WORKBETTER SOMERVILLE
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Presented By: Work Better Project Taskforce

September 29, 2022

ENTERING
INC. 1842
SOMERVILLE

Table Of Contents

Work Better Project Approach to Strengthening and Supporting The City's Workforce

Working as a municipal government employee is more than a job function. It is a commitment to the community and a responsibility to positively impact their lives and well-being. The City of Somerville is one of the most densely populated cities in the northeastern United States of America. Between residents, guests, students, businesses, etc., there can be anywhere from 80,000 to 100,000 or more people within the 4.2 square miles that make up the City of Somerville on any given day.

In the City of Somerville, the employees foster the unique character of our residents, neighborhoods, hills, and squares in which the strength of the community spirit is expressed from the history, the cultural and social life, and the deep sense of civic engagement.

As a city, we invest in the growth of a resilient economic base that is centered around transit, generates a wide variety of job opportunities, creates an active daytime population, supports independent local businesses, and secures fiscal self-sufficiency. The city also promotes a dynamic urban streetscape that embraces public transportation, reduces dependence on the automobile, and is accessible, inviting, and safe for all pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders.

The City of Somerville has built a sustainable future through strong environmental leadership, balanced transportation modes, engaging recreational and community spaces, exceptional schools, educational opportunities, improved community health, varied and affordable housing options, and effective stewardship of our natural resources.

While the City of Somerville is making progress with its commitment to continued innovation and affirms responsibility to current and future generations in all of our endeavors: COVID-19 had a major impact on the future of work and now the City of Somerville is *challenged with evaluating the immediate and longer-term impact of these trends and the degree to which they will change strategic goals and plans.*

COVID-19 and the City of Somerville Workplace Culture

In March of 2020, city buildings were initially closed for a "minimum of two weeks". But nearly two and a half years later, employees are still dealing with many of the impacts of COVID-19 on how the City of Somerville functions. Still, Organizations must remain vigilant according to (SHRM) *Society for Human Resources Management's,* "Strengthening the Workplace Culture- Global Culture Research Report". New economic trends, namely the Great Resignation, make it all the more imperative to prioritize culture. Based on SHRM's survey of workers from 12 different countries, workplace culture will spell the difference between success and failure in a post-pandemic world. Now is the time for us to focus on communication, accountability, transparency, trust and all of the other tenets of a strong work environment—one that puts the wellbeing of employees first.

Launch of The Work Better Project

The best workplace is one that cares for its employees and positions employee engagement as the catalyst for improving important organizational outcomes. Mayor Ballantyne understands well the need for strong workforce support to both improve the work environment for staff as well as the productivity of the organization. Together with Human Resources, her office set a plan to ensure this goal would remain front and center. Human Resources hired Eleshia Cash, an organizational development consultant to lead this initiative and assemble a Work Better Task Force composed of staff from relevant knowledge areas. The taskforce developed a plan to gather data from all city staff and recommend changes that will enhance the work life of the employee experience– and as a result, improve the delivery of services to the community.

The Work Better Task Force approach to the project is guided through the five pillars of Equity, Leadership, Workplace Culture and Environment, Feedback and Recognition, and Professional Development. The executive summary is an overview of what the taskforce learned from employees' shared experiences during the pandemic and over the past few years, as well as how the City of Somerville may integrate new strategies, capabilities, and resources to be ready for what may come next in an evolving workforce.

Vision

Taskforce Members

- Nikki Spencer */ Mayor's Office
- Ted Louis-Jacques / Veteran Services
- Steve Craig / Constituent Services
- Anne Gill* / Human Resources
- Ellen Schneider Collins* / Human Resources
- Eleshia Cash/ Human Resources and Organizational Development Consultant

- Lydia Lopez / Office of Housing Stability
- Bernabe Rodriguez / City Clerk's Office
- Irma Flores / Immigrant Affairs
- Megan Huckenpahler / Finance
- Dan Moore / Webmaster/Web Developer Communications
- Jason Piques* / Law Department

* Nonvoting members

Methodology

The Taskforce used both virtual focus groups, a popular qualitative market research method and an online survey, a quantitative methodology to capture the City of Somerville's employee experience (*excluding total rewards: the combination of benefits, compensation and rewards employees receive from their organization*) .

