior; I have to fight to be heard. **As** a WOC, no – it's a white male-dominated culture; men dismiss your ideas in meetings, when you speak you are considered a troublemaker. I feel like Black women do not have the same advancement opportunities as white women at the Port.

Question 2: The Port's equity goal in the Century Agenda is to develop a Port that mirrors the diversity of our community, instills principles of equity in its culture, and ensures a fair and intentional distribution of opportunities to expand economic development and quality of life for all. How well do you feel that the Port is demonstrating this goal? Please share one or two examples to support your thought.

33.59%

(34) I have had ample opportunity to grow professionally; I have a very supportive supervisor who encourages me and has a growth mindset; I work in a very diverse and supportive department. **(3)** WOC are being hired and promoted and equity, diversity and inclusivity (EDI) work is being supported. **Good.**

28.91%

(31) The Port is somewhat good at demonstrating its equity goals. **(2)** The internal systems need to support the Office of Equity & Diversity (OEDI). **Some** departments have better examples than others. **It** would be nice to have an OEDI representative present at the airport to assist/be an OEDI face for those in the AV division. **They** try; examples would be the OEDI and the Development & Diversity Council.

7.81%

(2) The Port is talking the talk, I want to see data and facts. **The** Port is clear about equity goals; however, outcomes seem to be lacking; as a supervisor I attended a mandatory 8+ hour racial equity training with no follow-up.

29.69%

(21) The people who represent the community are at lower levels organizationally and leadership is mainly white males; they don't care or have a backbone, they have to see the racism in order to act. **(10)** The Port is not doing well at all; while this is a goal, the numbers do not show a good picture; women in general, and WOC specifically, are not fairly represented in leadership. **(2)** **Opportunities** are given to those who are favored by management, not because of skill or experience.

Question 3: Are there any barriers to people's success at the Port of Seattle? If so, please describe the barriers. Do barriers disproportionately affect some employees and not others? What does the Port do to remove barriers to success?

2.05%

(3) Unsure.

20.55%

(14) It depends on where you work or who you work for; it appears there are barriers for Black women. (3) There are barriers, seen and unseen. (2) There are seen and unseen barriers; I am hopeful that this effort and others bring barriers to light, forcing them to be acknowledged and removed.

77.4%

(72) Age, tenure, being non-white, inability to assimilate well, poorly-skilled managers, the good ole boy network, popularity, being an introvert. (10) Leadership doesn't always hold people accountable/there are no consequences. (2) Desk jobs have more flexibility than frontline roles; the Port only offers trainings during shifts, we will not learn new skills if the Port isn't flexible. (2) There are so many barriers. (2) Success has a lot to do with your supervisor/manager; this disproportionately affects lower-level employees who are mostly POCs. Employee Resource Groups (ERG) participation with acceptable dialogue and the mentoring program.

Question 4: Describe the culture of the Port of Seattle (if the Port were a friend, how would you describe him/her/them?).

21.31%

(23) Awesome as it pertains to compensation/benefits/total rewards. **(3) Healthy/positive. Hours** and telework are great. **Friendly**, lots of opportunity for growth, ERG's offer tuition reimbursement. **Pretty** good place. **The** friend who says, "I hurt your feelings, what can I do to show that wasn't my intent?" – at that level the Port has integrity.

16.39%

(11) Just fine, neither good nor bad. **(11) Everything** is political. **(4) Innovative. Growth** mindset. **Somewhat** outdated, but they mean well. **Pay** is tricky. **Not** really a friend, but a work acquaintance.

3.28%

The Port is too decentralized, as a result it's hard to hold people accountable; too many cooks in the kitchen. **Outwardly** the Port looks good, but internally we have more work to do.

59.02%

(61) S/he means well and is growing in their struggle to be more inclusive, but the people in their inner circle are stunting progress. **(30) Unpleasant**; it could be better. **They** are not a friend to WOC, still in the good old boy network, they want to promote people that look like them and write job descriptions that exclude and put requirements in postings that can easily be learned on the job. **Inconsistent. Absent** to what's happening, it's an unhealthy environment. **I** do not trust the Port.

