




INFORMATION REPORT

TO:	Mayor and Members General Issue Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	February 16, 2022
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Our People Survey Update (CM22001) (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
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Council Direction:

On November 23, 2015, Council approved report HUR15014 regarding the Our People Survey (OPS) and provided staff direction to proceed with a one survey approach for all City of Hamilton (City) employees. This was in follow up to Council's request for a corporate methodology, incorporating a unified approach for employee surveying that would occur every three years. The intent of the survey was to measure five key areas including employee engagement, workplace culture, workplace ethics and integrity, health, safety and wellness, and workforce census and demographics.

Background

In September 2017, the City launched the first Our People Survey (OPS) to all employees. This voluntary and confidential employee survey was executed by a third-party vendor, Metrics@Work, an expert in municipal engagement surveys. The key objective for the survey was to collect meaningful feedback from our employees that

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would lead to thoughtful actions, enhance employee engagement, improve performance, and enable higher levels of trust and confidence in our City government. The survey was approved by Council as a nine-year project, with a plan to survey employees on a three-year cycle starting in 2017, and re-survey in 2020 and 2023, with a goal to measure improvement to the 2017 baseline over time.

Under the guidance and support of Human Resources, the 2017 Our People Survey proved to be a success. Phases One to Four were completed on time and under budget, and staff have been engaged throughout the process.

In 2020, due to the COVID-19 Pandemic and the impact it has had on the way City employees operate on a day to day basis, Council approved the City rescheduling the second cycle of the Our People Survey from Fall 2020 to Fall 2021. Accordingly, the second Survey was completed in September/October 2021.

Similar to 2017, the City executed the 2021 Our People Survey in a confidential manner by having the same third party, Metrics@Work, receive and summarize all survey responses directly from employees. The key objectives of the survey, as in the first Our People Survey, was to collect meaningful feedback from our employees that will lead to thoughtful actions, which will ultimately enable higher levels of engagement, performance, and trust and confidence in our City government.

The Vendor

Metrics@Work is a leading provider of organizational performance measurement and consulting services. Their core service and expertise is with employee engagement surveys, action planning and organizational change, as well as leadership development aimed at supporting organizations that want to build and maintain productive and engaged workforces.

Zakary Rochon is the Lead Project Consultant and Managing Partner at Metrics@Works'. Zak was part of the original Brock University research lab started by Dr. John Yardley, that developed into Metrics@Work Inc. His background is in research design and psychometrics. He consults on survey development and the interpretation and presentation of survey results to all stakeholder groups. He holds an M.A. from York University and a B.A. in Psychology from Brock University.

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The 2021 Survey Process

Consistent with the 2017 Our People Survey, the 2021 Our People Survey will follow a similar process, which involved progressing through four key phases:

1. Phase 1 – Survey Launch (September – October 2021)
- 2. Phase 2 – Sharing Results (current phase)**
3. Phase 3 – Building Action Plans (Q2 – Q4 2022)
4. Phase 4 – Implementing Action Plans, and Monitoring Progress (Q4 2022 – 2024)

To ensure the overall success of this next cycle of the Our People Survey, many of the same approaches, processes and tactics used in 2017 were followed in the 2021 Our People Survey, with minor changes and improvements based on lessons learned.

In particular, the survey was supported by the Senior Leadership Team, along with a Corporate Steering Committee comprised of representatives from each department. The City again reached out to front-line employees to act as Survey Ambassadors. Where workload and COVID-19 related operations were the priority, additional support was provided directly by Human Resources. The City employed a comprehensive communication strategy to generate excitement and to ensure that staff were well informed of the survey.

The survey questionnaire for the 2021 Our People Survey remained largely the same as the 2017 Our People Survey, in order to benchmark the City's progress. However, it is important to note that very few Municipalities ran full engagement surveys since March 2020, and as a result, only pre-pandemic Municipal benchmarking is available at this time. Benchmarking available during the Pandemic is more readily available from the healthcare sector, therefore comparisons would be more heavily weighted with responses from the healthcare and hospital sector.

Some minor adjustments and additions were being made to better assist the City in understanding the success of programs and initiatives. This includes additional questions pertaining to psychological health and safety, leadership, and action planning efforts following the previous survey iteration to understand employees' perceptions of the progress and impact of action planning. Questions were also added related to employees' perceptions of the City's efforts to support them through COVID-19, including their experiences related to redeployment and working from home.

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Taking into consideration the numerous priorities, challenges and resource pressures faced by City employees during this time, the number of questions in the 2021 Our People Survey were reduced in order to facilitate a shorter completion time (from approximately 30 minutes to complete in 2017, to approximately 15 minutes to complete in 2021). Notably, the questions related to workforce census and demographics from the 2017 Our People Survey were removed, as this work has been transitioned and better facilitated through a voluntary employee Diversity Survey issued in 2020.

All permanent and temporary full and part time employees of the City of Hamilton were invited to participate in the survey, in addition to students and interns working at the City during the survey window. Contractors, City Council and Council Administrative Staff were excluded from participation in the Our People Survey. Accessibility to the Our People Survey was improved in 2021 by leveraging Howi and providing secure links to the survey, reducing the use of paper-based copies.

2021 Our People Survey Results

All City employees had the opportunity, on a voluntary and confidential basis, to participate in the 2021 Our People Survey. The survey was open to all employees on September 13, 2021 and closed on October 11, 2021. The purpose of the survey was to measure key areas which included Engagement, Culture, Workplace Ethics & Integrity, Health Safety & Wellness, and the City's Response to COVID-19. It was also an opportunity to gather meaningful feedback and ascertain the impacts of the Action Plans that were built and executed in response to results of the 2017 Our People Survey, so that the City can continuously improve the employee experience and related performance.

The City had 4417 respondents, which translates to a 62% overall employee participation rate. Although the participation rate is slightly lower than achieved in the 2017 Our People Survey, the percentage of employees who participated is still remarkable given the resource challenges, workload and impacts that COVID-19 has had on our employees. Notably, during the 2021 survey window, the City and our community was experiencing the 3rd wave of the COVID-19 Pandemic, a number of employees had been redeployed to support a number of COVID-19 and vaccine-related operations, Lodge employees were navigating an outbreak, and the City introduced the Mandatory Vaccine Verification Policy.

To highlight the significance of the participation rate even further, 24 out of 36 divisions achieved a participation rate of 80% or higher with 12 of those divisions achieving over

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90% participation. This high participation rate means the results reflect the experience of the majority of employees and the survey has correctly identified strength and opportunities. This feedback will be used to develop the next round of meaningful and relevant action plans.

Metrics@Work has analyzed the survey data and provided the City's result reports at the organizational, divisional and sectional, levels (see Appendix A).

Themes were consolidated based on written feedback as well, and although many of the same strengths identified within the survey were mirrored in the written feedback, comments also highlighted several opportunities for improvement at the organizational level.

Results have been reviewed with the Senior Leadership Team and will be shared with Divisional Leaders, with on-going plans to cascade results down through respective management teams to the front-line. All City leaders will be scheduling meetings to share the results to the front-line which is expected to take approximately 2 to 4 months, depending on the size of the department/division.

The Human Resources division will continue to support the City's leadership with respect to the action planning and implementation phases that will follow.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

Appendix "A" to Report CM22001 – Our People Survey Update

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