

# Q & A: Employee survey info sessions, December 2023

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Online information sessions were held on Wednesday, Dec. 13 and Thursday, Dec. 14, 2023, to provide employees top-level, organization-wide survey results from a survey conducted in the summer of 2023.

After the presentation on survey findings, Chief Operating Officer Marissa Madrigal, Deputy Chief Operating Officer Andrew Scott, Deputy Chief Operating Officer Holly Calhoun, Venues General Manager Steve Faulstick and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Director Sebrina Owens-Wilson addressed questions from employees.

Below are summaries of their responses during the Q & A portion of the session and questions submitted separately to [together@oregonmetro.gov](mailto:together@oregonmetro.gov). Additional context or clarifying information has been added to some responses provided during the information sessions.

## Findings report and recorded session

The top-level, organization-wide survey findings report and a recording of the Wednesday, Dec. 13 information session are available at [oregonmetro.gov/employeeenews](https://oregonmetro.gov/employeeenews).

## Questions?

Questions about the employee survey can be sent to [together@oregonmetro.gov](mailto:together@oregonmetro.gov).

## Wednesday, Dec. 13 questions

### 1. Did you look at differences in responses between people working at the MRC and at other sites?

While the survey does not ask questions about a specific Metro work location like the Regional Center, it does ask employees to identify their department and if they work primarily on-site, remotely or a mixture of on-site and remote (hybrid). That information allows the data to be analyzed based on one or both of those factors.

### 2. Can you talk more about what investments might be made for the theme on employees wanting more connection?

There are a lot of different reasons – and different ways – for employees to connect. It's important to make sure that we're offering meaningful opportunities when we're asking employees to come together. At an organization-wide level we need to continue our review of the survey results to understand more about what this theme means for different employee groups and what investments need to be made. We expect department-level action plans will also include actions around this theme.

Ideas for creating opportunity for connection were submitted through open-ended questions in the survey and a summary of those can be found on page 37 of the findings report. If you have ideas, please share them through [together@oregonmetro.gov](mailto:together@oregonmetro.gov).

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## 3. How will you look at the differences between groups?

Lexicon & Line, the consultant that analyzes Metro's employee survey results, provides different views of the data to help us better understand themes across different groups of employees. For example, data from employees working on site is analyzed with data from variable hour employees. This helps us better understand the experience of employees who belong to both groups. Additionally, Lexicon & Line provided a heat mapping analysis to better identify themes and understand the experiences of employees with intersecting identities.

## 4. As a leadership team, what was the most concerning trend you saw in the results?

- The need to improve communication practices overall including more two-way communication between employees and managers.
- Some employees are unsure how or where to report concerns, lack confidence that those concerns will be addressed appropriately and are not confident that they can report concerns without experiencing retaliation.
- The change in employees reporting that diversity, equity and inclusion is not a high priority for Metro as it has been in the past.
- There are still differences, some significant, in the experiences between employees who work fully on-site and those who work remotely.

## 5. Why does the "I have a best friend at work" question matter?

Since 2017 Metro has used the Gallup Q12 set of questions to gauge engagement. Gallup is an international research and survey company with a recognized and established approach for looking at employee satisfaction and connection. Gallup has found that if someone has a friend at work they can trust and rely on, they look forward to going to work, are more likely to report a concern, feel supported to grow in their work, and are therefore a more engaged employee.

## 6. Was there any attention to generational differences in responses? It seems like there are some emerging differences in opinion on in-person vs remote work etc.

The survey did not ask a respondent's age. Metro employees have a variety of roles, different work locations and both hybrid and in-person jobs. Departments are being asked to tailor engagement strategies specific to the needs of employees in their departments.

## 7. Some survey results showed employees would like continued investment and more leadership/follow through on diversity, equity and inclusion. What are some of the ways Metro leaders can support this goal?

In 2024 the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Department will begin a process to update Metro's Strategic Plan to Advance Racial Equity. This update is an opportunity to reaffirm Metro's commitment to this work and clarify efforts and goals that result in more equitable programs and services.