The City of Somerville's 2022 Employee Engagement Survey and Focus Groups were conducted from July 13, 2022 through July 27, 2022, guided by Eleshia Cash. The City of Somerville's SomerStat Department distributed the Employee Survey using an online surveying tool for employees with city emails and distributed paper copies by mail to employees who did not have an employee email on file.

In total, 264 Employees completed the 2022 Employee Engagement Survey in July (a 32% response rate overall, although some departments were substantially underrepresented, including Police and DPW, with response rates of about 10%). The demographic profile of the respondents generally matched the demographics of the City of Somerville employees with the exception of frontline employees without access to city email. The response rate for those employees, who are largely in the DPW department, was extremely low (five employees responded from approximately 90 mailed surveys). Therefore, the overall survey results are missing information from this group of employees, and the survey results of the DPW department are only representative of the office-based staff on that team. In order to correct for different response rates by department, the final results were weighted to the size of the department to correctly represent the city's workforce as a whole, with the exception of employees without access to email.

Methodology (cont.)

The purpose of the Work Better Focus Group was to discover, clarify and record themes regarding employee experience and workplace environment in extension to the survey, in order to help Somerville attract and retain the best, happiest, and healthiest employees they can be. The Focus Group research included 46 employees from various departments and various years of experience working for the City of Somerville.

The Taskforce designed solutions and recommended strategies that address both the employee experience and organizational needs based on the Snap Comms Employee Pyramid of Needs Framework. The solutions and recommended strategies are recorded in the Work Better Executive Summary.
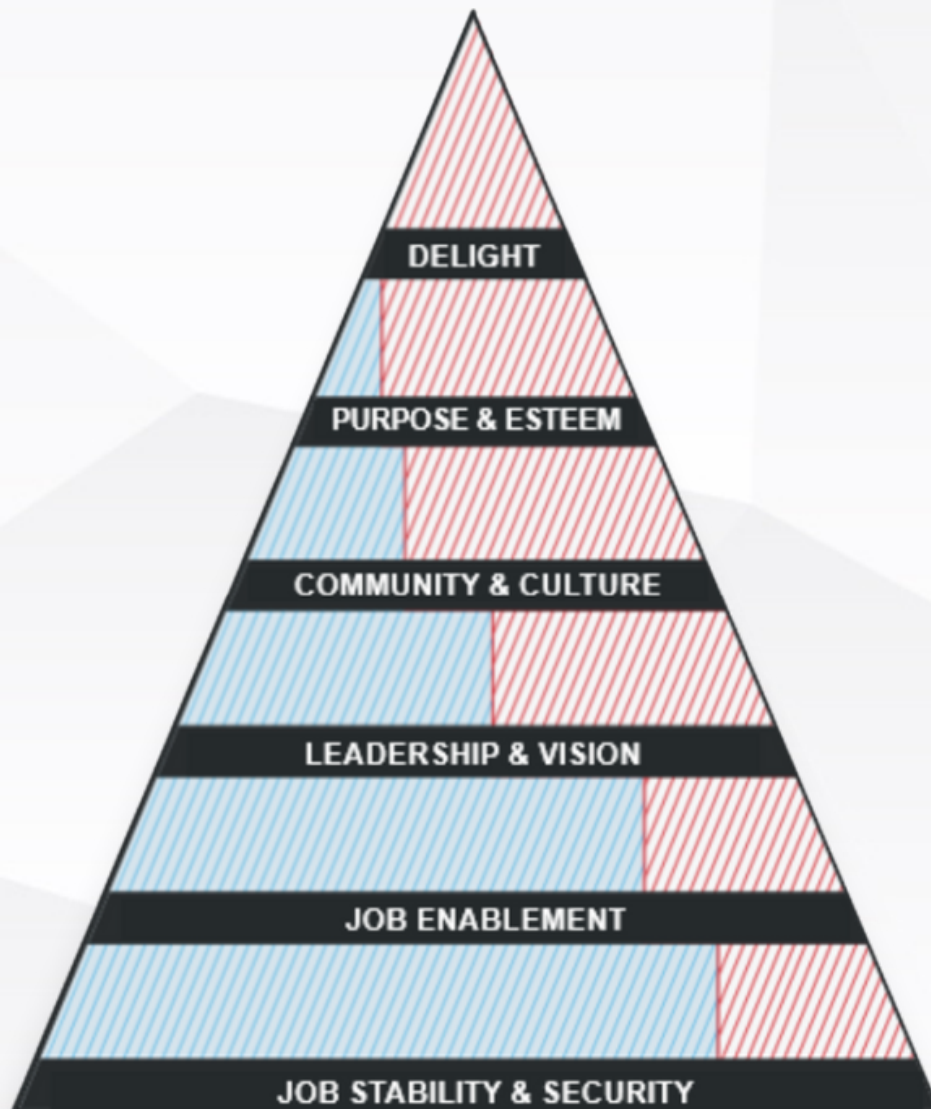
Photo Credited To Snap Comms
"The Employee Pyramid of Needs Framework"

