

FW: UPDATED: DEI Employee Survey

Vega, Yesli <yvega@pwcgov.org>

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, March 8, 2023 7:05 AM
To: Vega, Yesli <yvega@pwcgov.org>
Cc: Cooper, Fred <FCooper@pwcgov.org>
Subject: UPDATED: DEI Employee Survey

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Ma'am - Below is an adjusted version of the e-mail removing information that is now obsolete or would give clues about who I am, as well as adding two sentences regarding the office itself. I am agreeable to you sharing this and reading it during Supervisors' Time. As I mentioned before, I only ask that the contents of the e-mail be copied and pasted into a new message, rather than the e-mail being forwarded itself so as not to share my e-mail address. Thank you for your efforts and for your conviction in standing up for what is right.

Supervisor Vega,

First, I would like to sincerely thank you for notifying the public and shedding light on the DEI employee survey that was sent to employees in mid-February. As the taxpayers have funded this effort, I believe it is important that they are aware of how their hard-earned dollars are being spent.

Since receiving the survey the first time and then the subsequent reminder e-mail encouraging us to complete it, I have struggled with what to do and who to reach out to regarding its extremely offensive nature. Until publication of the news article, I was unsure if the BOCS had seen the contents or were even aware of the survey, and had considered e-mailing you to offer my thoughts. I also briefly considered reaching out to County leadership or my direct supervisor to offer the same, but quickly realized that would not only be a wasted effort, but would most certainly have unintended negative consequences. While I have very strong opinions about this survey and am a firm believer that it is important to stand up for what you believe in, I have been reluctant to reach out due to concerns over the possible ramifications to my career of not aligning with the current narrative and speaking out against it. It seems these days that anyone who speaks out is met swiftly and unwaveringly with efforts to destroy their reputation and livelihood, a now common occurrence to which I do not want to fall victim.

It was with both great sadness and anger that I received the e-mail from my employer leading me to a survey which begins by asking me my gender identity, race and sexual orientation. To be honest, I had not seen the questions the actual survey poses until the Potomac Local article posted them as I have refused to answer these pre-survey "demographic questions" on the basis that they are patently offensive and extremely invasive, and employees are unable to proceed to the survey itself without answering them, they are mandatory. Not only are the demographic questions mandatory, but the question regarding gender identity does not offer a selection such as "prefer not to disclose". You must pick a selection from Male, Female, Trans Man, Trans Woman, Genderqueer, Genderfluid, Agender, Intersex, Non-Binary, or Other and make up something totally new to submit. There are no other options. So while it is counter to my beliefs that anyone can have a gender other than male or female, one's biological sex, I must put those closely held beliefs aside in order to participate. I and anyone who follows a belief system or religion that dictates traditional or conservative principles which prohibits responses to questions that offer selections such as "non-binary" or

“trans” is excluded from survey participation. That does not feel very "inclusive". Not only that, I feel that I should not be required to disclose this information in order to participate in an employee survey, regardless of my opinions on the merits of the possible responses.

The survey goes on to ask my race, age category, department, tenure, role and status, making it increasingly likely that identification of survey respondents is in fact possible and could be discerned if one desired, particularly the identity of those working in smaller departments. Why would I ever respond to the questions contained in this survey if there is even a small possibility that my identity could be determined?

Demographic question #4 inquires as to my sexual orientation. This is the most offensive, outrageous and abhorrent question asked. It is not my employer's business nor place to ask me the gender of my sexual partner. Why is my employer asking me for details of what happens in the privacy of my home, particularly my bedroom? What is the likelihood that I could bring a subordinate employee into my office, sit them down and ask them this question, and not end up embroiled in both a civil lawsuit and an internal investigation for sexual harassment or worse with the likely outcomes of termination and an award of monetary damages to that employee? Why is it that the leadership of this organization can do the same to me and it be deemed "progressive" and okay, and on top of that pay tens of thousands of taxpayer dollars to have it done to me "professionally"?

Moving to the survey itself, it is clear that the questions and available responses were crafted in such a way that it forces respondents to answer so that it gives only one possible appearance of employee opinions as a whole, and minimizes or even eliminates the possibility of any dissenting opinions. Note that none of the 20 questions in the "Needs Assessment" offer any possible response other than that all 20 have value or importance to some varying degree, there is no available response that something is not important or not applicable. Those 20 questions also do not offer any write-in opportunity, that is not available until question 21, which specifically directs your answer to this open-ended question to be about the "IMPORTANCE of inclusion". It is clear that the survey was intended to put forth one message alone, and anything contrary to that will be minimized or rejected. I do not believe that this was simply an oversight or incompetence on the part of those who crafted the survey, but rather intentional in order to force an outcome that appears to offer organization-wide support for the DEI initiative, something that not all employees actually support. I can assure you that many employees do not in fact support this initiative. Every peer with whom I have discussed the survey felt it crossed the line and that the Equity & Inclusion Office and its activities as a whole is a waste of County resources. This is evidenced by the low response rate to this and the prior survey, and that some departments have opted to make their training sessions mandatory for select employees in order to bolster attendance and force participation.

It escapes me how this survey was ever approved by County leadership and how they thought this line of questioning was appropriate or acceptable. I respectfully ask for your assistance in having the survey permanently terminated and any further inappropriate DEI initiatives cancelled. It is clear that the office and the implementation of their initiatives requires closer scrutiny, oversight and management.

Humbly,
A Concerned PWC Employee

[REDACTED]