Question 5: In what ways do you see the Port of Seattle investing in your professional development? Do you feel they invest in all employees the same way they've engaged you?

29.78%

(40) My team is amazing when it comes to this. **(4)** The Port invests in us equally. **(4)** They are supportive. **(2)** Yes, they provide several professional development trainings, courses, and sessions. My boss encourages me to attend leadership classes (next year) and participate in professional associations; I have a great boss and have had different bosses and this experience is unique.

7.87%

(3) My department sent me to trainings and some of the classes didn't pertain to my job. **(2)** Professional development is happening, but workload makes it difficult to attend.

21.35%

(34) My department is very supportive, but I do not believe the Port supports all employees equally. I don't think every employee receives the same amount of attention/investment. There are clear differences and investments are defined by position and location. It feels like they invest in interns more than they invest in employees who have been here for 1-3 years.

41.01%

(60) I don't, I am locked into my position because I do not know how my skills transfer. **(4)** No, I don't think they invest equally. I hear that everyone is not treated the same, especially WOC; my onboarding experience did not set me up for success- I found out from others you could negotiate your salary. **Untenable** workload allows no time for professional development. **They** do not invest in employees; management gives you more work with no wage increase and HR insults employees.

Question 6: From an HR systems standpoint (e.g., leave, recruitment, benefits, compensation, flexible work arrangements, position descriptions, evaluations, employee relations, policies and procedures), what systems do you feel are strong, which systems would you like to see created? How could the Port better make these resources available to you?

25.82%

(37) PTO & work/life balance are very strong. (2) There are a lot of moving parts but with Katie Gerard leading HR they are heading in the right direction under her leadership. (2) Benefits and compensation are strong. (2) I feel supported and encouraged by the Port's HR team. Leave and benefits are strong.

10.44%

(16) I'm somewhat supported by HR systems.

29.12%

(20) HR needs to revamp onboarding. (11) Recruitment is the biggest challenge – position descriptions are inaccurate and often confusing, and compensation needs to be increased to attract good talent. (7) Performance evaluations/compensation are a major sore spot for many; I'm ecstatic we are in the process of reviewing/rewriting the current process. (2) We need more people in HR, we need a more robust HR department to run the Port. (2) Some job postings have a required level of education and I wonder if that's really needed.

34.62%

(52) Not sure, managers evaluate employees based on favoritism or what the department believes. Position descriptions and evaluations are the weakest systems. I don't ever see an HR representative. HR/recruiting... how can a department hire 10 people and there are only 1-2 new POC hired? The Port/HR need to make sure managers are qualified. I've seen employees share their issues with HR, but I've never seen a satisfying result achieved; if this continues, people will have no motivation to voice issues.

Question 7: Do you feel you are appropriately compensated and acknowledged for your contributions at the Port of Seattle? Please elaborate.

9.32%

(8) I feel supported, encouraged, acknowledged, and properly compensated. **(2)** Yes; pretty good work/life balance overall, compensation is reasonable for my contribution/work.

16.95%

(10) Initially I thought yes, but now I wonder if I'm paid fairly. **(2)** I do feel compensated properly because my manager looks out for me; that's not true for everyone. **(2)** I feel slightly undercompensated. I feel appropriately compensated because I fight for it; however, I'm not acknowledged by my supervisors for my contributions.

73.73%

(71) No. I was told that the Port does not give pay increases when you take on managing an employee. I'm finally being compensated for the work I've been doing, they waited until the end of my career to train and invest in me. **Not** at all, it took me ten years to fight for my pay increase. **No**, people are falling behind pay grades because their rates are not adjusted yearly. I do not; our reviews are tied to compensation and my manager only rates her favorites as high and strong. I should not make less money than someone with less experience. I'm on the low end despite what I am offering my department in skills and leadership. **The** Port salaries are not keeping up with the current economic rise. **No**, there is not an understanding of my work within the organization or HR, others are taking credit for my work, there's a lot of frustration.

Question 8: It is proven that when employees can be their authentic selves at their job, they are more satisfied. Are you able to be your full, authentic self in your current role at the Port? Why or why not?