KEY
FINDINGS

This section highlights five areas of celebration and five areas of opportunity. Celebration represents areas of work that employees feel like are going well in the City of Somerville, and they should be recognized. Opportunity represents areas of work where the city could benefit from on making targeted improvements. The comments are all based on the feedback from our employees.

Areas of Celebration

Overall, employees are engaged and thoughtful; the employee response rate to the survey and attendance at focus groups indicated that the City of Somerville's workforce is interested in discussion and collaboration on improving the work environment. Beyond the participation rate, survey takers were also thoughtful in their responses. Given five choices of responses (strongly disagree, disagree, neither disagree nor agree, agree, strongly agree), respondents consistently used the full range of available options. Very few employees responded, for example, strongly agree or strongly disagree across the board. Specifically, over 80% of respondents used four or five of the available five options; only 5% used only one or two. This shows that employees find at least some positive and at least some negative things about working for the City of Somerville, and that they are thinking critically about areas of strength and growth.

Additionally, 42% of respondents provided open-ended comments, with a median comment length of almost 400 characters (65 words), providing additional information and nuance to their responses.

Below are five key areas from the employee surveys and the focus groups that show how well the City of Somerville works.

City staff's pride in work

99%   **99% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement *"I am committed to producing the highest quality work for our residents/stakeholders."***

The highest agreement amongst all survey questions was displayed within the statement, "I am committed to producing the highest quality work for our residents/stakeholders," with 99% of respondents either agreeing or strongly agreeing to the statement. Additionally, people specifically wrote in comments showing their pride in their work:

> ***"The City of Somerville is a safe, supportive, and friendly community for residents, employees, businesses, tourists, and all. I feel honored and proud to have the opportunity to work in the City of Somerville."***

> ***"As a firefighter, I love serving my community and strive every single shift to give the best help to those in need. I really want to emphasize that you have a top notch group of firefighters that feel the same way."***

Employees enjoy the responsibilities that come with serving community

Working for the city can often be very challenging and stressful. However, employees from multiple focus groups indicated to their facilitators the enjoyment felt when they see the positive impacts their work has on the community, its residents, and guests. Supporting comments from employees include:

"The work we get to do is transformative and we are no doubt in an environment that is supportive of that work and of the wellbeing of our constituents. This drives much of our commitment to continue serving."

"I feel extremely happy and excited all the time to work for the City of Somerville and be able to create a safer environment for all of our residents with my knowledge."

"...I love serving my community and strive every single shift to give the best help to those in need."

"[I] [b]elieve the city overall, and most people who work for the city, are dedicated and passionate about their jobs."

There is a great willingness and desire for professional growth and improvement

83% 83% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement *"I participate in training and development opportunities that are available to me."*

Another theme that frequently came up in the Focus Group discussions and the survey data was what employees described as their responsibilities to the community through their jobs. Many taskforce members reported employees feedback that mentioned the person's desire to grow professionally. Members of the taskforce also found that cross departmental work groups would also be beneficial to employee development if resources and support was available.

Survey respondents agree. Employees report taking advantage of available opportunities: over 80% of survey respondents report participating in training and development opportunities available to them. Additionally, many comments expressed the commitment to continue learning and the desire for additional opportunities to do so:

"I really like my position and the opportunity to grow within the city."

"I have worked in my department for just over 1 year. It has been a challenging time of new leadership and growth. I have enjoyed the challenges relating to this position and the Department."

"Staff remains dedicated to the City's goals and to producing excellent work products, to working in concert with the Council and Administration, to continually increasing our knowledge, and broadening our skillsets so that we can serve the City well and be an asset to our colleagues."

