

**Kimberly Loving**  
**Nominee for Director of Seattle Department of Human Resources**  
**Responses to the Seattle City Council**

**1. What is your vision for the Seattle Human Resources Department (SDHR) over the next several years? What are your goals for the Department?**

The purpose of Human Resources is to provide support – through systems, processes, tools, and partnership, so that City departments can deliver the best service to the people of Seattle. To do this we need an engaged and motivated workforce where people can feel valued and contribute at their highest levels.

My vision for Seattle Human Resources is to provide equitable and effective human resource management and support services by developing and implementing systems, policies, and programs that enable our employees to contribute to positive outcomes for the City of Seattle. To achieve this vision will require strategic focus in the following goal areas:

- Continued measurable fortification and operationalization of Equity in everything we do.
  - I was drawn to work for the City of Seattle because of its demonstrated commitment to Equity. I look forward to forming strong partnerships with the Office of Civil Rights, the Office of the Employee Ombud and leaders in the Harrell Administration to build on the work of those who came before me.
- Investing in, developing and empowering department leaders
  - I believe thoughtful investment in people, our most precious asset, can create and sustain an organization's competitive advantage. By listening to understand our employees' needs and sharing a sense of purpose, we will inspire an environment of collaboration and positive change throughout our workplace community.
- Strengthening and cross-pollination of the citywide Human Resource Leadership Team (HRLT)
  - To achieve Human Resources excellence across the City, the entire HR community must activate and model Mayor Harrell's *One Seattle* vision. To drive greater levels of innovation and provide high-impact HR services to the City, citywide HR leaders must establish increased coordination.
- Serving as a trusted resource for all City team members –from the Mayor and City Council to frontline employees.

**2. Please share your vision for future of work (e.g., teleworking, supporting work arrangements that best benefit the City and employee needs). Moving forward, what is the right balance between work-from-home and an in-office presence for SDHR professionals?**

The way we work has dramatically changed over the past few years. While it is paramount for SHR employees to be accessible to City employees, “accessible” no longer only means “on-site.” For many City of Seattle employees, “accessible” means meeting virtually and not requiring employees to meet us in a specific location. This opens up many opportunities for us to creatively serve the needs of leaders, employees, and teams. My expectation has been and will continue to be that Human Resource professionals are strategic partners to City department leaders, helping them understand the new employment context, illuminating both traditional and hybrid team dynamics, and aligning human capital strategy with operational goals. To be an effective go-to source for people analytics that support business decisions and drive people strategy, SHR professionals must align with our client departments. With that said, we must also model how to balance these operational goals with healthy practices that support the well-being of our SHR workforce. This is why I support a hybrid way of working for SHR employees. As a department, we are thoughtfully working together to optimize the SHR work environment with human connection, flexibility, and practicality.

### **3. What are some of the notable accomplishments you achieved as Interim Director?**

I am extremely proud of what we have been able to accomplish together since I started as Interim Director in August 2021. I am particularly pleased with how SHR employees rallied alongside City HR and department leaders to successfully implement the City’s vaccine mandate in a timely, employee centered, and effective manner. It is impossible to adequately articulate the enormity of that extremely critical and time sensitive undertaking. It is also impossible to not acknowledge the massive amount of change the world faced and continues to navigate during this season of unprecedented challenges and change. I would be remiss not to acknowledge the dedication displayed by SHR employees to move the City forward, despite the implications of the pandemic.

During my time as Interim Director, I also implemented department organizational changes designed to align SHR’s commitment to leading the City’s workforce with a continued emphasis on equity. The Human Resources Investigations Unit (HRIU) investigates complaints and alleged violations of applicable City Personnel Rules, including allegations of harassment, discrimination, and misconduct. It is critical to change City employees’ experiences of the HRIU from being a reactive division to being a proactive unit that also aims to identify, address, and remediate the underlying causes for many of the frequent or reoccurring concerns in the workplace. To accomplish this, I expanded the HRIU Director’s leadership to include the Learning and Development (L&D) Team which shifts the attention of HRIU from fault finding to identifying learning opportunities. With the L&D Team’s experience in delivering equity focused training and development programs to City employees, SHR is now in a unique position to ensure that workplace conflict resolutions are programmed with valuable training and development solutions aimed at the root cause and focused in creating a more equitable culture at the City of Seattle. My decision to execute these organizational shifts presents an opportunity to realign work that will support a positive change in City culture in several ways:

