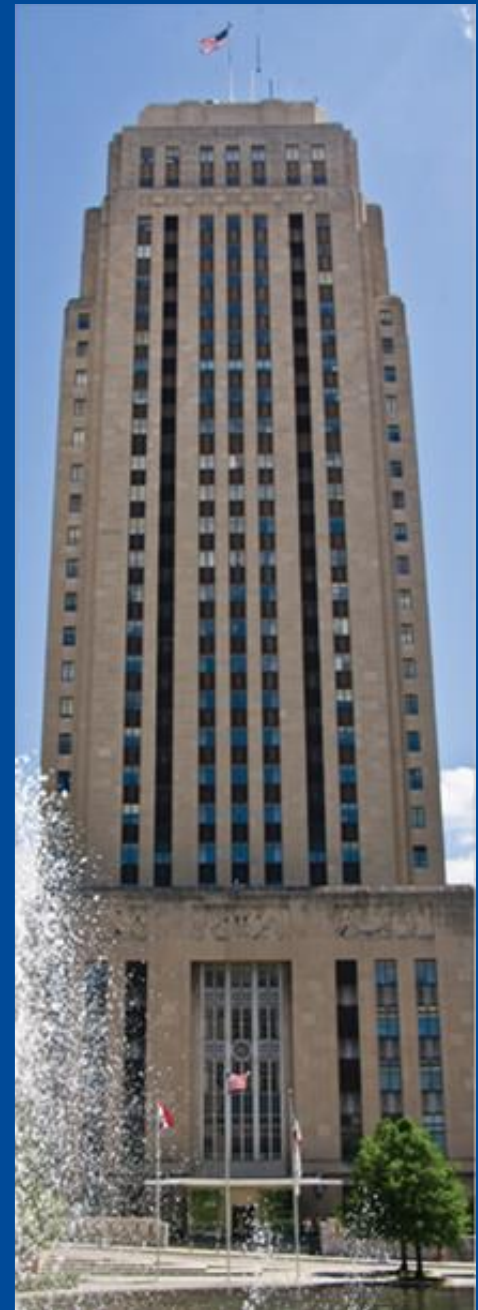




Office of the City Auditor
Performance Audit
August 2024

Listening to the Workforce 2024 Employee Ethics Survey



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08-2024



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August 5, 2024

Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council:

This audit of employee perceptions of the city's ethical environment focuses on the results of an employee ethics survey we conducted in March 2024. We surveyed all 4,469 active city employees using a web-based survey and received 869 responses. We also evaluated whether the city is following requirements in the city's code of ethics. For the first time, we added equity and inclusion questions in the employee ethics survey.

Employees' perceptions of the city ethical environment remain positive, however there are areas that have declined since our 2016 survey. About half of employees continued to agree that overall, the city is an ethical place to work.

Most employees report being familiar with the city's code of ethics and expectations for reporting unethical behavior. But, employee knowledge about how to handle ethical concerns was mixed. Longer tenured employees were more likely to positively report familiarity with the city's code of ethics, how to report unethical behavior, and how to find the city's ethics hotline number. Employees continue to be skeptical that unethical behavior will be detected and punished and some are concerned about retaliation for reporting unethical behavior.

Most employees continue to view their own department and supervisor's ethical tone as positive with both categories experiencing statistically significant increases. Employee perceptions of the ethical tone set by top city leadership significantly declined from previous survey results.

Most employees disagreed that their department management or elected officials asked them to do something that contradicted the city's rules and procedures. However, 94 employees agreed that they were asked to do so by their department management and 50 agreed they were asked to do so by an elected official. In 1999, the Council Ethics/Relations Committee noted individual councilmembers giving direction to city staff was inappropriate and recommended individual councilmembers use discretion when communicating with city staff and direct most communications to the city manager or department directors. Employees should report such concerns through the city's ethics hotline or the city's Municipal Officials and Officers Ethics Commission. We are currently conducting an audit of the city's ethics hotline to evaluate its operations.

Employees were aware of the city's equity and inclusion program and meaning of equity and inclusion, but less familiar with how to contact the Equity Office or request an equity investigation. Immediate supervisors and department management were rated higher as addressing perceived inequities in city policies that may exist regarding recruitment, hiring, promotional opportunities, grievance and/or disciplinary hearing procedures. Employees'

perception of top management's work to address workplace inequities was low and over 40% agreed they had experienced inequities in hiring, promotional, or grievance processes.

The city has not provided ethics training to employees since 2019 and is not distributing ethics handbooks to new employees as required by city code. The City Council added these requirements to the city's code of ethics to help improve the city's ethical environment. Employees who report they are familiar with the code of ethics were more likely to report they know how to report unethical behavior and that they are expected to report questionable ethical behavior of others in our survey results.

To help strengthen the city's ethical environment and improve employees' familiarity and understanding of the city's code of ethics we recommend the city manager provide city employees a current copy of the city's Ethics Handbook and ethics training as required by city code.

The draft report was sent to the City Manager on June 10, 2024, for review and comment. His response is appended. We would like to thank the city employees who took the time to complete the survey. The audit team for this project was Terry Bray and Jonathan Lecuyer.



Douglas Jones, CGAP, CIA, CRMA
City Auditor

Listening to the Workforce 2024 Employee Ethics Survey

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Introduction

Audit Objective

How do city employees perceive the city's ethical environment?

Our audit of employee perceptions of the city's ethical environment focuses on the results of a March 2024 employee survey. We surveyed all 4,469 active city employees with a web-based survey and received 869 responses. We compared current responses with 2016 survey results for statistical significance. We also reviewed compliance with ethics requirements in the city code. For the first time, we asked city employees their perceptions of the city's equity and inclusion environment.