Staff have repeatedly shown their abilities as far as creative problem solving

One item that was mentioned repeatedly by staff involved in the focus group sessions was the resilience of City employees. Not only did they continuously provide examples of their willingness to work creatively in order to solve problems that arise in their day-to-day responsibilities, but also their ability to think "outside the box" to help community members and coworkers alike.

High satisfaction with the immediate work environment (team and immediate manager)

85% 85% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement *"Our team's current activities reflect a strong focus on residents / stakeholders."*

74% 74% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement *"My manager is fair and even-handed in the treatment of all employees."*
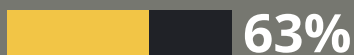
72% 72% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement *"My department works well together to accomplish our organization's goals."*

65% 65% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement *"My manager communicates a clear direction for my department / division / work."*

67% 67% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement *"I am recognized by my manager for my contributions."*

63% 63% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement *"My supervisor provides me with adequate feedback."*

84% 84% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement *"I know what is expected of me in my job."*

City of Somerville employees generally report a very high level of engagement among their immediate team and manager. For example, over 85% of survey respondents report that their team's current activities reflect a strong focus on residents and stakeholders. About three quarters of survey respondents agree or strongly agree with the statements that their manager is fair and even-handed, and that their department works well together.

Additionally, about two thirds of respondents feel recognized by their manager for their contributions and report that they get clear direction for their work and adequate levels of feedback from their supervisor. The vast majority of respondents also report having clarity around what is expected of them in their own role.

This overall high satisfaction with the immediate work environment is also reflected in additional comments that people made:

"I am happy here and feel I have a very strong team. We provide support for one another as well as hold each other accountable."

"I feel supported and learn from my boss."

"I love my colleagues. My supervisor is wonderful and accommodating, which to me, as a solo parent, is like a benefit in itself."
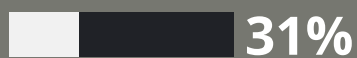
*"I like all the guys I work with and what I do for work."*

Areas that Present the Most Opportunity for Improvement

Below are five key areas that came up between the employee surveys and the focus groups that identify specifics on how the City of Somerville could improve.

The overall approach to the recruitment and retention of employees
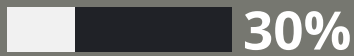
31% — 31% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement *"The benefits that the City offers are appropriate for my needs and those of my family."*
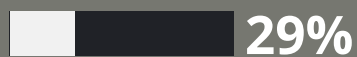
29% — 29% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement *"The City offers adequate support for working families (child care, elder care, etc)."*

As we navigate through a tight job market, the City of Somerville needs to implement smart and equitable recruitment strategies while focusing on retaining top talent at the same time. First, the city needs to focus on retention and then on recruitment. If the city can retain employees, that reduces the work to recruit new ones. Among survey respondents, statements relating to retention and promotion had a large contingent of negative responses; for example, about a third of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that the benefits provided by the city are appropriate for their and their family's needs and with the statement that the city offers adequate support for working families (child care, elder care, etc). Additionally, about a third of the respondents felt doubtful that they had a career path within their department or within the city generally.

30% **30% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement** *"Career paths exist for someone with my skills in my Department."*

29% **29% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement** *"Career paths exist for someone with my skills in the City."*

Many comments also expressed concerns with the pay and benefits levels (about 30% of the comments mentioned this topic), as well as reported concerns with the level of vacancies and retention issues on some teams:

"So many vacancies, we need more capacity in HR/recruitment but also systematic review of why things go unfilled/not good applicants, we are all drowning in work."

"We can not keep people in the department, because of management, pay, promotions, and job description issues."

"...in coming years, the pipeline for staff seems to be drying up..."

The lack of acceptable work facilities and individual workspace
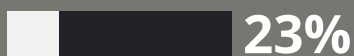
23% **23% of open-ended comments mentioned or focused on physical workspaces and building conditions**

Through the focus group comments, employees have strongly expressed their concerns on the conditions of city buildings. Nearly a quarter of the open-ended comments mentioned or entirely focused on physical workspaces and building conditions.

"My working conditions at the fire stations are inadequate and unsafe to be in due to mold, leaking pipes, the walls literally crumbling, no exhaust pipes for the engines, kitchens where we make meals being only feet away from exhaust pipes, and so much more. This has been an ongoing issue for years and I truly feel as though the city has done little to nothing to remedy the problems at these fire stations."