26.98%

(37) Yes, I can be my authentic self 100% of the time. **(10)** Yes, I can, but it's not because of the Port. **Yes**, my team is diverse. **My** position is very independent, my manager and peers are supportive; I feel that I am in a good team and environment. **Yes**, I had an awakening during this pandemic which made me realize I still have a voice; I am no longer afraid of the retaliation.

3.7%

(2) I can be 60% authentic at the Port. **Somewhat**.

26.46%

(40) Yes, I can be authentic because I have that kind of manager/team; I wouldn't go to another group, this is not the norm. **(3)** **Not** really; I was told that I am being too direct with others and it hurts their feelings, I was asked to adapt and be more passive. **Yes**, I can be my full self, but it's only because I've "proven" myself, I did not feel this way when I started.

42.86%

(40) **No**. **(32)** **No**, I am not being my authentic self; this isn't what the Port wants...I play a role. **(4)** I am not able to be my authentic self in my current role; I'm not sure any role will allow me this – I'm a Black woman. **We** are not given the space/time to be authentic, supervisors talk over us and don't give credit when it is due. **No**, the Port is a very passive-aggressive place; if you have a big personality, they see you as intimidating, angry and/or aggressive; I stay to myself. **No**, I think my manager's goal is to get rid of me; I cannot be my authentic self.

Question 9: What, if anything, could the Port do to make you more satisfied in your job or in being a member of the Port community?

13.71%

(22) I believe the Port is making steps, I am very proud of the strides made in 2020-2021. (3) I am very satisfied at the Port.

2.54%

More engagement across departments, rewards and recognitions. Hold everyone accountable to do their job. We need a re-org.

64.47%

(30) Better evaluations and a program where managers are mentoring to elevate staff. (30) Provide more growth opportunities. (30) Address/solve/resolve issues around: equal pay, race, gender, favoritism. (10) Survey employees about mental health/ wellness. (10) Put programs in place to make Port leaders more representative of the communities we serve. (2) More internal promotions/career switches within the organization.

19.29%

(30) Develop a fairer and less subjective evaluation process. Management should not control low-wage workers. Management should not impede staff's career advancement.

Question 10: Would you leave the Port if a comparable position came up at another company? Why or why not?

31.25%

(22) No, I like being part of the change that is happening. **No**, because of the benefits. **No**, I have small children and the Port is family friendly. **No**, the possibilities are endless for me at the Port. **No**, I wouldn't want to start over and the PTO is worth a lot to me.

26.04%

(10) Yes, if the pay and benefits were comparable and the values aligned with mine. **(10) Depends** on the opportunity (salary, commute, do I have to relocate, and projects). I appreciate the stability of working at the Port during the pandemic, but I have considered applying at Microsoft or moving to a fully-remote position.

11.46%

(3) Yes, I would move on for the same pay and benefits with a more diverse team that is progressively moving toward being an equity-minded organization. **(3) Yes**, if I am frustrated with people and they are not pulling their weight.

31.25%

(25) Depends on the other company; I would leave because of poor management, a toxic work environment on our team, and/or being overworked. **(2) Yes**, keeping my eyes open. **(2) Yes**, the morale right now is not great. **Yes**, because I would get paid more, feel more appreciated, and not be stuck.

Question 11: What are one or two things you would like to see changed at the Port of Seattle as it pertains to WOC compensation and potential for development?

2.35%

More networking opportunities. **COLAs**. **Pay** equity analysis. **Hide** names when reviewing resumes.

63.53%

(50) More WOC acknowledged/encouraged to step out and take growth opportunities. **(18) Pay** me fairly. **(10) Hire** more BIPOC in management positions. **(4) Introduce** a leadership program specifically for WOC. **(3) Ensure** time for development. **(3) Fix** compensation, specifically for WOC. **Share** pay assessment/research about pay disparities between WOC and white men. **Take** meaningful steps to truly incorporate a culture of equity. **Truly** implement the findings of the compensation assessment; give increases where they should be awarded; at the very least, give increases for supervisors and incorporate COLAs.