We conducted this audit in accordance with Government Auditing Standards.

See Appendix A for more information about the audit objective, scope, methodology, and compliance with standards.

Background

Ethical Culture is the Foundation of Good Governance

Government is most effective when elected and appointed officials and employees follow ethical principles and act in the best interest of the people they serve. A high standard of ethics is one of the city's values in the Citywide Business Plan.

Periodically conducting an employee ethics survey can provide valuable information about the city's ethical environment. It also aligns with the Citywide Business Plan strategy to "Implement strategies for actively collecting and addressing employee feedback to enhance job satisfaction and organizational effectiveness."

The Office of the City Auditor conducted employee surveys in 2008¹ and 2016² that included questions related to the city's ethical environment. Additionally, we conducted audits of the city's past efforts to encourage ethical conduct³ and the city's hotline operations.⁴

¹ [Listening to the Workforce-2008 Employee Survey](#), Office of the City Auditor, Kansas City, Missouri April 2009.

² [Listening to the Workforce-2016 Employee Survey](#), Office of the City Auditor, Kansas City, Missouri April 2016.

³ [City's Efforts to Encourage Ethical Conduct](#), Office of the City Auditor, Kansas City, Missouri February 2011.

⁴ [Recommended Practices Would Strengthen Hotline Operations](#), Office of the City Auditor, Kansas City, Missouri August 2016.

Equity and Inclusion Important to City

The city's first Chief Equity Officer started with the city in 2022. This position serves as the city's steward for equity and leads efforts to create new policies that proactively implement programs and strategies to:

- Promote equity within the KCMO's internal structure and throughout the city, and
- Develop innovative approaches to address race and equity both internally, and citywide.

We developed equity and inclusions questions for the survey with the assistance of the Chief Equity Officer. We asked city employees questions about equity and inclusion to determine how familiar they are with this new office.

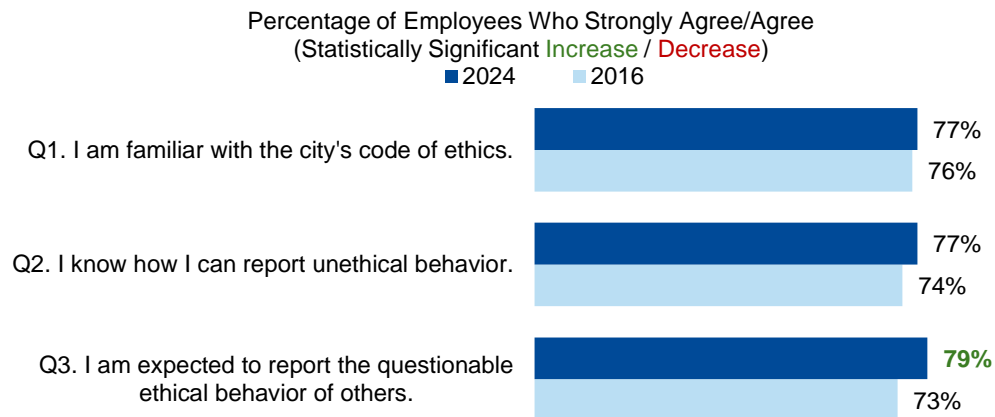
Survey Results

Employee Perceptions of the City’s Ethical Environment Has Changed

Employees’ Familiarity with Code of Ethics and Reporting Expectations Remain High

Respondents were familiar with the city’s code of ethics and reporting expectations. Employees reported they were familiar with the city’s code of ethics and how to report unethical behavior. Seventy-nine percent also agreed they are expected to report the questionable ethical behavior of others, a significant increase from the 2016 survey. (See Exhibit 1.)

Exhibit 1. Employee Familiarity with the Code of Ethics and Reporting Unethical Behavior



Respondents’ familiarity with the city’s code of ethics was significantly related to how they answered other survey questions. Those who reported they are familiar with the code were also likely to know how to report unethical behavior and rate the ethical environment of their departments and the city more positively. Survey respondents’ familiarity with the code of ethics is also significantly related to their years of employment with the city with less experienced employees less likely to agree they are familiar with the ethics code.

Employees are knowledgeable about how to handle ethical concerns with one exception.

Seventy percent of respondents reported knowing the city has an ethics hotline. However, only one-third of employees reported knowing how to request and ethics advisory opinion. (See Exhibit 2.) Those who knew how to find the phone number of the ethics hotline reported being more likely to know how to request an ethics advisory opinion from the city’s ethics commission.

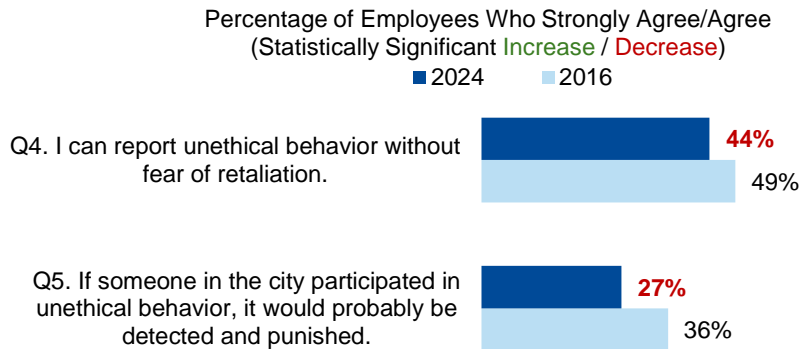
Exhibit 2. Employee Knowledge of How to Handle Ethical Concerns



Employees Are Skeptical Unethical Behavior Will Be Detected and Punished, Some Fear Retaliation for Reporting

Perceptions related to retaliation from reporting unethical behavior and the detection and punishment of unethical behavior are low and declining. Forty-four percent of respondents believed they could report unethical behavior without fear of retaliation. Less than a third of respondents agreed that if someone participated in unethical behavior it would probably be detected and punished. (See Exhibit 3.) Both questions experienced statistically significant decreases.

