

**Seattle City Council Confirmation Questions & Answers
Steven Marchese – Director, Office of Labor Standards**

Background

1. Why do you want to be the Director of the Office of Labor Standards (OLS)?

I am a child of the labor movement - my father was a Teamster truck driver in NY for close to 40 years and my grandmother was a garment worker, I see a direct connection between the life I have been able to lead as a result of the collective bargaining and labor protections they received in the late 20th century and the work of OLS at this moment in time. I have been involved in public service throughout my legal career, including most recently as public service director for the Minnesota State Bar Association and as a board member of the St. Paul School Board. My wife (who recently started as the new dean of the Evans School at the University of Washington) and I decided to relocate to Seattle and contribute to our new community. Moreover, I have been aware of the trailblazing work that has been done here in Seattle by OLS and have seen the influence it has had on worker protection efforts in the Twin Cities in Minnesota. I am excited to help lead these efforts, in collaboration with the City Council and Mayor's Office, as we seek to build towards a city that values the efforts of all workers and equalizes the imbalances of power that disproportionately impact BIPOC community members in Seattle.

2. What do you see as the biggest challenge to OLS in the coming year?

The past 18 months have been an extremely challenging and active time for worker protection efforts in Seattle. OLS now oversees 16 ordinances and the demands on staff resources to effectively implement all of these provisions are quite high. I believe OLS needs both sufficient staff and support resources to do the work already on the docket, as well as keep focused on new and emerging needs in the community. This will take both strong partnership with the City Council and Mayor's Office, as well as a commitment by all to prioritize scarce resources to build the office's capacity to do its work.

3. What do you want to accomplish in your first 90 days and year as Director?

In the first 90 days, I want to spend the majority of my time listening actively and learning about the office's work, developing intentional relationships with OLS staff, policy makers, community members and other external stakeholders. As a new arrival to Seattle, I know that there is a lot I do NOT know. I want to also keep an eye out for opportunities for enhanced collaboration and information sharing, as well as the chance to ask questions that help clarify embedded assumptions about how OLS works currently or has worked in the past. In my first year, I hope to work closely with OLS staff members and leadership to develop a 3-5 year strategic plan for the office's work. OLS has largely been responsive to developments external to the office since its creation. I would like to develop a strategic focus to the work that incorporates feedback from the Mayor's Office, City Council, City departments, labor and worker organizations, small businesses (in particular women- and minority-owned businesses), community members and BIPOC groups to chart a more long term strategic focus for OLS' ongoing and developing work.

4. What is your experience with enforcement and policy development of worker rights and labor standards?

As a practicing attorney, earlier in my career, I represented both employees and employers in employment discrimination and labor-related matters, among other areas of civil litigation. I have experience as an attorney commissioner on the Minneapolis Civil Rights Commission which meant that I was part of both policy development on civil rights for the city and the attorney panel lead for hearings on civil rights complaints under the city's ordinance. Several of these claims were employment-related. In addition, I have also served on the St. Paul Civil Service Commission which meant that I participated in reviewing grievances under the city's civil service laws. As a school board member, I have worked closely with the district's general counsel and assistant director of HR on developing policies that relate to worker rights for district staff, including the creation of internal whistleblowing protections and the creation of a separate EEO office within administration. Finally, I took course work in law school on labor and employment discrimination law, which provides me a basic framework to understand the regulatory frameworks for labor standards and workers rights protections.

Vision/Policy/New Workforce

5. What are the most pressing issues facing workers? What are your ideas for strengthening worker protections and building worker power? How can the City ensure that workers have access to safe, healthy and workplaces that provide living wages?

Economic disparities are increasing throughout the country, and Seattle is no exception. Workers face a market in which businesses use many different legal mechanisms to evade creating employer/employee relationships. The rise of gig economy jobs in which workers absorb the majority of risk without the benefit of wage and safety protections creates an environment ripe for abuse. Further, the ability of workers to bargain collectively and organize is made more challenging when work is not done in a central location, but remotely throughout the city in cars, homes and numerous other less visible and isolated locations. The city must step in to use its regulatory power and set up baseline protections for workers regardless of employment status. Focusing enforcement efforts on emerging uses of subcontracting in specific industries will allow the city to target sectors that are high violation and low complaint. Those sectors tend to disproportionately employ BIPOC and low income community members.