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**8. Did this survey specifically ask about more in-person work?**

No, the survey only asked if the respondent worked on-site, remotely or a mixture of both (hybrid), not their preference. Responses to open-ended feedback showed that opinions vary on in-person and remote work.

**9. How will you ensure directors and middle management are responding to the feedback and implementing strategies to address any negative feedback?**

This is the primary reason why Metro leadership invested in department-level reports with survey findings and recommendations. These reports will provide Metro departments and venues with the information needed to develop tailored approaches to improve work culture.

**10. Was the data examined by years served at Metro?**

No, the survey did not have a question about years of service.

**11. Can you talk more about the thoughts around increasing communication and helping people know what is expected of them?**

Through its data analysis Lexicon & Line recommended focusing on setting clear work expectations to encourage professional development and employee autonomy. A project is underway to revise the annual performance review process to help increase the frequency of meaningful two-way discussions between supervisors and employees. Metro's required training series for managers emphasizes ongoing communication and consistent coaching and relationship building.

**12. How do the reporting confidence numbers compare to the last survey? The presenter said that this year's numbers are concerning and need focus. Did they go down from last time? If not, what has been done this last two years to address these concerns? I seem to recall the same commitment, but I may be wrong.**

Metro's overall reporting confidence mean score did increase slightly from 2021, though not by a statistically significant measure. For reporting safety concerns, most employees selected *Very confident* or *Confident*.

However, compared to 2021, there were decreases in scores for all questions in the safety concerns category. "Metro handles reports of safety concerns appropriately" saw a significant decrease of 0.42 points.

As a result of reporting confidence scores in the 2021 survey, Human Resources invested in a tracking system to record concerns and incidents, which helps to identify and respond to patterns in the number of and types of concerns reported across the organization.

Every employee needs to know how and where to report concerns. We have to make sure concerns are addressed timely and appropriately. Most importantly, everyone needs to have confidence they can raise issues without fear of retaliation. Metro's leadership team is committed to ongoing investments in this work.

Looking to current, 2023 survey responses, we continue to have more work to do in this area. Every employee needs to know how and where to report concerns. We have to make sure concerns are addressed timely and appropriately. Most importantly, everyone needs to have confidence they can

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raise issues without fear of retaliation. Resources on reporting concerns for supervisors and employees are being developed and refreshed for more robust communications to employees.

**13. You mentioned that open responses shared thoughts about leadership strategy. Can you share some more specific themes and how this feedback will be considered by leadership?**

Lexicon & Line's findings report includes recommendations based on the data and the feedback and ideas employees shared in open-ended responses. Some data highlights include:

- When asked about ways to improve employee engagement, one in five respondents wished to see an improvement in Metro's work culture and called for more interaction with peers across departments.
- When asked to identify Metro's greatest challenge in achieving DEI goals, 31.5% of comments focused on the need for more leadership follow-through, less talk and more action, and stronger agency-level and department-level leadership.

How Metro materially responds to the survey findings is in the early stages of development. The consultant's recommendations on pages 37 and 38 of the report and the department-level action plans will inform strategy.

**14. Considering the pressure that the City is putting on businesses to bring employees back to the office and the positive results from our folks on the remote work, do you see any changes in the future around the telework options Metro is providing?**

There are no plans to change Metro's current Telework policy.

**15. How is Metro planning to address the need for devices (laptops) for specifically for Black or African American, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders, Latinx participants?**

Employees need to have the tools and resources to do their jobs, and need access to information on resources, benefits and how to report concerns. In 2021, the following question was added to the survey to help provide a better understanding of technology access across the organization: *During a work week, how often do you have access to a computer and are provided paid time to read Metro emails/updates or attend virtual town halls?*

Page 13 of the findings report lists some data insights on this question including:

- In 2023, 87% of respondents reported "I have regular access every week," 6% reported "I sometimes have access but not every week," and 7% reported "I do not have regular access."
- By race, Black or African American participants and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders participants were more likely to indicate that they either "sometimes have access" or "do not have regular access" (17% of Black/African Americans, 20% of Hispanic/Latino/a/x participants).

