

# Highlights

## Why We Did This Audit

Government is most effective when employees, elected and appointed officials follow ethical principles and act in the best interest of the citizens. A high standard of ethics is one of the city's values.

An ethical work environment helps retain employees, increase productivity, reduce risks associated with misconduct, and sustain public trust and confidence in government.

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

## Objective

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

## Background

The City Auditor's Office conducted employee surveys in 2008 and 2016 that included questions related to the city's ethical environment, which we asked in this year's survey.

In addition to questions about ethics, we added questions to this year's survey to gauge employee perceptions of equity practices in Kansas City government.

We surveyed all 4,469 active city employees through a web-based survey in March 2023. We received 869 responses, and compared the results to previous survey results.

We also evaluated compliance with requirements in the city's code of ethics.

[Click here to view the full report.](#)

## PERFORMANCE AUDIT – August 2024

# Listening to the Workforce 2024 Employee Ethics Survey

## Survey Results

Employees' perceptions of the city's ethical environment remain positive, however there are some areas that declined since our 2016 survey.

About half of employees continued to agree that overall, the city is an ethical place to work and over 60% agreed their department is an ethical place to work.

Most employees reported being familiar with the city's code of ethics and reporting expectations, however employee knowledge about how to handle ethical concerns was mixed. Employees are skeptical that unethical behavior will be detected and punished and some fear retaliation for reporting unethical behavior. Both questions experienced statistically significant decreases.

Most employees continue to view their supervisor's and department's ethical tone as positive, however their perception of the ethical tone set by city leadership declined. Although most employees (statistically significant increases) *disagreed* their department management or elected officials asked them to do something that contradicted the city's rules and procedures; 94 employees agreed they were asked to do so by department management and 50 agreed they were asked to do so by an elected official. Employees should report such concerns through the city's ethics hotline or Municipal Officials and Officers Ethics Commission.

*Equity and inclusion.* Overall, most employees reported understanding what is meant by equity and inclusion and aware the city has an equity office, but less familiar with how to contact the equity office or request an equity investigation. 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.

*Ethics code requirements.* 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. Employees who reported being familiar with the code of ethics were more likely to report they know how to report and are expected to report unethical behavior of others.

## What We Recommend (full list on back)

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 city manager agreed with the recommendations.

Statistically Significant Changes in Responses to Ethics Questions 2016 to 2024

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