6. On the City's website and outreach materials, OLS describes itself as a leader on wage, labor, and workforce practices that enhance equity, address wage gaps, and create a fair and healthy economy for workers, businesses and residents. What does this mean to you? How do you see yourself supporting and leading this vision?

I have seen the impact of OLS' work nationally from my own perspective as an elected leader in Minnesota. When both Minneapolis and St. Paul looked for national models on which to base their own minimum wage and PSST ordinances, Seattle was one of the benchmarks advocates and policymakers used. OLS' work directly ties into and supports the broader work the city is doing to create a sustainable place for working people to grow and thrive. The office directly contributes to the well being of workers by setting standards that, when complied with and enforced, can help make it possible for workers to achieve the kind of life and success my own family experienced 30-40 years ago. I see my role as articulating the connections between OLS' work and the larger vision through broad media amplification, personal connections and the ongoing work of the OLS staff. I know that worker

protections can, wisely implemented, contribute positively to a larger overall effort to enhance equity and the quality of workers' lives.

7. How can the City center worker rights during the COVID-19 emergency while some businesses are facing extreme economic circumstances?

I believe this is a “both/and”, as opposed to “either/or” proposition. Clearly, small businesses are struggling to remain viable and, at the same time, workers are struggling to balance their personal safety with being able to continue to earn a wage, a need made all that more urgent by the high cost of living in Seattle. During this unprecedented time for workers and employers, OLS has been able to advance efforts to mitigate financial burdens on struggling businesses. For example, throughout 2020, OLS made efforts to ease financial hardships on employers who were under investigation and struggling due to the pandemic. OLS offered significant penalty reductions, particularly for small businesses. (Indeed, the largest financial remedy assessments in 2020 were against large employers subject to the Secure Scheduling Ordinance). OLS is able to offer payment plans to those businesses most in need and is in the process of negotiating multiple settlement agreements with payment plan terms. During this time, OLS also emphasized informal resolutions with businesses to remedy violations. In 2020, OLS initiated 16 informal negotiations, a nearly 30% increase from 2019. All of these efforts are designed to help keep the focus on employer compliance with much needed worker protections and standards, while also recognizing the financial burdens already placed on struggling employers. Further, OLS will continue to enforce the city's Paid Sick and Safe Time ordinance given the many issues raised during the COVID emergency that impact the health and safety of workers and their families. In a time of emergency, these kinds of protections can be lifesaving. Finally, as the city builds towards recovery, it will be necessary to continue to strengthen partnerships between OLS and other city agencies that work with the business community. For example, OLS and OED have been robustly coordinating through the Mayor's Community Needs departmental working group to build awareness of labor protections and resources as part of outreach to small businesses and workers through OED's partnerships and education channels.

8. Are there any missing components or unexplored options in the City's current approach to labor standards policy and enforcement that you believe should be addressed? If so, please describe here these issues and your ideas or suggestions for change.

While OLS staff have worked hard to implement both new and existing ordinances, some challenges persist. For example, there are increasingly large cases and class sizes for OLS investigations which makes it ever-more important to streamline remedy assessment and provide increased administrative support. Other potential areas for exploration to augment OLS enforcement include increasing support for private rights of action, increasing collaboration with the City Attorney's office to expand enforcement, and collaborating with other City departments in their contracting processes.

9. OLS has seen incredible growth since its inception in 2015 – how will you manage staff recruitment, training, and development with enforcing the City's labor standards; in particular with the multiple new (including emergency) ordinances that went into effect last year?