Exhibit 3. Employee Perceptions of Retaliation, and Detection and Punishment



Reporting unethical behavior without fear of retaliation is strongly correlated with the detection and punishment of unethical behavior. Respondents who were likely to fear retaliation for reporting unethical behavior were also highly likely to believe unethical behavior would not be detected or punished.

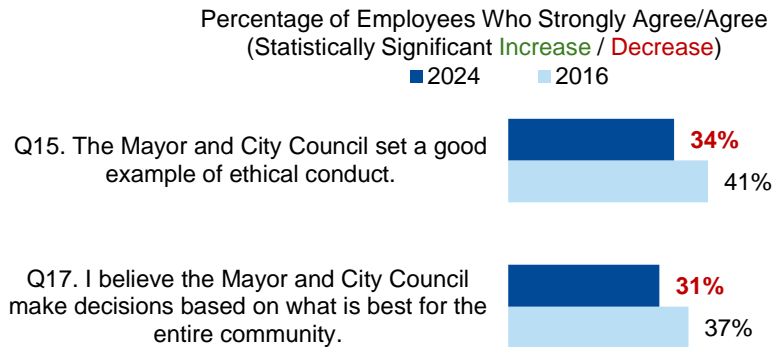
Employees' Perception of Ethical Tone of City Leadership has Declined, View of Direct Management Stayed Positive

City employees' perception of the city's ethical tone at the top declined significantly from 2016. This year, fewer survey respondents agreed city leadership set a good example of ethical conduct.

Perceptions about elected officials decreased significantly.

Survey respondents rated elected officials significantly lower than they did in 2016 for setting a good example of ethical conduct. The percentage of respondents who agreed that elected officials make decisions based on what is best for the entire community is low and decreased by six points from 2016, a statistically significant decline. (See Exhibit 4.)

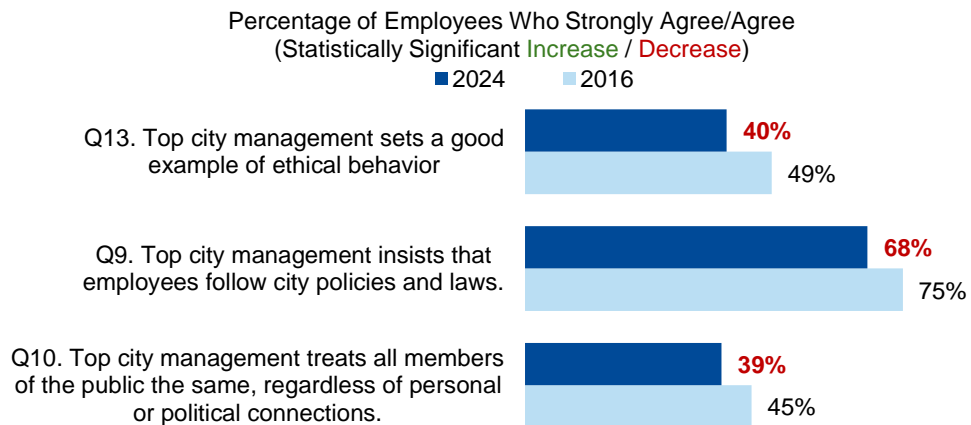
Exhibit 4. Employee Perceptions of Elected Officials



Employees’ perception of the ethical tone set by top city management declined significantly.

Forty percent of respondents agreed that top city management sets a good example of ethical conduct, a significant decrease, compared to the 2016 survey. Additionally, thirty-nine percent of respondents agreed that top city management treats all members of the public the same, regardless of personal or political connections. Despite low perceptions of top management’s ethical tone, about two-thirds of survey respondents agreed that top city management insists that employees follow city policies and laws. (See Exhibit 5.)

Exhibit 5. Employee Perceptions of Top City Management⁵

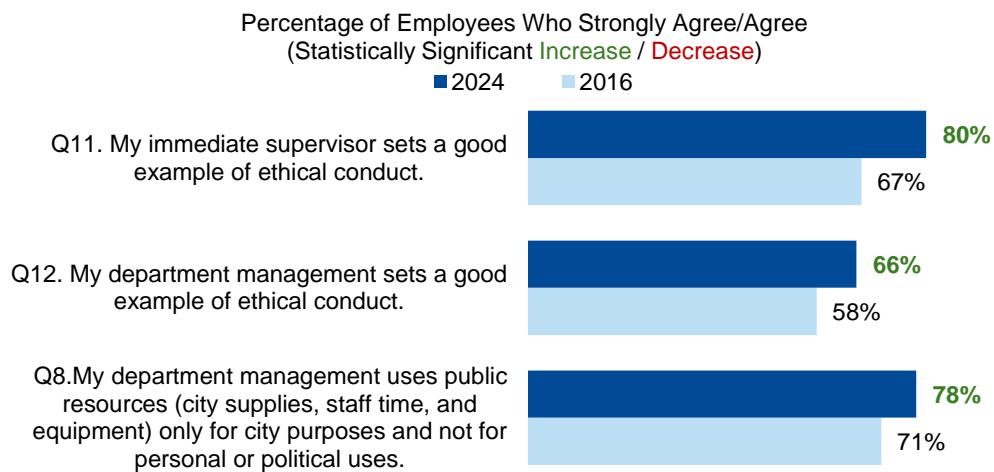


⁵ The survey defined top city management as the city manager, assistant city managers, department directors, and deputy directors.