"Please do something about the awful conditions of this building!! Especially the air quality!! It's basically the worst building I've ever worked at in my 40 years of working."

"We need more public bathrooms in our buildings and more conference room spaces at city hall -- if / when in person meetings are fully back there is no place for some committees and commissions to have a proper public meeting space..."

"The building I work in was built in 1895... The last time it had a major renovation was 1937... It is outdated for current technology and equipment. There is no second means of egress from the second floor. The electrical system is overloaded. The restroom facilities are not up to code."

"It would be nice to have better working facilities (more space per person, more meeting spaces, and an updated space that is not falling apart/ugly)."

Technology needs are severely lacking or are under-supported in numerous areas

Understanding the lack of technology support is vital to our work. The data shows that employees productivity at work decreased due to lack of technology systems. We need fast and efficient access in order to evolve and create a new dynamic environment for our workforce. Open-ended comments flag many different technical barriers to doing their work well:

"The internet+wifi situation at the Annex building is abysmal, and a genuine hindrance to public-facing work, when we need to have residents access important documents from their phones, or even just making calls from work cellphones."

"Technology, hardware and software, are a mess. Poor computers, waiting months for software, having requests unanswered."

"As a manager, I don't believe that the needs of employees in departments doing a high volume of challenging and often stressful direct service work are adequately addressed. Technology and related support are inadequate due to understaffing and under resourcing. Software and practices related to payroll and recording of time off need updating so that employees can keep track of time accrued and spent."

"I am curious if the city has plans to implement a software to help HR with new hires, so there is less paper to complete. Since the use of online app would minimize the need to write personal info. over and over again."

"Updating from GoToWebinar to Zoom would be hugely helpful for staff and residents - GoTo is challenging on users and staff. It also doesn't allow for virtual backgrounds, which can make it hard for those who do not want to show their home environment in a recorded public meeting to participate fully. Similarly, not having a phone option is challenging for our team... It disrupts work life balance to receive phone calls from project teams, city councilors, and community members on a personal device."

Technology is a higher barrier for some departments more than others. While overall, about a third of respondents disagree or strongly disagree with the statement that they have the technology appropriate to their needs and those of the public, in some departments, like the Executive office, Fire, Infrastructure, and Strategic Planning & Community Development, that rate rises to over half of the respondents.
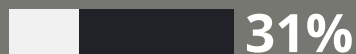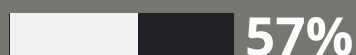
31% — 31% of **all respondents** disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement *"The technology available is appropriate for my needs and those of the public."*
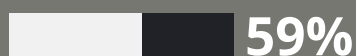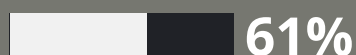
59% — 59% of respondents in the **Executive Office** disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement *"The technology available is appropriate for my needs and those of the public."*

65% — 65% of respondents in **Fire** disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement *"The technology available is appropriate for my needs and those of the public."*

57% — 57% of respondents in **Infrastructure** disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement *"The technology available is appropriate for my needs and those of the public."*

61% — 61% of respondents in **Strategic Planning & Community Development** disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement *"The technology available is appropriate for my needs and those of the public."*

The desire for ongoing training and employee career development

52% **52% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement *"I am given the training I need to do my job effectively."***

83% **83% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement *"I participate in training and development opportunities that are available to me."***

Career Development increases employee motivation and productivity. Attention to career development helps us in retaining valued employees and attracting top new recruits. Identifying clear short term and long term goals of learning new skills, finding purpose in one's work, and advancing are all examples of why ongoing training is important. Currently, only half of the survey respondents report that they are given adequate training to perform their job effectively, while more than 80% report participating in training and development opportunities available to them. Many employees specifically requested trainings in the open-ended comments:

"Would like to see management training."

"If there is one area where the City of Somerville can improve as an employer it is in the area of ongoing staff training and development."

"I feel that if there are future positions in our department, that we would be made aware ... and if not qualified be offered the training for that position."
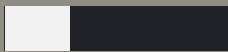
"I would like to see ... additional training opportunities be available & promoted. In municipal finance, we must seek out training opportunities relevant to our skill set; when we do, they are supported."