The first step is to complete hiring for our vacant positions. The pandemic disrupted plans to hire last year, but the hiring process for four vacancies is underway and the office is on track for initiating the hiring of the two new positions that were added to the 2021 budget. When you examine the work of

the office, it is meaningful, cutting-edge, and equity-driven, which makes recruitment less challenging. Professional development and training are also extremely important to help staff remain effective and at the forefront of the field. I have dedicated large portions of my career to the topic and I hope to employ that experience to the benefit of the OLS team. Our existing laws and our services require technical and substantive legal knowledge. Many of our laws, including recently passed ordinances that address the gig economy and domestic workers, have been some of the first in the nation which requires thoughtful analysis and consideration. I intend to ensure that our staff are equipped with the knowledge and skills to do so. Our work also requires deep understanding of how inequity and power manifest in workplaces and in our own work. We are fortunate to be able to fund professional development in our budget and that our staff have a growth mindset.

10. What is your vision for using strategic enforcement methods to obtain compliance with Seattle’s labor standards? What does “strategic enforcement” mean to you?

Strategic enforcement is an intentional, considered, and proactive approach that maximizes impact and drives equity. Severe power imbalances between worker and business are more deeply felt by low-wage workers, especially those who face additional barriers like those associated with immigration status, race, gender, criminal history, or have survived trafficking. Through directed investigations, triage and priority setting, industry research and knowledge, co-enforcement with community organizations, and effective communications, we can thoughtfully focus our attention and impact on the most egregious of cases, with the intent to cause ripple effects in those industries. It is also a long-term commitment that requires continued planning and holistic approaches. OLS has a long tradition of using education to create a culture of compliance, and strategic enforcement amplifies this approach. It also requires lasting relationship with labor and community partners because it is only with them that we can be the most effective.

11. Directed Investigations that target employers or industries which frequently violate labor laws are one way to ensure workers’ rights are more adequately protected – can you explain OLS’ success with directed investigations and how you anticipate using this tool especially in light of backlogs in case load?

OLS is a young and expanding agency with high demand on its services. Despite this, the office has worked diligently and has been successful in recent years to reduce its waitlist of cases. In the coming year, the office will continue to make progress with filling vacancies and through its efforts to continue to reduce case ages and prioritize the most impactful cases. Directed investigations are useful, especially in industries that have a high volume of violations but low worker complaints. OLS has been increasingly successful in using directed investigations as a strategic enforcement tool to target violations that were not being directly reported to OLS. In 2020, OLS filed nine directed investigations and assessed \$2.6 million in three resolved directed investigations. As of the beginning of 2021, OLS had 12 open directed investigations. On the other hand, OLS does not need to rely on directed investigations for gig worker investigations, as OLS has received voluminous complaints from workers in that industry.

To this end, the use of directed investigations is not conditioned on the complete resolution of a backlog – directed investigations are a tool appropriate for some industries, and the backlog is largely a result of an over-emphasis on a complaint-based system. Shifting the focus more aggressively towards a

strategic enforcement approach, in line with national labor standards enforcement trends, requires that directed investigations be pursued simultaneously with ongoing backlog resolution efforts.

12. What overall barriers do you see to compliance with our labor standards and how do you plan on overcoming these barriers? What new/emerging trends in labor standards enforcement would support more efficient enforcement?

To create a culture of compliance in the business community, we must first start with awareness. Our reach must be tailored to the needs of each community, including small business that are owned by low-income and historically disenfranchised communities that are not typically served by traditional outreach methods. We also must enlist trusted community partners to be messengers, which includes chambers of commerce, payroll providers, neighborhood business associations, and fellow departments. As I mentioned before, we have benefited from an increase in partnerships with departments this year which has expanded our reach and we plan to continue and build upon this collaboration.

In a similar vein is the trend in labor standards enforcement related to co-enforcement. These are formal and long-term partnerships with community and labor organizations that are trusted in low-wage workers' communities. Co-enforcement, among other things, helps labor standards agencies understand industry practices, identify violations, and connects us with workers during investigations.

13. Please describe your approach to managing external communications and media relations to promote OLS's policy development and enforcement achievements? What is your vision for maximizing publication of this information?