- HRIU and L&D currently provide services to the entire City. This shared scope creates the platform in SHR to provide other targeted learning and development services to all City departments.
  - Given the City Personnel Rules require all HRIU employees to be mandatory reporters (unlike the Office of the Employee Ombud, the Civil Service Commission, or the Office for Civil Rights), it is in the best position to see trends and patterns of issues that need addressing throughout the City and within individual departments. This will help identify who needs L&D's support and in what areas.
  - Further, HRIU and L&D have strong partnerships with City HR leaders providing frequent discussions on best practices for employee engagement. This new combined division will continue to build and strengthen these relationships for further impact.
- 4. We have heard that some City positions have been allowed to continue past the sunset dates set in Adopted Budgets. How do you plan to prevent this from happening in the future?**

While sunset dates on regular positions are a mostly informal practice of signaling a department's future intent to eliminate a position and have no automatic and enforceable function under the Seattle Municipal Code, the City Budget Office (CBO) and Seattle Human Resources have in the past two years put in place procedures to encourage departments to eliminate positions with past or approaching sunset dates, or to formally remove or extend those dates. Specifically, the SHR Workforce Analytics and Reporting Unit (WARU) has begun to send annual notifications to departments regarding all positions with sunset dates that will expire in the next two years. Beginning in 2022, WARU now has a practice of freezing any vacant position with a past sunset date and requiring CBO approval to unfreeze it for department use, thus alerting CBO to the expired date and beginning the process of formally modifying the date or eliminating the position. In the past, these dates were extended or removed using a memo between the CBO and SHR. Today, a more robust partnership between CBO and SHR has led to formalizing the process for departments, increasing transparency and accountability.

**5. What do you see as the biggest challenges to SDHR in the coming years?**

**Finding talent during a shortage**

Attracting and retaining talent are becoming increasingly difficult and competitive. While the SHR Talent Acquisition team continues to stay ahead of the national average days to recruit and fill a position (SHR = 35.76 days to fill positions; industry standard for general recruiting = 38-45 days to fill positions), more and more employers are offering big salaries and signing bonuses to attract talent. Looking ahead, while we may not be able to compete by offering the same salary levels, we can compete effectively for talent by offering meaningful workforce development opportunities to our City employees. It will be critical that we identify and develop potential within the City employee population through our Workforce Development offerings. In an area

like Seattle with so much competition for talent, we must be creative and flexible in establishing our value proposition for current and potential employees.

### **Continuing to balance the evolution of remote work**

We are now nearly 3 years into a massive remote work experiment driven by necessity and marked with trial and error. Employee expectations have increased with respect to remote working. When possible, more people are choosing to work from home because they want to, even if their office is open and they are less concerned about Covid risks. One challenge facing the citywide HR community is identifying sustainable and effective ways to support flexibility and foster an engaged and balanced workforce without compromising business outcomes and services to Seattle residents.

### **Managing through the opportunities of a challenged classification & compensation program**

Public agencies depend on a clear, comprehensive job classification structure on which to base performance expectations, promotional and career ladders, performance management, performance evaluation and fair and equitable compensation. For the most part, jobs are dynamic, ever changing and evolving to reflect the business of the organization. Best practices in classification review suggest that jobs and job descriptions/class specifications should be reviewed and updated every 3 – 5 years, more frequently for jobs in technology. For a city the size of Seattle, it will be important to implement a realistic organizational goal of building a review cycle every 7 – 10 years to keep alignment of structures and compensation.

### **Prioritizing employee mental health & well-being**

While well-being has in recent decades been a growing concern of employers, the pandemic, social upheaval, and increased pressures on marginalized communities have accentuated these needs and put mental health and well-being as a top priority for conscientious employers. SHR has championed programs to address these needs. With the 2022 Seattle Sheds Light on Mental Health initiative, citywide Future of Work Informational Sessions and other expanded Employee Assistance Plan offerings, SHR has made clear its commitment to support City employees' mental health and well-being.

### **Human Capital Management replacement system**

Although the implementation plan for the City's new Human Capital Management (HCM) replacement system is on track, the substantial and complex endeavor will require each City department to embrace new ways of working with new technology. This venture will require leaning on the change management transition skills HR professionals are exercising today as we traverse the evolution of a hybrid workplace. I am excited to be a part of such an impactful undertaking that will undoubtedly harmonize City HR processes and enable us to work more effectively.