Communication by the City to staff and employee engagement

41%

41% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement *"The City does a good job communicating about changes or decisions that affect employees."*

29%

29% of open-ended comments mentioned or focused on issues related to communications or transparency from City leadership

Throughout the survey, focus group, and open comments, the data have shown consistent confusion around open lines of communication with management. The workforce's loyalty and commitment to the City of Somerville may suffer and can lead to higher turnover. There will be more friction, frustration, and confusion if the city does not able to have a cohesive, open culture. It often creates a tense environment where people are not motivated to be productive and not inspired to collaborate. In return, it will directly affect how employees relate to constituents and negatively affect the reputation of the City of Somerville.

Consistently, a large portion of survey respondents identify communication gaps and lack of support, especially coming from the City (Administration, Mayor's Office) rather than their direct team or management. For example, over 40% of respondents disagree with the statement, "The city does a good job communicating about changes or decisions that affect employees."

Many comments specifically call this out; about 30% of all comments mention an issue that's specifically related to communications and transparency from the leadership team.

"I wish there was a clearer set of goals and priorities from the Mayor, and that someone was working to organize all levels of staff to achieve those goals and mediate any disagreements, rather than just letting directors fight it out between themselves."

"There are many ideas and supports I try to have heard, but they are shot down as they go up the chain of command. It is difficult to be heard when ideas go against 'the way we've always done it'. It also feels like people are constantly speaking for me and I am not provided a platform to be heard outside of my Direct Supervisor."

"[T]his is not the first time we have participated in surveys and nothing was ever done to improve the quality of life."

"The amount of work, the untenable hours, the lack of concern from the past and now current administration regarding the well-being of its staff cannot continue... When we try to take our foot off the pedal in order to attain a better balance between work and 'life', we are quickly yanked back into the vortex of the same cycle. We need to be able to look to the administration as our partner in work and partner in safety."

TASK FORCE

RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE
THE EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE AND ORGANIZATIONAL NEEDS

Time & Effort Key

⏳ Effort likely requires 1-2 departments, WBTF, or consultant

⏳⏳ Effort likely requires coordination between multiple multi-department and/or consultant

⏳⏳⏳ Effort likely requires coordination between multiple multi-department and/or consultant over multiple years

STRATEGY 1: Job Stability & Security

Clarity around role scope, responsibilities, job function & expectations

- **ACTION 1**

Establish SomerFlex: A remote/hybrid work policy for the City of Somerville
One of the main pieces of feedback the task force received was a need for clear and concise communications on such policy, for existing employees and those new to the city. The City of Somerville considers telecommuting to be a viable, flexible work option when both the employee and the job are suited to such an arrangement. A remote/hybrid option may be appropriate for some employees and jobs but not for others. We will address the current space-capacity issues within city buildings; create transparency amongst staff, and build the foundation for larger-scale policy implementation.

- **ACTION 2**

Implement formal policies and procedures for eligible employees to ensure long-term success of SomerFlex
Employee and manager will evaluate the arrangement and make recommendations for continuance or modifications. An appropriate level of communication between telecommuter and supervisor will be agreed to as part of the discussion process and will be formal

- **ACTION 3**

Develop universal employee onboarding
Focus group attendees thematically agreed that the City of Somerville would greatly benefit from standardizing HR onboarding. Managers and supervisors have expressed that they had to reinvent the wheel every time they had a new hire, and that these makeshift orientation led to disparate experiences with new hires. New hires also felt lacking in not being formally introduced to the differences between the private and public sector, how City Council functions, and overview of citywide operations. A standard onboarding experience in-person led through HR and supported by department and division heads would allow folks to build community while learning about the basics of how the City operates. Guiding principles for training within divisions should also be established and communicated for new hires and interdepartmental transfers.

STRATEGY 2: Job Enablement

Tools and resources needed to perform

- **ACTION 1**

Develop & communicate a Strategic Plan to address physical space limitations
Physical space constraints can impede workflow and constituents needs, impact strategic planning and organizational growth in the City of Somerville. As a result, this creates privacy breaches when dealing with sensitive cases and information, risks in the form of increased operational costs, employee safety issues, fire hazards, and reputational loss. Our workforce is growing as we fill in vacancies and staff newly created positions. Still there is not enough room for all to work in person and there need to be mitigation strategies in place in the short term as well as a cohesive long term strategy for converting existing space, offsite work, and a long term plan with an understanding of current department needs and occupancy.