OLS's effectiveness is strongly tied to the public's awareness of our existence, our services, and about the rights and requirements of our laws. In particular, external communications and media expand the office's reach. We have to acknowledge that traditional media does not reach many communities that we need to reach (e.g. workers and business owners who are immigrants or people of color) and it will be important to elevate the office's profile through ethnic media channels and trusted community partners to reach those that might not be reached through traditional outlets. We can also expand our reach by relying on partnerships with fellow City departments. During the pandemic, we saw an expansion of collaborative outreach and communications efforts with departments like the Department of Neighborhoods, Office of Economic Development, the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs, and the Seattle Office for Civil Rights. I would like to continue those partnerships. Finally, it will be helpful to continue to promote successful investigation outcomes to build public awareness of the office's effectiveness and knowledge of the importance of compliance with the city's ordinance protections.

14. Please describe your vision for innovation and creativity when it comes to labor standards in this city? How does partnership with the county, state, and federal government come into play?

Workers do not live their lives or work exclusively in one City. If anything, gig work and domestic work are a major illustration of this. Their work necessarily spans multiple jurisdictions, whether because of the nature of it or because it must be so to earn a sufficient living. To ensure we can further our mission to achieve a meaningful quality of life for every worker and a level playing field among businesses, innovation in other jurisdictions is key – whether that be at the county, state, or federal level. To that end, OLS has and will continue to be a resource and willing partner to other jurisdictions.

15. Do you have any thoughts about the adverse impacts of the Supreme Court's decision in *Epic Systems Corp. v. Lewis* on Seattle workers' ability to band together to challenge an employer's illegal acts?

The Supreme Court's decision in *Epic Systems* has accelerated the use of arbitration clauses and made it more difficult for workers to use class action litigation to seek redress for employer abuses. Clearly, OLS can't stop the proliferation of arbitration clauses and the waivers that employers seek from workers as a condition of employment. However, the case increases the need for an active enforcement agency like OLS to address both existing and emerging abuses through the city's regulatory powers. The city can continue to set a baseline for worker protections and use OLS' enforcement capacity to address the most egregious and broad-based examples of wrongdoing by high visibility employers. *Epic Systems* does not stop the city from standing indirectly in the shoes of workers and might raise the potential for other affirmative litigation efforts, such as through the City Attorney's office, as complimentary strategies for enforcement. Finally, this is an everchanging area of the law. OLS can use its public education capacity and relationships to help raise awareness of these new legal developments and enable workers to understand how to best secure their own rights.

16. OLS' Labor Standard Advisory Commission (LSAC) has made recommendations on a proposal for a floor of transparency protections for independent contractors. How best can the City implement those recommendations?

The City can make sure that the fundamentals of good contracting practices apply for independent contractors. Rather than legislate an implied employer/employee relationship, the City can set baseline standards for what should be disclosed as part of the contracting process so that independent contractors have more information and awareness of those provisions that directly impact them the most. Such provisions would make it important to develop a strong public education and outreach effort to educate the community about them. Since many BIPOC community members will likely not be familiar with them, the City and OLS would need to make sure that outreach was accessible and targeted with support from community partners in COEF and BOEF.

Management Skills and Experience

17. OLS will soon have 30 FTEs – what is your experience leading a team of this size? Specifically, describe your experience managing a team, developing and implementing a budget, overseeing data collection and information systems, addressing internal personnel issues, and ensuring that work plans are followed?

For the past 11 years, as Public Service Director, I have managed, led, and implemented the state bar association's public service and access to justice initiatives. This has included budget oversight responsibility for this work and management of/support for the association's related committees and task forces. These groups have included up to 50 volunteer members with whom I have worked to develop workplans and keep on task. For the past five years, as a school board member, I have shared oversight with my colleagues over the St. Paul district's \$800 million budget, the superintendent and over 6,000 staff and over 25 separate bargaining units. We also replaced a previous superintendent, hired an interim, and conducted a nationwide search for our current superintendent. In addition, we

developed an extensive strategic plan focused on addressing increasing academic outcomes, reducing outcome disparities based on race and increase social/emotional support for students. Finally, prior to my current work, for five years, I led a department of 4 permanent staff and 4 student workers at the University of Minnesota Law School.

18. How will you build staff and team relationships while employees are working remotely, and without a deep background in Seattle’s labor rights community? Provide specific examples.