Responses to the ethical tone at the top are related to how employees responded to many other survey questions. Those who agreed that department management or top city management sets good ethical examples are more likely to agree they can report unethical behavior without fear of retaliation. They also tend to rate the ethical environment of their department and the city more positively. Respondents who disagreed that management set a good ethical example were more likely to disagree that unethical behavior will be detected and punished.

Employees’ perceptions are positive about the ethical tone set by their direct department management. Eighty percent of survey respondents agreed their immediate supervisor sets a good example of ethical conduct, a significant increase from 2016. Most respondents agreed their departments’ management sets a good example of ethical conduct and use public resources (city supplies, staff time, and equipment) only for city purposes and not for personal or political uses. (See Exhibit 6.)

Exhibit 6. Employee Perceptions of Immediate Supervisors and Department Management⁶



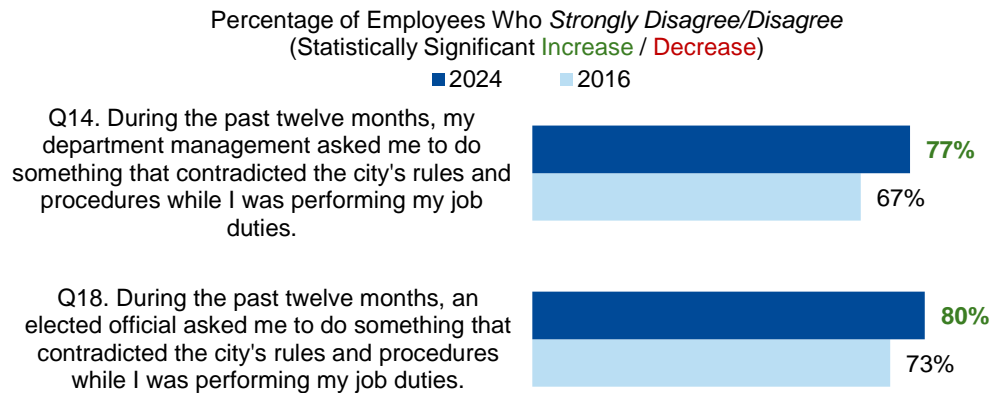
Most survey respondents *disagreed* that their department management or elected officials asked them to do something that contradicted the city’s rules and procedures while performing their job duties. These are significant improvements compared to 2016. (See Exhibit 7.) In the last twelve months, however, 94 employees agreed they were asked to do something contradicting the city’s rules and procedures by their department management and 50 agreed they were asked to do so by an elected official.

Communications between individual councilmembers and city staff creates risks. City staff could misinterpret a request for information as a directive or conversely the councilmember could have intended to give direction. Another risk is city staff could perceive the request as inappropriate or unethical when that is not

⁶ The survey defined department management as department directors, deputy directors, managers, and supervisors.

the intent. The *Report of the Council Ethics/Relations Committee* (February 1999) noted that individual councilmembers giving direction to city staff was inappropriate. The committee recommended "...individual councilmembers use discretion when communicating with city staff. Individual councilmembers should direct most communications to the city manager, his assistants, department heads, or their designees."⁷

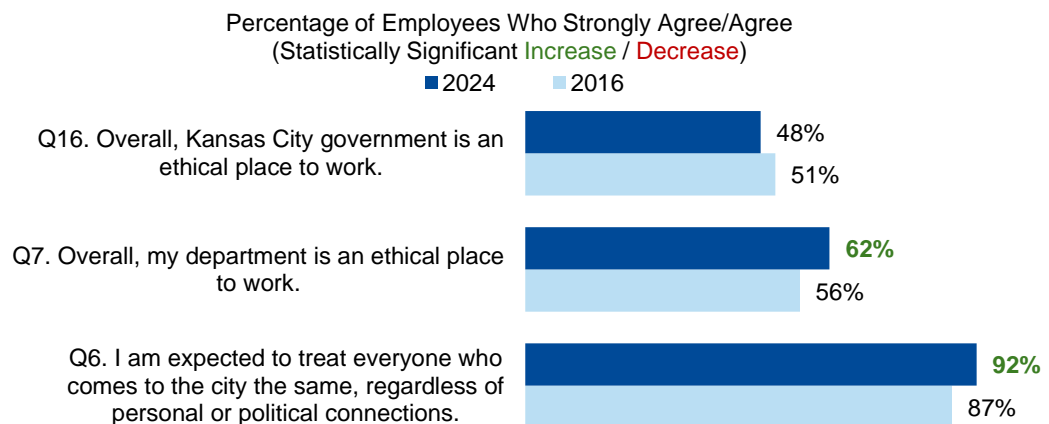
Exhibit 7. Employee Perceptions of Inappropriate Requests



Organization-Wide Perception of Ethical Environment has Remained About the Same.

Close to half of survey respondents agreed that overall, Kansas City government is an ethical place to work, statistically similar to the results in 2016. A little less than two-thirds of respondents also agreed that overall, their department is an ethical place to work. Most respondents reported that they were expected to treat everyone who comes to the city the same, regardless of personal or political connections. This is a significant increase from 2016. (See Exhibit 8.)