Strategies to remove barriers to access will vary by department based on employee feedback and operational needs of each department or venue.

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- 16. Thank you all for this and sharing this information. Can you touch on where folks may fall if they choose to not answer the survey? (the 44%) not just Metro but folks whom choose to not answer. Do they feel it isn't anonymous? Do they feel their opinion may not count?**

It is hard to predict the underlying reasons respondents chose not to answer certain questions. In the past, employees have raised concerns about anonymity. While communications to employees on the survey tried to emphasize that it was anonymous some employees may still have chosen not to respond due to lack of confidence.

**Will the statistical significant numbers be posted for the departmental data?**

Department data reports are analyzed to identify statistical significance with the data we have from respondents who participated in the survey. Statistical significance is a measure that tells us whether our data is meaningful. The greater the statistical significance, the more we should look closely at what those data points are telling.

## Thursday, Dec. 14 questions

- 1. Did you take into account the stage of the pandemic we were in in 2021? Did we look back over all the survey years?**

Similar questions have been used in the employee engagement survey since 2017, which allows Metro to compare trends over time. From 2021 to 2023, Metro's Q12 Engagement Mean increased significantly from 3.83 in 2021 to 3.92; and overall satisfaction increased from 3.75 in 2021 to 3.87 in 2023.

When the survey was conducted in 2021 there were some venues and departments that were still experiencing impacts of the pandemic in terms of available finances and therefore employee staffing. So, some employees that were working in 2018 were not working when the 2021 survey took place. Since then, many employees have been recalled to their positions and as result, 2023 participation returned to pre-pandemic levels.

The pandemic also changed the nature of remote and hybrid work for Metro. This factor is also considered when looking at survey results in 2021 and 2023.

- 2. Marissa mentioned at the top of the conversation that investments were made in training accessibility. I'm interested in gaining a deeper understanding of the specific nature of these investments and whether they were implemented before or after the introduction of the 2023 mandatory learning requirements. Throughout OCC's dedicated effort to complete the mandatory learning for 2023, we encountered significant eLearning accessibility issues that played a role in the overall employee experience and engagement. These issues encompassed inconsistencies in the user interface across modules, necessitating users to adapt to different navigation styles with each module. Furthermore, concerns arose regarding visual design aspects, such as color schemes, contrast, and font sizes, all of which are crucial components of creating a positive and engaging learning environment that aligns with adult learning styles.**

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The feedback on issues you encountered is helpful, and in some aspects, may reflect experiences in other work areas. Over the last several years investments in training accessibility focused on finalizing and implementing our required learning program to ensure all employees received a foundation of training on important policies. As part of this work, investments needed to be made to ensure that employees had access to technology workstations in areas conducive to learning. Programs with operational needs also had to make scheduling adjustments to ensure employees had paid time for training. The training team in Human Resources has begun offering required learning courses in person to also help address some of these needs.

While initial work largely focused on addressing physical access to technology, the next step is to ensure trainings are broadly accessible. For example, training content needs to be accessible for people with low-vision or those with different learning styles.

A possible area of investment could include updating trainings to follow best practices and standards used for Metro's public-facing website ([established by the Web Accessibility Initiative or W3C](#)). Teams will need to spend more time considering the feedback and how best to address needs across the variety of learning platforms Metro uses to provide learning content.

Employees who experience barriers in accessing training and resources, or who may need a reasonable accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) should reach out to Human Resources. To learn more about requesting an accommodation, or to put in a request, contact the Metro benefits team at [benefits.help@oregonmetro.gov](mailto:benefits.help@oregonmetro.gov) or visit [oregonmetro.gov/request-accommodation-disability-or-religious-belief](https://oregonmetro.gov/request-accommodation-disability-or-religious-belief).

**3. Did we have targets or acceptable ranges that Metro is contextualizing the scores? I understand the 0.10 statistical significance, but does an increase or decrease keep us within an acceptable range, or is any decrease considered equally important?**

One of the primary reasons Metro uses the Gallup Q12 engagement questions is that it allows Metro to compare its scores to thousands of other organizations in both the private and public sectors.