## **6. What specific and measurable outcomes should SDHR look to when defining success?**

### **Recruitment**

We will continue to challenge and improve service level agreements and metrics. Our success can be measured by increasing the percentage of active job openings filled with people who can perform the functions and want to be here.

### **Employee experience & retention**

Employee experience should be a foundational component of HR. To capture this, we should measure employee satisfaction and engagement. It is important for us to know if HR initiatives are helping to boost employee satisfaction and engagement. To begin this, we will identify a baseline then measure at regular intervals to work towards increasing the percentage of City employees who say their work environment is positive.

### **Aligning HR operations to department business strategy**

SHR must identify ways to power the City's business by helping leaders continue to strengthen the connection between employee and business success, tightening the relationship between department operational strategy and workforce strategy.

#### **7. Under normal circumstances how long should a hiring process take? How will you make sure SDHR is meeting the mark?**

The average number of days to recruit and fill a position should be approximately 38-45 days based on industry standards for general recruiting. Over the last 4 years, the SHR Talent Acquisition (TA) team has averaged 35.76 days to fill positions for the 20 departments we support. We ensure this by setting goals that include objectives and key results. Regularly monitoring metrics provides visibility to areas where the team should focus its efforts and implement improvements so that we successfully meet customer staffing needs in a timely manner. These goals are tied to each recruiters' performance goals to ensure continuity and accountability.

In August 2022, the SHR TA team led a collaborative effort in partnership with the citywide recruitment community to launch a new reconfiguration of the City's cloud-based talent management software, NeoGov. Features such as the new self-service dashboard, data analytics, and mobile phone application empower the citywide recruitment community to modernize processes, accelerate time to hire outcomes, and improve the candidate experience.

#### **8. The Seattle Race and Social Justice Initiative is a citywide effort to end institutionalized racism and race-based disparities in City government. Can you provide specific examples of how you would develop and apply your commitment to equitable hiring and fair representation?**

This is an area of great importance to me. I have a deep commitment to meeting the City's Race & Social Justice objectives and under my leadership while serving as SHR Chief of Staff, the SHR Talent Acquisition (TA) team began focusing on building anti-racist practices. The team implemented a hiring process methodology called (TEA) Talent, Experience, Alignment with a

goal of citywide adoption to ensure consistent and equitable hiring practices. TEA reflects SHR's commitment to antiracism by removing barriers from the hiring process, deemphasizing formal education and years of experience, and placing a stronger emphasis on the applicant's potential, skills, and values.

- Talent - This component is about potential--having the skills and passion to be successful in the role the applicant is being considered for. This area describes not just what someone can do, but how successfully they do it. Skills that might fall into this area include ability to learn, adaptability and flexibility, critical thinking and problem-solving, managing workload, accountability, and professional development.
- Experience - This is where technical skills, knowledge, and experience are evaluated. This area covers both the depth and the breadth of someone's experience. This area could include knowledge gained through training, technical skills honed, specific software skills, education, lived experience, or keeping up with current developments and trends in areas of expertise related to the position.
- Alignment - This component is evaluating the fundamental values of the applicant and how they align with both the needs of the position and the department. This is where an applicant's commitment to Race and Social Justice, Equity, and Inclusion are considered. Other areas might include a commitment to the department's values, ethics and integrity, respect, teamwork, conflict resolution, customer service, communication, and a focus on results.

The SHR TA team partners closely with citywide recruiters across departments to educate and train on the TEA model. Currently, Seattle City Light, Seattle Department of Transportation, Seattle Information Technology, Seattle Public Utilities and the 20 departments supported by SHR utilize this hiring model. Under my leadership, SHR will continue to lead a collaborative effort across the City's recruitment community to promote consistent and equitable hiring practices that improve the internal and external candidate experience and generate an even richer City workforce and culture. Additionally, SHR established and leads a citywide talent acquisition work group that focuses on crafting job advertisements and descriptions aimed at screening in Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) and women applicants versus screening them out.

**9. We noticed the "equity-based talent acquisition philosophy and process" you implemented. How do you plan to address both hiring and retention as Director of SDHR – what is the strategy to make sure we are retaining diverse candidates?**

- Leverage exit interviews to identify reasons for turnover
  - o Conduct exit interviews when employees leave the City. We will use the data to identify organization gaps that appear to be causing employees to leave and design plans to improve retention.
- Investing in, developing and empowering department leaders
  - o Strengthen capabilities in current and emerging City leaders by delivering training and development programs aimed at creating a more equitable culture at the City of Seattle.