As a new arrival in Seattle, I am committed to working intentionally and actively to develop positive relationships with staff and labor rights community stakeholders. While the current work environment creates some challenges, I intend to do the following over the next 3-6 months: 1) hold periodic 30 minute one on one meetings with all staff; 2) encourage, support and participate in efforts to build connections across office teams ; 3) meet with membership of OLS’ various advisory committees and grant recipients so they get to know me and I get to hear their observations, concerns and proposals; and 4) meet on a regular basis with other key department directors to better understand and coordinate our work. I am very clear about my need to spend most of the next several months listening to the experiences and insights of my new colleagues, strategic partners and community members. To be effective, I need to recognize that I don’t know what I don’t know and elevate/tap into the expertise of those who have been doing this work for many years and/or are closest and most directly impacted by the issues OLS is attempting to address.

19. The culture of an office or organization is critical – what will you do to ensure that OLS is an inclusive, supportive work environment where employees feel safe to voice concerns?

I start with my own personal work style – as the office leader, I intend to model and set expectations for working collaboratively, respectfully and with attention to how we nurture and sustain an inclusive culture. Again, as a new arrival, I need to immerse myself in the RSJI work already embedded in the office and city, participating in opportunities to build my own knowledge base and awareness with OCR as part of a cohort of new cabinet members and in community with other city leaders. OLS already has a strong RSJI and inclusive culture – I see my role as building on and enhancing what exists, not starting completely anew. That said, I also will emphasize that my “door” is open to staff regarding any aspect of their work and, through periodic check ins, hope to keep lines of communication fresh and current.

Working with Stakeholders and Constituents

20. What is your experience working with community-based organizations and business groups, including contracting with such organizations?

As a school board member in St. Paul, I have worked closely with both community-based organizations and business groups to support the school district and its many efforts. When I decided to run for school board in 2015, I knew I needed to connect with others who were interested in the well-being of our students. Over my years as board member, I have met frequently with parent organizations, organizations connected to BIPOC communities, faith-based organizations and business entities (such as the St. Paul Chamber of Commerce) to build relationships and educate about the needs of our students and district communities. SPPS contracts with a number of these organizations and, as a board member, I have been asked to review and approve many of these contracts as part of my oversight duties.

21. What is your experience working with labor unions and worker centers to advance and enforce labor standards?

I have partnered with labor unions as both a candidate for school board and sitting school board member. Part of this has been to educate myself about the needs of the district's workers and to also inform my own policymaking. Further, as one of the district's legal representatives, I have been involved in negotiations with all of our bargaining units. In 2017, our board made the decision to set a floor of \$15 hourly minimum for all staff before the city of St Paul adopted its own minimum wage ordinance. We did so because we believed we should be paying all staff a living wage, regardless of any external mandate.

22. Both worker and business communities can be skeptical and fearful of the government. How will you work to partner with organizations in the Community Outreach and Education Fund (COEF) and Business Outreach and Education Fund (BOEF), and build trust in the larger worker community (particularly low wage workers who are women, BIPOC and immigrant) and business community? How do you view the relationship between community-based outreach and OLS?

Community outreach is an essential component of OLS' effectiveness. OLS staff cannot be everywhere and the office needs community partners who are prepared with information about the ordinances to help educate both workers and businesses about their provisions and compliance. More importantly, community organizations can provide this information through organic community relationships in language- and culturally appropriate ways. I see COEF and BOEF partners as integral to this work and OLS staff have spent countless hours cultivating these relationships. I would like to continue to build the outreach team's capacity through strategic planning and support, as well as evaluate how existing partnerships are working so that funding can continue to be used in strategic ways. We also need to center the experiences of low wage workers in the development of policy and enforcement efforts – the connections created and sustained through BOEF and COEF grantees will continue to be all the more valuable as the office's work evolves.