Exhibit 8. Employee Perceptions of the Overall Ethics of Department and City



⁷ [Report of the Council Ethics/Relations Committee](#), Council Ethics/Relations Committee, Kansas City, Missouri, February 1999, p.10.

A positive perception of the ethical environment strongly correlated to the positive perceptions of the ethical behavior of the top management and elected officials. Those who reported their department or the city is an ethical place to work also tended to believe they can report unethical behavior without fear of retaliation.

Employee Perceptions of the City’s Equity and Inclusion Environment

Equity and inclusion questions were new to the employee ethics survey this year and no comparison data is available. Overall, most respondents were familiar with the meaning of equity and inclusion but mixed on how to contact the Equity Office or request an equity investigation.

Employees’ Understanding of Equity and Inclusion

Sixty-eight percent of respondents reported understanding what top city management means by equity and inclusion and that the city has an Equity Office. Fifty-one percent knew how to contact the office. Only about one-third of respondents reported knowing how to request an equity investigation. (See Exhibit 9.)

Exhibit 9. Equity & Inclusion Office

QUESTION	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree
Q22. I understand what top city management means by equity and inclusion.	68%	18%	14%

QUESTION	Yes	No
Q30. I know the city has an equity office.	68%	32%
Q31. I know how to contact the equity office.	51%	49%
Q32. I know how to request an equity investigation of systemic practices and procedures from the equity office.	36%	64%

Perception of Workplace Equity Practices Mixed

Sixty-seven percent of employees agreed their immediate supervisors and department management work to address workplace inequities in city policies that may exist regarding recruitment, hiring, promotional opportunities, grievance and/or disciplinary hearing procedures. More than one-third of respondents agreed that top city management works to address those workplace inequities in city policies.

Over forty percent of respondents agreed that they had experienced potential inequities in city hiring, promotional opportunities, grievance and/or disciplinary hearing procedures. (See Exhibit 10.)

Exhibit 10. Equity & Inclusion Recruitment, Hiring, Promotional Practices

QUESTION	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree
Q23. My immediate supervisor works to address any inequities that may exist regarding recruitment, hiring, promotional practices, grievance and/or disciplinary hearing procedures.	67%	19%	14%
Q24. My department management works to address any inequities in city policies that may exist regarding recruitment, hiring, promotional practices, grievance and/or disciplinary hearing procedures.	53%	23%	24%
Q25. Top city management works to address any inequities in city policies that may exist regarding recruitment, hiring, promotional practices, grievance and/or disciplinary hearing procedures.	38%	35%	27%
Q26. I have experienced potential inequities in city hiring, promotional opportunities, grievance and/or disciplinary hearing procedures.	44%	19%	37%

Perception Split on City's Efforts to Address Equity and Inclusion in Service Delivery

Sixty percent of respondents agreed their department management worked to create city programs and policies that deliver services equitably in the city. Less than half of respondents agreed that city officials and top city management work to create city programs and policies that deliver services equitably in the city. (See Exhibit 11.)

Exhibit 11. Equity & Inclusion Service Delivery

QUESTION	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree
Q27. My department works to create city programs and policies that deliver services equitably in the city.	60%	27%	14%
Q28. Top city management works to create city programs and policies that deliver services equitably in the city.	43%	36%	21%
Q29. The Mayor and City Council works to create city programs and policies that deliver services equitably in the city.	41%	37%	22%

Management Should Provide City Employees with Ethics Handbook and Periodic Ethics Training

CITY VALUE

“A high standard of ethics through transparency, meeting our commitments, and treating everyone with respect.”

Citywide Business Plan 2025-2029
p4.

In 2013, the City Council adopted a new code of ethics to strengthen the city’s ethical environment by providing employees an ethics handbook and ethics training to strengthen the city’s ethical environment.⁸ The current Citywide Business Plan identifies a high standard of ethics as one of the city’s foundational values to guide city operations. An ethical work environment helps retain quality employees, increases productivity, reduce risks associated with misconduct, and sustain public trust and confidence.

The City Has Not Distributed an Ethics Handbook to New Employees

City code requires the city manager to distribute an ethics handbook to each employee within the first month of their employment at the city.⁹ Staff report they discontinued distributing paper copies of an ethics handbook to staff at some point because of the printing expense. Staff stated that no ethics materials are distributed during employee onboarding. While the Law Department located the existing print version of the ethics handbook, they do not have a digital version. Human Resources staff were unsure who created the ethics handbook.

Human Resources staff believe city’s code of ethics is not written in a way for staff to easily understand. An ethics handbook should provide new employees with a quick reference guide to important resources. The ethics handbook should include the city code of ethics, Missouri state statutes and city administrative regulations related to ethical conduct and may also include information about how to report unethical or questionable behavior, and examples and scenarios to help demonstrate the city’s ethical expectations.

Recommendation

To ensure city employees receive a current copy of the city’s Ethics Handbook the city manager should update and distribute a copy of the city’s ethics handbook to all city employees.

⁸ Code of Ordinances, Kansas City, Missouri, [Sec. 2-2001](#).

⁹ Code of Ordinances, Kansas City, Missouri, [Sec. 2-2003.\(b\)\(1\)](#).

The City Has Not Conducted Citywide Ethics Training Since 2019.

City code requires the City Manager to periodically provide all employees ethics training.¹⁰ The last required citywide employee ethics training occurred from January-March 2019. The Human Resources Department does not provide ethics training as part of new employee orientation. Human Resources stated they are working to develop new ethics training.