34.12%

(45) Greater clarity on job grades; I have no idea why I have the grade I do compared to others. **(5) I** don't want to see WOC/POC/minorities promoted if they don't have the skills – it's a thing nowadays. **(4) OEDI** needs a backbone, they need to say you either follow this new policy or find another job. **POC's** are asked for feedback, feedback is given, leadership meets behind closed doors, and nothing changes.

Question 12: How does the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) reflect the Port's equity goals and objectives? Please describe your perception of the team's capacity and inclination to advance those objectives.

33.56%

(40) One exec walks the talk/is committed. I believe the CEO is leading by example, I hope the rest of the Port will follow. I think they are heading in the right direction. **They** are proactive, engaged and their presence is great. I believe one leader is a champion for change, I think the ELT is making great attempts at creating equity. **The** ELT does reflect the Port's equity objectives/goals, they just need to be more visible and get out in the field.

7.53%

(2) I don't know enough about what the ELT does to comment. **(2) The** Port's ELT are somewhat good at reflecting equity objectives/goals. **(2) I** don't feel a close connection/any connection to the ELT.

36.3%

(45) The ELT's goals should include a focus on internal Port staff and/or HR focus. **The** ELT is too far removed from the people at the Port. **Leadership** only meets with executives for ideas...we are workers, too, and we have ideas. **The** team does not reflect equity goals and are not able to fully advance them. **Everything** sounds good on paper, let's see more qualified POC in ELT.

22.6%

(31) Poorly; I do not see the Port's values reflected in my interactions with some ELT members. **They** are not walking the talk. **The** Port talks a good game, but is not living up to it; the executive level is not diverse, our commissioners are not diverse, much of our management team is not diverse.

Question 13: Please provide any further information that you feel would be helpful in advancing equity for WOC at the Port.

51.06%

(46) I appreciate the Port is having this very difficult discussion and is seeking honest feedback. **Prejudice** is hard to overcome for everyone, including WOC; I appreciate this opportunity and am grateful this is being built, I'm glad you all are doing this. **Thank** you for taking a deeper look into advancing equity for WOC at the Port.

2.15%

(20) **Change** the way we promote and recruit. **(10)** **Stop** doing the same thing and expecting things to change. **(2)** **Numbers/data** don't lie. **(2)** **Have** mentors for WOC, especially those that are in lower-tier jobs. **(2)** **Advance** WOC not because they are WOC, advance them because of skill, knowledge, and experience on the job.

Observations

Trust concerns were consistently shared regarding topics like compensation, promotions, hiring, FWA (flexible work arrangements), and other decisions a middle manager could unilaterally make. Many participants expressed that middle managers were not acting in support of DEI efforts broadcasted by Port leadership. Participants referenced leaders not “walking the talk,” however, these statements were predominately connected to leaders not holding middle managers accountable for upholding stated DEI values, which invariably led to inequitable outcomes- from their perspective.

Port staff are committed to the organization and want to see the Port of Seattle continue to grow and evolve in a positive direction. Assessment participants were encouraged by some of the changes they heard about over the past couple of years, now they want to see those changes move from being symbolic to something that is truly felt by employees at every level of the Port.

Port leadership have an opportunity to reinforce their stated DEI values by addressing the problem areas in their work environment. Assessment participants are hopeful that leadership will take a more proactive approach to implementing changes that will help women of color be successful at the Port.



Port of Seattle Recommendations

Leadership



- ✓ Accountability and Transparency: It is incredibly challenging to fix the issues highlighted in the Port's culture assessment primarily because there is deep-seated fear, suspicion, and division at the core of the concerns that were shared. Mandates for things such as applicant diversity likely won't shift outcomes; more accountability for progress and transparency around process and data are needed to shift perceptions and impact outcomes.

Recommendation: The Port needs more facilitated communication between leaders and managers about hiring, promotions, and compensation trends. During these facilitated discussions, Managers and leaders would discuss where progress is being made, and where progress is not being made. For example: leadership could hold bi-monthly meetings where all promotions, hires and pay trends disaggregated by race and gender are reviewed for gaps, inconsistencies, and by departments. This transparency and discussion would impact outcomes and daylight resistance.

- ✓ Access: Assessment participants expressed that 3rd shift employees and employees without email access are oftentimes left out of discussions.