23. How do you plan on ensuring outreach and enforcement is fair and equitable?

OLS staff have been deeply committed to using RSJI principles and toolkits to evaluate and guide both outreach and enforcement efforts. I hope to continue and build on this work. Moreover, I think it's important for the office to continuously examine how our efforts, both in terms of OLS staff and staff from contracted organizations, have been directly connected to impacted communities. OLS is using improved data collection to better track demographic data from both enforcement and outreach efforts to examine patterns that may highlight areas of underservice or new groups in need of attention. Further, both enforcement and outreach need to be adequately resourced to be effective and, in environments of scarcity, fairness and equity can be at risk as guiding values. I will advocate for both good strategic planning for both enforcement and outreach efforts to both guide the office's resource requests and direct existing efforts in intentional ways.

24. The lowest-wage workers, usually employed by large employers, are the most impacted by labor violations and are disproportionately women, people of color, members of our LGBTQIA community, immigrants and formerly incarcerated individuals. How do you anticipate being able to connect with these workers to develop strategies, policies and procedures to address both individual complaints as well as systemic discrimination?

Fortunately, OLS has existing working relationships and structures that form a strong basis for connecting with and strengthening the flow of information with and between the office and impacted low-wage worker communities. OLS has built strong community organization relationships through COEF, including Casa Latina and the Fair Work Center. These long-term strategic partnerships provide a two-way source of information – educating workers about labor protections and providing feedback on current policies and emerging needs/issues. Similar work has been done on the Domestic Workers Standards Board and the Labor Standards Advisory Board, each of which have provided or will provide important feedback on policy initiatives and raised awareness of worker needs. OLS can also tap into strategic communication avenues to amplify key messages about workers rights and labor protections, particularly as the office builds out its strategic enforcement work.

25. How can OLS strengthen partnerships and develop new initiatives with other City departments, including OED, DON, OIRA, and FAS among others, to promote awareness and compliance with the City’s labor standards?

For several years, OLS has had good working relationships with a number of city departments, including FAS (for business outreach), OED (similar for small businesses), OIRA (for connections with impacted communities) and OCR (similar). These relationships have been “baked into” the workflow and planning of OLS staff. However, the COVID emergency has also created the opportunity for OLS staff to work with a broader range of departments as part of the city’s Community Needs departmental working group. Some of the newer initiatives have been with Seattle City Library, Public Health, SDHR, DON, and others. The need for collaboration during the pandemic has been clear and OLS has been able to reach more people in impacted communities through these efforts. Going forward, as the city pivots towards recovery, there are opportunities to enhance compliance efforts via city contracting, as well as working with departments to champion labor protections with their own workforces through awareness and in the community through additional training and outreach partnerships.

26. How will you promote intergovernmental relations and foster partnerships with other governments (e.g. local, state, federal) and other labor standards organizations to advance the City’s labor standards development? What policies and programs would OLS recommend the City advocate for in its legislative agenda at the state and federal level?

OLS has benefited from many informal connections and formal agreements with other government agencies at the local and state level. By way of example, OLS has an agreement with the Washington State Department of Labor & Industries to further mutual outreach and enforcement goals, including providing accurate and easy-to-access educational materials and enhanced enforcement through case referrals and information sharing about laws and regulations of common concern and enforcement best practices. OLS staff have also been building strong relationships with the Center on Law and Social Policy (CLASP) and with national experts in municipal labor standards agencies to share best practices and lessons learned. OLS staff will continue to be in frequent contact with municipal, county, and State peers to provide insights into policy, enforcement, and outreach practices. As the leading labor enforcement agency in the state, OLS can offer a tremendous amount of technical assistance and support to other regional governmental entities. Looking forward, OLS staff have been exploring a more formal relationship with the Washington Advisory Committee on Trafficking (WashACT) to connect with its network of organizations and agencies that work collaboratively to combat human trafficking. Task force members share information on the issue of human trafficking, discuss developments in the field,

increase awareness of resources for survivors, identify and remedy gaps in services for survivors, and coordinate the investigation and prosecution of trafficking cases. As OLS staff deepen the office's strategic enforcement work, I see opportunities to leverage these connections. Finally, OLS staff has a strong, positive working relationship with the City's Department of Intergovernmental Relations. OLS can continue to feed relevant policy information to OIR staff to better inform legislative lobbying efforts in Olympia and elsewhere.

27. What would partnerships with labor unions look like to shape or influence economic and workforce development strategies? What other strategies would you use to support workers?