Employee years of employment with the city were related to how they answered other survey questions. Employees with more than six years of experience rated questions more positively about their familiarity with city code, how to report unethical behavior, and about the city's ethics hotline. Providing an ethics handbook and training for all employees will help improve their familiarity with and understanding of the city's code of ethics.

Recommendation	<p>To improve city employees' awareness of the city's code of ethics, the city manager should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure ethics is a topic included in new employee orientation and • periodically provide ethics training to all employees
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Recommendations

1. The city manager should update and distribute a copy of the Ethics Handbook to all city employees.
2. The city manager should ensure ethics is a topic included in new employee orientation.
3. The city manager should periodically provide ethics training to all city employees.

¹⁰ Code of Ordinances, Kansas City, Missouri, Sec. [2-2003\(b\)\(2\)](#).

Appendix A: Objective, Scope and Methodology, and Compliance Statement

We conducted this performance audit of employee’s perception of the city’s ethical environment under the authority of Article II, Section 216 of the Charter of Kansas City, Missouri, which establishes the Office of the City Auditor and outlines the city auditor’s primary duties.

A performance audit provides “objective analysis, findings, and conclusions to assist management and those charged with governance and oversight with, among other things, improving program performance and operations, reducing costs, facilitating decision making by parties with responsibility for overseeing or initiating corrective action, and contributing to public accountability.”¹¹

Why We Did This Audit

An ethical work environment helps retain employees, increase productivity, reduce risks associated with misconduct, and sustain public trust and confidence in the government. Resident satisfaction scores for how ethically the city conducts business decreased in Fiscal Year 2023 from Fiscal Year 2016. In the current Citywide Business Plan, the City Council has established, as one of their values for city government, a high standard of ethics through transparency, meeting commitments, and treating everyone with respect.

The City Auditor’s Office last surveyed employees about the city’s ethical environment in 2016. The 2016 survey found that employees’ perceptions of the city’s ethical environment had improved since our 2008 survey and most employees agreed that Kansas City government is an ethical place to work. An employee ethics survey will gauge the city’s current ethical environment and identify areas for improvement. In this year’s survey, we will include additional questions to gauge employees’ perceptions of equity practices in Kansas City government.

Audit Objective

This report is designed to answer the following question:

- How do city employees perceive the city’s ethical environment?

¹¹ Comptroller General of the United States, [Government Auditing Standards](#) (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2018), pp. 10, 11.

Scope and Methodology

Our audit focuses on the results of an employee ethics survey we conducted in March 2024. We surveyed all 4,469 active city employees using a web-based survey and received 869 responses. We received responses from all city departments.¹²

We used the city's employee email distribution list to send an email to all city employees. On March 6, 2024, we sent emails to all active city employees who had a city email address and an email with a link to the web-based survey. We sent a follow-up email on March 18, 2024, and the survey closed on March 20, 2024.

City Communications posted a message for us on myKC, the city's intranet site, to remind city employees to take the survey.

We compared the survey results with those of our 2016 survey and identified statistically significant changes. A total of 869 of the 4,469 City employees completed the 2024 survey (a 19% response rate). The overall results have a 95% level of confidence with a margin of error of +/- 2.98%. The 2016 survey had a total of 2,005 of the 4,410 City employees completed the survey (a 46% response rate). The 2016 survey's overall results have a 95% level of confidence with a margin of error of +/- 1.62%.

We also reviewed city compliance with ethics requirements in the city code.

New this year, we also asked city employees their perceptions of the city's equity and inclusion environment.

Statement of Compliance with Government Auditing Standards

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. No information was omitted from this report because it was deemed confidential or sensitive.

Scope of Work on Internal Controls

Other than compliance with city code, which is addressed in the body of the report, we determined there were no internal controls relevant to the audit objective and the scope of the audit.

¹² We did not survey employees in the Police Department because they are a state agency.

Appendix B: 2024 Ethics Survey Results and Comparison to 2016 and 2008 Survey Results

2024 Ethics Survey Results and Comparison with 2016 & 2008 Employee Survey Results

A shaded cell indicates a statistically significant difference between survey years.

Ethics Questions	2024			2016			2008		
	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree
Q1. I am familiar with the city's code of ethics.	77%	15%	8%	76%	16%	8%	80%	13%	7%
Q2. I know how I can report unethical behavior.	77%	11%	12%	74%	13%	12%	74%	13%	13%
Q3. I am expected to report the questionable ethical behavior of others.	79%	12%	9%	73%	17%	10%	66%	22%	12%
Q4. I can report unethical behavior without fear of retaliation.	44%	23%	34%	49%	20%	31%	41%	21%	38%
Q5. If someone in the city participated in unethical behavior, it would probably be detected and punished.	27%	29%	44%	36%	29%	35%	30%	32%	39%
Q6. I am expected to treat everyone who comes to the city the same, regardless of personal or political connections.	92%	3%	5%	87%	7%	6%	91%	5%	5%
Q7. Overall, my department is an ethical place to work.	62%	18%	20%	56%	22%	22%	55%	25%	20%
Q8. My department management uses public resources (city supplies, staff time, and equipment) only for city purposes and not for personal or political uses.	78%	13%	10%	71%	17%	12%	68%	17%	14%
Q9. Top city management insists that employees follow city policies and laws.	68%	17%	15%	75%	15%	10%	72%	17%	11%
Q10. Top city management treats all members of the public the same, regardless of personal or political connections.	39%	28%	33%	45%	26%	29%	32%	32%	35%
Q11. My immediate supervisor sets a good example of ethical conduct.	80%	10%	9%	67%	17%	16%	64%	16%	20%
Q12. My department management sets a good example of ethical conduct.	66%	16%	18%	58%	21%	22%	54%	19%	27%
Q13. Top city management sets a good example of ethical conduct.	40%	33%	27%	49%	31%	20%	30%	37%	33%
Q14. During the past twelve months, my department management asked me to do something that contradicted the city's rules and procedures while I was performing my job duties.	12%	12%	77%	15%	18%	67%	Not asked in 2008		
Q15. The Mayor and City Council set a good example of ethical conduct.	34%	37%	29%	41%	36%	23%	18%	29%	53%