- **ACTION 2**

Streamline and improve IT Support
Both focus group attendees and survey respondents reported issues in lack of technology and support staff available to address day-to-day work functions. Comments related to both hardware needs as well as with the Help Desk Ticketing System currently managed via email. The committee recommends that the Mayor's Office in partnership with IT, explore solutions including additional staff or consultants/vendors that can build capacity to support the growing needs.

- **ACTION 3**

Development of procurement protocols for IT Hardware and Software
The City's employment pool is growing, with it the demands on IT hardware and software. Many survey respondents felt that they did not have the tools needed to complete their job functions, or if they did have the tools, bureaucracy and/or lack of transparency created a stop-gap in their work. One focus group task member recounted how their department had purchased the equipment they would need in order to begin their essential work functions, but the equipment lay in storage because only IT personnel could install the equipment. Another focus group participant noted that it took around 6 months from them to receive the software they requested in order to complete their work responsibilities

STRATEGY 2: Job Enablement (cont.)

Tools and resources needed to perform

- **ACTION 4**

Identify mechanisms needed to determine the eligibility of SomerFlex work options

Individuals requesting formal arrangements must have a satisfactory performance record. The employee and manager, with the assistance of Human Resources Department, will evaluate the suitability of such an arrangement, reviewing the following areas: employee suitability; job responsibilities; and equipment needs.

- **ACTION 1**

Provide all Employees with a COS email address and computer access, as well as COS Intranet

As we continue to evolve into a connected and collaborative environment, the way we communicate internally with our colleagues, and externally with partners and stakeholders play an important role in our success as an organization. In order for us to keep our very best employees, attract new talents, and provide next-level constituents' experiences, we need to embrace better communications. We know that speed is at the ultimate core of communication. Unified equity-based communication channels will enable our workforce to collaborate in a way that ensures streamlined operations, increased responsiveness to constituents and clients, and minimized downtime. Effective communication between the administration and the workforce develops healthy relationships and efficient workflow. In order to make processes and decision-making quicker and simpler, allow our workforce access to citywide email and communications from anywhere.

- **ACTION 2**

Uniform policies, procedures, and management practices across all departments

The City of Somerville needs to expand on this crucial aspect of our organization to operate effectively and successfully. It helps to provide a roadmap for day-to-day operations and ensure compliance with laws and regulations, give guidance for decision-making and streamline internal processes. Ensuring that all employees have access to policies and procedures will reduce the risk of liability. Consistency builds a healthy reputation and promotes consistency across the city, especially regarding employee touchpoints with constituents.

STRATEGY 3: Leadership & Vision (cont.)

Connection to decision-makers, value alignment

- **ACTION 3**

Creating a new "Emerging Leaders Program"

A new generation of leaders is emerging. What skills do these up-and-coming managers need to lead most effectively in this new era? Leadership is a continuous learning process, skill/competency, and value. A leadership program designed for early- and mid-career professionals and potential management candidates that will help the workforce gain confidence to take advantage of leadership experiences. This program will teach the skills, tools, and habits used by successful leaders. It will provide an understanding of how to act in real-time, mobilize knowledge for social change, provide the ability to make evidence-based decisions in a world of ambiguity, awareness of key policy areas affecting the well-being of the Somerville community, and finally the capacity to exercise moral leadership within our organization and structure our environment in ways that promote ethical decision making

- **ACTION 4**

Host a Citywide employee Town Hall to discuss the findings of the Work Better Task Force and discuss recommendations

Many participants of both the survey and the focus groups reiterated feeling disillusioned with the prospect of any 'real' changes to the workplace. For this reason, the Work Better Task Force strongly recommends that the Mayor's office host a citywide town hall for employees to discuss the findings and strategies.

