

Susan McNab  
Mayoral Nominee for Director  
Seattle Human Resources Department  
Confirmation Questions  
2018

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

In one sentence, my vision would be to create a respected professional Human Resources department that is recognized for its leadership on people issues and works daily to serve the employee of the city of Seattle with excellent service.

Additionally, I want to build the strategic value of the department by upgrading skills of staff, eliminating “silos,” focusing on productivity, and enhancing the culture of SDHR to be respectful, equitable and creative.

2. **We have heard concerns about morale at SDHR. What have you seen in your first few months? What have you done to address the morale issues at SDHR? How do you plan to address the staffing vacancies at SDHR?**

With the addition of two professional HR hires to work in SDHR as the Director of Recruiting and Director of Organizational Development, we are nearly fully staffed for 2019. The only exception is filling the role of Labor Relations Director, which is proving to be a very competitive hire. Interviews are scheduled this week and next.

In terms of department morale, I’ve worked to bring a sense of teamwork, comradery, and professionalism to the group. The Executive Team has met monthly for an entire day to define our direction and build an understanding of each other’s priorities. We have had several low-cost social events for the department to get to know each other and build positive work relationships. We have also had two all staff meetings over lunch in the past five months as we built our strategic plan and our department values. The latter were created and defined as a group effort, and we all own them.

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

The biggest challenges for SDHR in the future will be:

- Implementation of HR Consolidation where it is cost effective and important as a strategy
- Continued success in recruiting throughout the City in a very competitive hiring environment
- Building a positive employer brand reflective of our values and our commitment to reflecting the diversity of our residents

- Reinforcing a culture of respect, productivity, and career development Citywide
- Developing and implementing a robust HRIS system that provides managers with better tools and Citywide metrics on staff management.

4. **What specific and measurable outcomes should SDHR look to when measuring success?**

Our metrics should reflect:

- Percentage of employee turnover by population
- Successful union relationships as measured by number of grievances and unfair labor practices filed
- Number of position vacancies and time needed to fill them
- Employee surveys

5. **What steps will you take to ensure that you work effectively with the City Council?**

To create relationships with the City Council, I will respond quickly and thoroughly to requests for information. I will anticipate issues of concern in advance and inform Council of the impact. I will be available for consultation on employee issues as the Council sees fit. I will make sure I am knowledgeable of Council priorities as it relates to employee issues and ensure follow-up on directives as necessary.

6. **How will you ensure that Councilmembers and Legislative Department staff receive timely information needed from your department for Council to make sound policy decisions?**

I will respond quickly and thoroughly to requests for information as will my SDHR Team. I will anticipate issues of concern in advance and inform Council of the impact. I will be available for consultation on employee issues as the Council sees fit. I will make sure I am knowledgeable of Council priorities as it relates to employee issues and assure follow up on directives as necessary.

7. **How will you be responsive to Council requests, particularly regarding priorities that may differ from those of the Executive Branch?**

My ultimate accountability is to my customer. That customer could be the employee, HR professionals within the city, the Executive Branch or the City Council, or the residents of Seattle. Knowing the priorities and concerns of each group is important so that we can work together to achieve the goal of a vibrant, productive, and respectful workplace. Creating accurate information flow and feedback from SDHR to each group is key to creating good relationships, so decisions can be timely and based on reliable information.

8. **The previous administration and Human Resources Director proposed and began a Citywide Human Resource Consolidation. Are you planning on continuing One HR? If so, how do you intend to address the significant concerns of the City Labor Unions that the**

**Human Resource needs of the City’s largest departments will not be sufficiently addressed under a consolidated HR department?**

We plan on proceeding with One HR but at a very different pace and direction. Our priority will be focusing on areas where consolidation makes strategic sense and can be cost effective, while fulfilling the mission of ensuring a respectful workplace.

Specifically, in 2019, we will be addressing:

- Citywide staff recruitment
- Leave administration
- Policy interpretation
- Labor relations
- Workforce investigations
- Supervisory training and performance engagement

My experience has been that the Unions are supportive of One HR efforts, since it helps to assure consistent and fair treatment for all employees.

9. **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?**

Providing career opportunities for all and encouraging every employee to design their own path to career success are key to fair representation. Use of tools such as training, Career Quest, and workplace opportunities in nontraditional roles can enhance our race-based disparities in City government. Access to knowledge, preparation for the future, and a focus on career development can all work to eliminate institutional racism. Quality programs that measure results, adjust to best practices, and are evergreen; in response to employees’ changing needs, are necessary for success in ending institutional racism within the City. We also anticipate recruiting with an eye towards seeking out diverse populations in our outreach.

10. **What steps will you take to ensure that SDHR and all City Departments maintain a welcoming and safe workplace for City employees? Can you provide some specific examples?**

It is my personal creed as an HR professional to create a workplace where “everyone can bring their whole self to work.” That means, they work in an environment where all their skills, talents, issues, and challenges are supported, and growth is allowed in a respectful and safe learning environment. Successes and accomplishments are celebrated and opportunities for career exploration are available.

Defining and managing to workplace expectations and assuring a respectful and recognized employer brand are key to attracting and retaining employees.

In my career, I have implemented training programs, succession plans, knowledge and speaker series – open to all employees – with the purpose of creating a healthy, team-based environment where the focus is on the customer. It's my experience that giving employees a common purpose and direction while creating a respectful and safe work environment can go a long way towards productivity and success.