Ethics Questions	2024			2016			2008		
	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree
Q16. Overall, Kansas City government is an ethical place to work.	48%	31%	21%	51%	32%	18%	33%	44%	22%
Q17. I believe the Mayor and City Council make decisions based on what is best for the entire community.	31%	33%	36%	37%	31%	32%	26%	27%	47%
Q18. During the past twelve months, an elected official asked me to do something that contradicted the city's rules and procedures while I was performing my job duties.	8%	12%	80%	10%	17%	73%	Not asked in 2008		

Ethics Questions	2024		2016		2008
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
Q19. I know the city has an ethics hotline.	70%	30%	67%	33%	Not asked in 2008
Q20. I know how to request an ethics advisory opinion from the city's ethics commission. ¹³	35%	65%	38%	62%	
Q21. I know how to find the phone number of the ethics hotline. ¹⁴	66%	34%	58%	42%	

2024 Equity and Inclusion Questions (New in 20204)

Equity and Inclusion Questions	2024		
	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree
Q22. I understand what top city management means by equity and inclusion.	68%	18%	14%
Q23. My immediate supervisor works to address any inequities that may exist regarding recruitment, hiring, promotional practices, grievance and/or disciplinary hearing procedures.	67%	19%	14%
Q24. My department management works to address any inequities in city policies that may exist regarding recruitment, hiring, promotional practices, grievance and/or disciplinary hearing procedures.	53%	23%	24%
Q25. Top city management works to address any inequities in city policies that may exist regarding recruitment, hiring, promotional practices, grievance and/or disciplinary hearing procedures.	38%	35%	27%

¹³ In 2016, this was question 21.

¹⁴ In 2016, this was question 20.

Listening to the Workforce 2024 Employee Ethics Survey

Equity and Inclusion Questions	2024		
	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree
Q26. I have experienced potential inequities in city hiring, promotional opportunities, grievance and/or disciplinary hearing procedures.	44%	19%	37%
Q27. My department works to create city programs and policies that deliver services equitably in the city.	60%	27%	14%
Q28. Top city management works to create city programs and policies that deliver services equitably in the city.	43%	36%	21%
Q29. The Mayor and City Council works to create city programs and policies that deliver services equitably in the city.	41%	37%	22%

Equity and Inclusion Questions	2024	
	Yes	No
Q30. I know the city has an equity office.	68%	32%
Q31. I know how to contact the equity office.	51%	49%
Q32. I know how to request an equity investigation of systematic practices and procedures from the Equity Office.	36%	64%

Demographics		2024	2016	2018
Q33. How many total years have you been employed with the city	Under 1 year	10%	10%	2%
	1-5 years	24%	19%	22%
	6-10 years	16%	18%	21%
	11-15 years	12%	15%	16%
	16-20 years	11%	16%	14%
	More than 20 years	27%	22%	24%
Q34. What is your supervisory status?	Non-Supervisor	59%	64%	61%
	1 st Line Supervisor	19%	21%	24%
	Manager	21%	14%	15%
Q35 What is your Gender?	Female	44%	32%	42%
	Male	56%	68%	58%
	Non-Binary	<1%	Not asked	Not asked
Survey Format	Electronic	100%	64%	0%
	Paper	0%	36%	100%
	Total Surveys	869	2,005	303

Appendix C: City Manager’s Response



Inter-Departmental Communication Office of the City Manager

RECEIVED

JUL 01 2024

Date: June 28, 2024 **CITY AUDITOR’S OFFICE**

To: Douglas Jones, City Auditor

From: City Manager Brian Platt *bb* Digitally signed by
Brian Platt
Date: 2024.07.01
10:24:41 -05'00'

Subject: Response to Performance Audit: *Listening to the Workforce 2024 Employee Ethics Survey*

1. *The city manager should update and distribute a copy of the Ethics Handbook to all city employees.*

Agree / Agree in Part / Disagree. The City Manager’s Office will ensure that the ethics handbook is revised and updated and distributed to all employees.

2. *The city manager should ensure ethics is a topic included in new employee orientation.*

Agree / Agree in Part / Disagree. I will direct Human Resources to include ethics as a topic in new employee orientation.

3. *The city manager should periodically provide ethics training to all city employees.*

Agree / Agree in Part / Disagree. I will direct Human Resources to provide annual training on ethics and ethical behavior to all city employees on at least an annual basis.

Other feedback

See Appendix D for the city auditor’s comments regarding the city manager’s additional comments.