- **ACTION 5**

Extend the Work Better Task Force functions until Approval of FY24

One of the key factors in employee 'buy-in' to the work of creating a better workplace was the themes of transparency and accountability. For this reason, the Work Better Task Force recommends that the taskforce continues meeting until the passing of the Fiscal year 2024 budget. Meeting times, frequency, and membership will be determined at a later date.
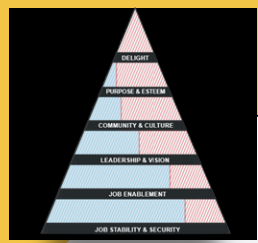
STRATEGY 4: Community & Culture

Belonging, unity, camaraderie

- **ACTION 1**

Monthly training on various topics related to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
Everyone in the city interacts in some way with folks with lived experiences different than theirs and all are responsible for serving the diverse constituents of Somerville. Therefore to ensure employees are all acting with equity, and reducing any inequities, we are recommending regular training to build on our collective knowledge of these topics. Training should be mandatory for employees with management or hiring responsibilities with an exploration into topics such as implicit bias, antiracism, building inclusive workspaces, and an exploration of white supremacy culture.

- **ACTION 2**

Create opt-in Affinity groups and Mentorship programs citywide to encourage community amongst coworkers
Throughout the city, employees are looking to build connections with those outside of their daily work, meet new people, and gain a better understanding of city operations. Affinity groups and a formal mentoring program would allow folks the opportunities to socialize and network with each other in ways that will build strong connections and encourage more collaboration across the city. Affinity groups will allow those in historically marginalized groups to engage across the city, and mentorship will allow anyone interested the chance to grow professionally as well. We recommend a call be placed for those interested to kick off such groups as they see fit.

- **ACTION 3**

Formalize equitable hiring practices
Employees around the city understand conceptually that we are aiming for a workforce that better reflects the constituents we serve. Focus group members did not criticize this practice but wanted to see it formally communicated internally to build morale, as well as externally to attract more diverse candidates.

STRATEGY 4: Community & Culture (cont.)

Belonging, Unity, Camaraderie

- **ACTION 4**

Creation of employee incentive programs for bilingual/multilingual speakers

The taskforce recognizes that the process of evaluating salary, labor, and benefits has already started with the total rewards compensation investigation, however, it stands to note that the issues raised on salary, work, and recognition in the survey responses and focus groups, demanded to be reported to the Mayor's Office.

STRATEGY 5: Job Purpose & Esteem

Recognition of achievements and contributions

- **ACTION 1**

Re-Implement Annual Performance Reviews for Non-Union Employees
50% of employees haven't had a conversation with their manager in the past 12 months regarding their progress. The pandemic fundamentally changed the nature of work for many departments. However many folks recognized the inequity of recent years when there has not been a formal communication on performance or reward for work that goes above and beyond expectations. To get the best out of employees, we need to recognize and compensate those who do well and provide structured feedback and action planning for those who do not.

- **ACTION 2**

Evaluate current retention strategies
Focus group data suggests that the "revolving door" of employees is a constant stressor for managers and employees alike. The taskforce recommends, evaluating current citywide retention strategies and presenting the findings to the Work Better Task Force and/or pertinent parties.

STRATEGY 6: Delight
Unexpected 'Wow' Moments

- **ACTION 1**

Incentivize alternative means of commuting

Many employees expressed dissatisfaction with car parking facilities available within the city. In the interim period before the Building Master plan is executed, there exists more opportunity in providing employees incentives to use alternative methods of transportation. The City of Somerville is principled in re-envisioning a green future and would benefit from subsidizing employees who choose to walk, bike, carpool, or use the MBTA systems. With the extension of the Green Line just behind City Hall as well as existing Red and Orange Line stations, the City is at a critical moment to encourage more green methods of commuting to work.

- **ACTION 2**

Improving pride in the City of Somerville Brand

Finding ways to increase the availability of "swag" (stuff we all get), to City employees to reward and acknowledge the efforts of staff as a way of increasing City of Somerville brand pride. Items should be useful/functional, as well as include City branding.

- **ACTION 3**

Make new experiences more accessible to City staff

Although giveaways can be difficult within a municipality, there are other ways to improve the employee experience. One recommendation would be to have food trucks or local food vendors come on-site to give employees some new food options and increase inter-office engagements.

- **ACTION 4**

Beautification of city buildings/spaces

Some of our working spaces throughout different city buildings need a facelift and renovation.

Organize a team effort of different departments to beautify common areas and shared spaces. New streaming natural light and airflow to offer a natural boost of well-being to the work day.

28

Appendix of Sources

1.**US Gallup WorkPlace Report 2021**

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