In addition to the implementation of the equity-based Talent, Experience, Alignment hiring initiative described in question number 8, the SHR Workforce Development Unit (WFD) provides resources for City employees to explore career opportunities, connect to others within the City community and develop skills. In 2022 we are focusing on enhancing information and training for people managers to support employee development, build talent pipelines and positively impact retention. The WFD's vision is to ensure the City of Seattle has a skilled, engaged, and equitable workforce that best serves and is representative of all members of our community. We accomplish this by offering citywide internships, fellowships, career outreach events and programs that develop, connect, and empower people. The work is guided by the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan. The 2019 Employment Pathways and Workforce Diversity Report identified the benefits of mentorship for improving workforce diversity and building relationships between employees. The WFD mentorship program connects individuals within their organization who they may not otherwise encounter, mentors who look like them and may share similar backgrounds and help them cultivate knowledge and skills to move up in the organization. Mentoring has been found to be significantly related to favorable job performance, job satisfaction, lower work stress and increased self-esteem, positive relationships with peers, promotions and job offers.

Just as important for retention as the above programs is support for mental and emotional well-being. Earlier this year, I was thrilled to share with the City community SHR's well-being focus to show care and compassion for the excess of challenges we all have experienced during the last 2+ years by expanding the citywide Employee Assistance Program and hosting an awareness week entitled "Seattle Sheds Light on Mental Health," complete with speakers, educational webinars, and wellness activities. To continue our commitment, the 2023 SHR workplan will include initiatives such as the Seattle Sheds Light on Mental Health campaign and other career resilience support offerings with the goal of engaging, retaining and better meeting City employees' needs.

**10. Our workforce is aging and we want to make sure we are recruiting a diverse age range to have continuity in city knowledge and services -- what suite of benefits is important for folks looking right now.**

Employee benefits help protect employees against severe financial impacts of illness, loss-of-income, and death. To continue to appeal to a diverse range of ages and financial needs throughout employment-- both at hire date and through retirement or separation --means offering a broad range of choices so employees can update their benefit choices to best meet new financial needs as their jobs, families and lives may change. SHR effectively and efficiently offers enough choice so each employee can meet their main needs with a variety in terms of medical networks; tax-preferred arrangements; levels of protection; all within the framework of stewardship of City funds and the collective bargaining process. We continually educate employees with the information and tools they need to make updated choices in their financial planning.

SHR offers several lifestyle benefits, including many that highlight the City as a caring employer, which is critical to candidate attraction and employee retention success:

- Expanded Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to serve temporary employees
- Virtual counseling care with TalkSpace – which may appeal to younger generations via text support
- Advocacy/Accolade – navigating conditions, finding new providers, and getting help with claims, a need that transcends all ages
- Mental Health Benefits and Focus – affecting all generations/ages
- Reach Wellbeing – digital learning and engagement experience appeals to younger generations Family planning benefits – increased fertility coverage, likely serving employees between the ages of 25-45
- Kinside – Childcare support, parents possibly 25-45
- Teladoc on Aetna – Virtual Care and app-based support, attractive to younger generations <30
- We are proudly a leader in gender-affirming services coverage

**11. What do you see in terms of opportunities to work with labor unions on all of the above?**

Because the Labor Relations team is housed in SHR, we are uniquely situated to have direct engagement with nearly every department. That provides us an opportunity to work collaboratively with our union partners to develop consistent, transparent, and equitable policies and processes to enhance and improve all City employees' experience. The City has long advanced a collaborative approach to our union partners and Mayor Harrell's *One Seattle* vision has made it clear and unequivocal that we are to continue that longstanding commitment. Due to their unique relationship with our employees, a primary value unions bring to the workplace is advocacy for their members in areas where we may be unaware. Collaboration with unions early and often almost invariably leads to better outcomes for the City and its employees.

Under my leadership, the Director of Labor Relations has restarted the Labor Relations Forum, a monthly meeting attended by Directors and Executives as well as other non-represented managers, Employee Relations, Labor Relations, and citywide Human Resource professionals. Beyond keeping these employees informed with respect to Labor Relations activities, this forum is effectively de-siloing City departments by bolstering cross-departmental relationships. Ultimately, the Labor Relations Forum trainings will reduce the number of grievances and unfair labor practices, conserving substantial resources and, more importantly, improving the employee experience.