This survey provides a helpful consolidation of the perceptions of our employees and it is clear that additional training and communication is needed broadly related to ethics and ethical behaviors. We will be focusing on adding and rebuilding a variety of trainings for employees and supervisors for ethics and other management skills in general. That said, we have a few opportunities for improvement for the next ethics survey:

- 1) It is unclear if our employees have a consistent definition or understanding of ethics or ethical behavior, and how employees might interpret certain statements or behaviors differently. This relates to the need for additional training, education, and communication around this topic, but as a result it is possible that responses are skewed in every direction because of this.
- 2) This survey does not identify any actual or specific issues with the behaviors or actions of employees or managers nor can a direct connection be established here between the perception of employees and any actual wrongdoing (or lack thereof). Future audits related to ethics should include an audit of the Ethics Hotline, investigations of the Ethics Commission, and other related HR investigations and complaints to ensure that we better

understand if actual improper, unethical, and/or illegal activities are taking place and to help us address and resolve them or if there simply is a perception issue here.

- 3) It would be helpful to understand employee sentiments and perceptions within specific departments to determine if certain departments are better or worse.
- 4) The transition from this survey being completed on paper, in person, in group settings, and with audit staff observing to a fully private, anonymous, and digital survey tool needs to be taken into account more prominently when discussing trends over time. This is likely a significant influence in the types of responses received.

Appendix D: City Auditor's Comments on the City Manager's Response

Under Government Auditing Standards, when an audited entity's response comments are inconsistent with findings, conclusions, or recommendations or do not adequately address recommendations, auditors should evaluate the comments. If they disagree, auditors should explain in the report their reason for disagreement with management's comments.

This appendix is the city auditor's comments to comments made by the city manager in addition to his response to this audit. The city manager's response is Appendix C.

City Manager's additional comments

- 1) It is unclear if our employees have a consistent definition or understanding of ethics or ethical behavior, and how employees might interpret certain statements or behaviors differently. This relates to the need for additional training, education, and communication around this topic, but as a result it is possible that responses are skewed in every direction because of this.

City Auditor's comment:

The purpose of this survey was to gauge city employees' perceptions about the city's ethical environment and 77% reported they were familiar with the city's code of ethics. Employees also reported fear of retaliation for reporting the unethical behavior of others and a perception that those undertaking unethical actions will not be detected and punished. (See page 4.) Additionally, when asked if they were asked to do something contradicting the city's rules and procedures, 94 employees agreed they were asked to do so by their department management and 50 agreed they were asked to do so by an elected official. (See page 6.) Employee perceptions are important and should not be dismissed. These perceptions influence how employees act. The possibility of misunderstanding is important in communications between councilmembers, top management, and other city staff that could lead to unintentional or intentional unethical actions that reflect poorly on the city.

The city manager should listen to employee perceptions and determine how to address voiced concerns. One step the city manager can take is to provide employees an understanding of the city's code of ethics and expected ethical behavior by implementing our recommendations to update and distribute an ethics handbook to all city employees and conduct ethics training for city employees as required by city code. (See pages 10-11.)

City Manager's additional comments

- 2) This survey does not identify any actual or specific issues with the behaviors or actions of employees or managers nor can a direct connection be established here between the perception of employees and any actual wrongdoing (or lack thereof). Future audits related to ethics should include an audit of the Ethics Hotline, investigations of the Ethics Commission, and other related HR investigations and complaints to ensure that we better understand if actual improper, unethical, and/or illegal activities are taking place and to help us address and resolve them or if there simply is a perception issue here.

City Auditor's comment:

The purpose of this survey was not to identify specific instances of wrongdoing or measure the extent of unethical behavior. However, employee perceptions of wrongdoing and the ethical environment are important as described in my response to the previous comment.

The city manager should be able to get information regarding specific instances of wrongdoing from his staff (the internal auditor) who administers the city's hotline and investigates those complaints.

Additionally, the city manager is aware that we are undertaking an audit of the city's hotline this year as a compliment to the ethics survey. We informed him of the upcoming hotline audit when we initiated the ethics survey in February 2024 and this audit is listed in our [Annual Audit Plan Fiscal Year 2025](#) issued on March 1, 2024. We recently started our audit of the city's hotline.

We previously audited the city's hotline in 2016 ([Recommended Practices Would Strengthen Hotline Operations](#)) and we audited the Human Resources Department's Equal Employment Opportunity Office in 2017 ([EEO Complaint Investigation Efficiency Can Be Improved](#)).

City Manager's additional comments

3) It would be helpful to understand employee sentiments and perceptions within specific departments to determine if certain departments are better or worse.

City Auditor's comment:

The city manager should focus his efforts to strengthen the city's ethical environment on all city departments and employees because an ethics handbook is not being distributed to city employees and there has been a lack of ethics training for all city employees since 2019. The city manager could ask his staff for information about hotline and EEO complaints to identify any departments where additional ethics training would be helpful.

City Manager's additional comments

4) The transition from this survey being completed on paper, in person, in group settings, and with audit staff observing to a fully private, anonymous, and digital survey tool needs to be taken into account more prominently when discussing trends over time. This is likely a significant influence in the types of responses received.

City Auditor's comment:

We do not believe the change in the survey collection method had a material impact on the survey results. We calculated differences between survey responses over time to identify whether changes were statistically significant for each survey question.

All prior survey responses regardless of collection method were private and anonymous. In 2018, audit staff attended shift briefings for field staff in city departments at numerous locations who did have email access. We asked employees to complete the survey, let them know they were not required to complete a survey, passed out the surveys, and collected the surveys. We did not observe employees entering their responses.

The comments by the city manager appear to be directed towards discounting the survey results and employee perceptions of the city's ethical environment. Residents have expressed decreasing satisfaction with the city's ethical environment. In the city's 2023 resident satisfaction survey 28.4% of residents were satisfied (combination of very satisfied/satisfied) with how ethically the city conducts business compared to 46.5% in 2016. Discounting unflattering survey results will not help the city strengthen its ethical environment.