**11. How will you support Mayor Durkan and Council Member Mosqueda as they consider the IDT on Anti-Harassment recommendations?**

I am firmly committed to fulfilling the IDT recommendations on Anti-Harassment at the City. I met with the IDT for an entire day as an introduction to their work. My intent is to work towards quality implementation of the group's recommendations so that our goals of no tolerance for harassment in the workplace, and consequences for those who do harass others, are achieved.

**12. What is your organizational management approach? How will you review internal operations at SDHR to determine if they warrant improvement?**

My organizational management approach is to effectively use the assets, people and resources given to me to achieve the results needed to fulfill the organization's mission. Some strategies that I have been using to determine improvements needed are:

- Use of appreciative inquiry with end users
- Time to fill on recruiting vacancies
- Monthly budget reviews at department level
- Smart goal setting and achievement
- "Moving staff to the work"
- Strengthening core HR service delivery

**13. What is your leadership approach?**

My leadership style is characterized by the following principles:

- Having a vision and communicating it
- Organizing the work
- Coaching not directing
- Making decisions using all the wisdom in the room
- Absolute loyalty to the Team
- Flexibility
- Adventurous spirit
- Open door always

**14. Give an example of your strategic planning approach and explain the result. What did you learn?**

My strategic planning approach starts with a vision and a definition of values. I then establish the timeframe for the strategy (e.g., 3 to five years) and define long-term objectives.

Next, Departmental SMART goals are created with an annual time frame with further interpretation to individual goals. If everyone finds their place in the strategy through a connected goal, it becomes a useful management process instead of just a document. The final step is to measure results and adjust goals as needed to achieve the strategic direction established.

I applied this approach most recently at PEMCO, where we created a strategy of competing in the insurance market with a Northwest approach. We were able to compete in the Washington/Oregon marketplace successfully by using our shared identity with customers as our platform. We learned, above all, that people will embrace strategy if they understand it on a visceral level and can find their “place” in the picture and contribute to results. Our NW profiles campaign has become legendary.

**15. How will you continue to work on improving work place equity across all city departments?**

Improving workplace equity at the City is not a program; it should be a way of life. Every day, we must work with the lens of equal opportunity for all and create a respectful, productive workplace focused on learning and accomplishment. Specifically, we will monitor results using data, target areas for improvement such as Hispanic/Latinx representation at Supervisory levels (current data shows deficiency) and draw the best team members together to create action plans and monitor results.

**16. Through resolution 31712, the SDHR has been extensively involved in advancing a green jobs initiative through an interdepartmental team. The resolution defines a green job as “one that preserves or enhances environmental health as well as the economic and social well-being of people and communities, centers on communities most negatively impacted by climate change, and pays a living wage while providing career pathways.”**

**Can you describe any work experience in the environmental sector that will inform your leadership in advancing the green jobs initiative? What specific steps would you take to give community members access to green jobs in our city?”**

I personally have not had paid work experience in the environmental sector. However, I have advised on National Girl Scout programs that focus on environmental stewardship with young women:

- AmeriCorps
- Leave No Trace
- Every Girl Outdoors

I have worked on career preparation programs in the environmental sector through career day with high school students. In giving community members access to green jobs at the City, I have not had much experience to date, but it is possible to work with other departments such as SPU to design internship possibilities.

**17. Your breadth of experience in HR and HR Leadership does not include public sector experience. What have you seen as differences and similarities between public and private? What do you bring to a public-sector HR Leadership role?**

The common thread in both the public and private sector HR focus is PEOPLE and their desire to work in a place where they are respected, safe, and can contribute. The differences between the public and private sector are primarily in the processes necessary to make change or act in the public sector and the timing required.

There is also a strong sense of mission and stewardship in the public sector which does not come automatically in the private sector. The private sector creates a sense of urgency for an executive, especially in retail, where you must be responsive to the customer 24/7. Melding the strengths of both disciplines together as we move forward will be my mission.

**18. What do you see Labor's role at the City of Seattle? How do you propose improving the relationship between Labor and SDHR?**

Simply, Labor is a partner at the City. With 75 percent of the workforce represented, both the unions and the City have the common denominator of shared concern for the well being of our employees.

Interest-based bargaining is the norm and so far, I have experienced mostly cooperation from our union representatives in solving issues such as Janus implementation. Continuing to create and earn trust every day between SDHR and Labor is a priority as we move into contract negotiations this month.

**19. The city recently completed two efforts to collect more information about employee's experiences with harassment and discrimination. These included focus groups of city employees and the 2018 RSJI employee survey which included questions about harassment and discrimination. The focus groups heard significant concerns about employee experiences with harassment and discrimination and particularly with SDHR's ability to respond. As director how do you propose to address these serious employee concerns?**

We will make our anti-discrimination and anti-harassment standards non-negotiable in our workplace culture at the City.

We will hold managers accountable for creating a workplace of safety and opportunity. We must reinforce the use of an RSJI lens in all we do. And we must show results and action in addressing their concerns to be successful in this effort.

This is a multifaceted and complex issue, but we are up to the challenge, because we are a City built on diversity and acceptance. We just need to transfer that to the employee experience.

**20. Why do you want to be the SDHR Director?**

This position is of interest to me because of the opportunities it provides for new work adventures and serving my City. It challenges me to bring 30+ years of Human Resources and corporate executive experience to complex issues and coach the solutions from the Department Team. It's a new arena for me, which is exciting, and it offers me the opportunity to leave a legacy of improvement that contributes to a respectful and dynamic workplace. Our draft Employer Brand statement is "One Employer, Dozens of Benefits, and 1000's of career opportunities." My challenge is to make that live for every employee every day.