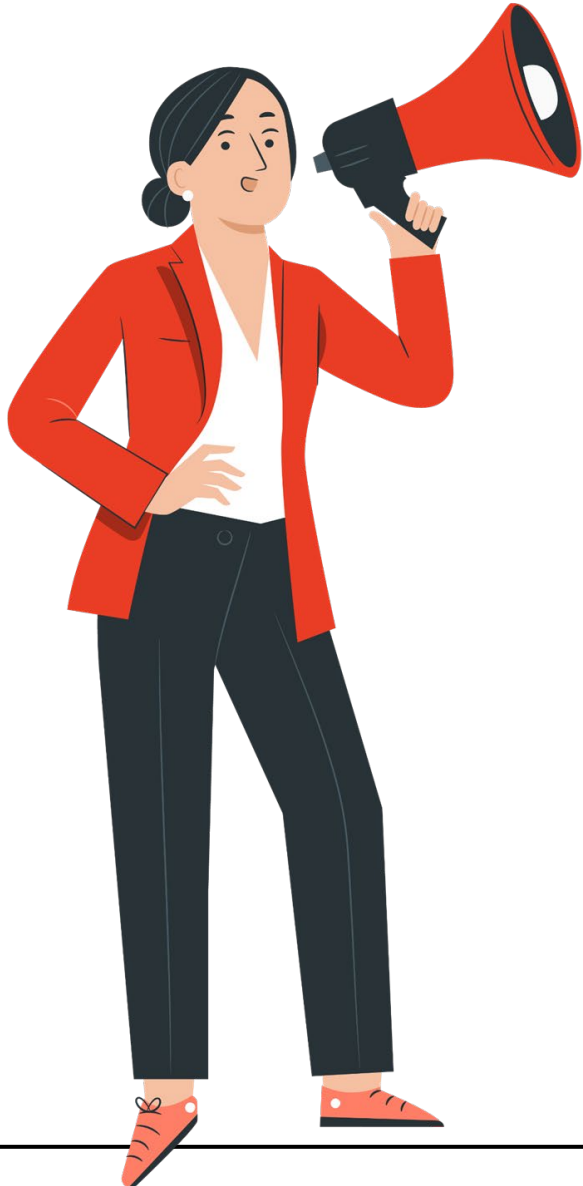
Recommendations: Equal access must be provided to 3rd shift workers (trainings, ELT meetings, focus groups, etc). Also, non-electronic communication channels must be consistently used to provide information to Port employees with limited or no access to the internet.

- ✓ Screening for DEI Competence: Many participants expressed concerns about middle managers' comfort with and commitment to DEI concepts.

Recommendations: Establish DEI evaluation criteria and interview questions for ALL manager recruitments. Also, require that a set percentage of finalists for ALL manager roles be from historically underrepresented communities. If you do not have the representation fail the recruitment.

Port of Seattle Recommendations

Human Resources



- ✓ Career Advancement: Many assessment participants expressed they do not understand how to advance their careers at the Port. They feel like White men have more support available to advance professionally. Also, participants consistently expressed they felt people were selected for promotional and stretch opportunities based on favoritism. They believe that leadership and HR are aware of this unfair system.

Recommendations: Establish and broadcast pathways for promotion(s) to all Port staff, and especially to women of color. Create a new, transparent process for internal promotions and actively work to disrupt favoritism (see Leadership recommendations- slide 19).

- ✓ Career advancement continued:

Recommendation: Launch a high-quality training and/or leadership program, establish diversity metrics for each cohort (WOC targets), and prioritize hiring participants into vacancies first.

- ✓ Career advancement continued:

Recommendation: Require an honest feedback loop for internal candidates who were not selected for positions for which they were interviewed.

- ✓ Additional recommendation:

There were major, alarming pay disparity concerns shared. Ensure the pay equity process is transparent and the algorithm for determining pay equity is made public.

There is low trust for going to HR/Legal about workplace concerns. Consider creating a 3rd Party platform for concerns to be gathered and addressed in a consistent, equitable manner.

Consider launching department-specific Culture Assessments to explore hot spots where staff are consistently complaining.

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