**4. Regarding accountability for leadership on racial equity in particular, are you planning on looking into this at all levels of leadership (e.g. managers up to COO office)?**

Everyone who works at Metro has a responsibility to promote belonging and to eliminate racial disparities in the services they provide. Leaders, from supervisors to positions at the Director and COO level have a higher degree of responsibility to ensure we are meeting commitments for programs and for our employees. In 2024 the update to Metro's Strategic Plan to Advance Racial Equity Diversity and Inclusion will begin. This update will include implementation strategies to improve follow-through and accountability.

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5. **Are there any financial considerations leadership has related to their ability to take action on some of the information they learned through the survey? What should staff know regarding how our finances could impact or support efforts to improve things for staff.**

New resources and improvements may require a financial commitment, but there is also a cost associated with having a workforce that isn't engaged or feeling part of a healthy and cohesive environment. There are many no-, and low-cost actions leadership can take to improve employee engagement. Work is just getting started to identify exact investments and the financial costs that might be associated with them in response 2023 survey results. In departments with staff budget advisory committees, employees can provide input around the investment of funds in engagement activities and strategies.

6. **Are these results being cross-walked with the demographic information of the people who have left Metro over the past 2 years? I'm concerned about the experiences of those employees, especially POC in light of some of the results.**

In order to retain employee anonymity, data has been disaggregated to remove identifying information so we can't compare if specific respondents who took the survey in 2021 took it in 2023.

Metro's Human Resources department does maintain a data dashboard that provides reports on employee turnover by demographic information and department or venue. This information helps us measure our ability to both recruit diverse workforce and create welcoming and inclusive spaces in order to retain that workforce.

**Sent to [together@oregonmetro.gov](mailto:together@oregonmetro.gov)**

1. **Could the significant differences in employee group responses over the years be due to a limited number of participants, and a few people giving different answers or turnover allowing larger changes than normal?**

Metro was still recovering from the economic impacts of COVID-19 when the 2021 survey was conducted. In some cases, departments were not fully staffed. Since then, many people who were previously employees have been recalled into their positions, and many vacant roles have been filled. Turnover could affect employee sentiment. The survey design does not account for this factor or a respondent's previous employment impact like a layoff.

2. **What is Metro doing with the data collected from the survey and is there a specific plan in development for moving forward?**

Currently, each director is being provided an in-depth analysis of survey results for their department and Metro's COO has asked them to develop action plans in response to those analyses.

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**3. What steps were taken after the Employee Engagement Survey in 2021 to show improvement before the most recent survey in 2023?**

In survey responses two years ago, employees shared feedback about wanting more news about Metro's priorities and successes, more professional development resources and more DEI training opportunities. In response, DEI has added contracts with new trainers and Metro Learning began offering a wider variety of courses. Survey feedback – along with the feedback of the Black and People of Color Employee Resource Groups – is also helping Human Resources build a new performance review process that is more equitable, better centers Metro's current values, and is more relevant employees and their work. Investments in employee communications were also made.

*See also: response to question 12, page 3 of this document.*

**4. Would Metro consider administering the survey in Person via Large/Small Group Discussions or 1:1's for staff that don't feel they can fully express themselves in the written survey?**

The online method for this survey is designed to provide an efficient, practical and consistent approach to collecting general data on an employee's experience working at Metro. However, it should not be the only option employees have to provide input. Providing a variety of ways for employees to provide feedback, in ways that are inclusive and equitable, is important.

**5. Would Metro allow staff to review the survey and discuss as work groups prior to filling out to better understand the questions?**

For future surveys we can consider providing opportunities to review and discuss the survey questions with work groups. It is important that our employees feel comfortable to participate in the survey and understand the questions.

**6. Will Metro be changing the questions periodically, or will they remain the same? Staff noticed many of the same questions from the 2021 survey.**

To compare survey results from year to year, best practices recommend consistent use of similar or identical language of questions. However, things can change. For example, diversity, equity and inclusion efforts were in early stages of development when questions on that topic were first used in the 2017 survey. As our work on DEI continues to advance, future survey questions may need to evolve as well.