Labor unions provide important connections to the worker community and experience and offer the opportunity to be ambassadors to workers to understand the worker protections due to them, as well as provide critical feedback on the effectiveness of current OLS investigation and outreach efforts. In addition, union staff and organizers are at the frontlines of working directly with members from impacted communities and can highlight emerging enforcement, policy and education needs. Further, labor unions provide helpful contacts and resources that can enable OLS staff to build strategic enforcement efforts. For example, working with labor unions, OLS staff can determine and refine potential directed investigation targets. Finally, labor-supported entities like the Fair Work Center provide additional feedback and partnership opportunities for connecting workers to OLS staff, as well as keeping the information flowing on what is happening in workplaces throughout the city current and relevant.

28. What kinds of tools can OLS offer to businesses, especially small businesses who don't have dedicated HR staff, to help them navigate the City's labor laws?

a. What innovative ideas could build upon the existing BOEF and office outreach?

b. What current ideas would you like to prioritize, expand or deepen?

Small businesses, particularly ones owned by BIPOC community members, often lack access to relevant labor standards information and the capacity to track ongoing developments in the city's labor ordinances. The starting point for small businesses is education and outreach – OLS, in conjunction with other like BOEF-funded organizations, can provide culturally relevant support and technical assistance, as well as linguistically appropriate communications. Information can also flow more easily between OLS and small businesses because of these relationships through BOEF. Yet, there will also be the need to improve visibility – through trusted community intermediaries and targeted media, particularly for BIPOC community members. There have been helpful partnerships started with other city departments like OED, and OLS staff can work to strengthen them with the goal of providing better access to relevant information and technical assistance for businesses. Other BOEF funded partners (e.g., ethnic chambers of commerce) can also provide helpful resources, as well as more sector-based trade associations like the hospitality association, neighborhood small business associations, etc.

Race and Social Justice

29. In your role as OLS Director, how will you address racial and social inequities through the City's Race and Social Justice Initiative?

OLS staff have deeply embedded RSJI principles and practices in their work. As the new director, I would support these continued efforts and seek to learn about how they show up in the office's work going

forward. OLS staff have conducted numerous RETs over the past several years. As we examine implementation of more recently adopted ordinances, and we increase the office's outreach and enforcement capacities, I will want to make sure that we use the RET tools to help guide our work. I also know that I want to increase my understanding of and fluency with the RSJI and will be part of a cohort of new cabinet members who will be spending time with OCR staff to learn and share on this journey. I have used similar racial equity principles and frameworks to guide my own work on the St. Paul School Board and have familiarity with many of the similar concepts as they showed up in the education sector.

30. What are your specific ideas for addressing institutional and structural racism in the workplace?

Over the past several years, I have done much reading and thinking about my own personal work to increase my capacity to participate and lead antiracist work and use antiracist frameworks. The workplace is rife with instances in which racism constructs power relationships, access to employment opportunities, and negotiating ability, as well as determining what is worthy of public notice and awareness. To combat structural and institutional racism, I believe we need to continue disrupt the power imbalances and address new places and structures that have evolved to keep BIPOC disempowered. For example, addressing the use of independent contracting and subcontracting to evade labor law protections is top of mind for me and the office.

31. How will you incorporate racial equity principles into all aspects of OLS's work, including management, outreach, enforcement, and policy development?

As mentioned above, I have been working to improve my capacity to use antiracist and equity frameworks to guide my own work and leadership. As OLS director, I will center the use of antiracist and equity principles in my leadership, staff guidance, expectations and work development. As a matter of practice, I believe this means looking directly at existing and proposed policies, outreach efforts and enforcement and asking how they impact the communities most directly affected by the office's work. What are the racially predictable aspects, the blind spots and the gaps where someone(s) should be involved or heard but may not be? RETs provide helpful structural guidance for OLS staff to use as frameworks for evaluating new initiatives and policies. While the use of RETs is embedded in the office's work (as part of the office's annual workplan), we can use some of the techniques "on the fly". They can reflect embedded values in how OLS staff approach their work in ways that aren't necessarily about applying specific tools from RETs. I believe it will be important, as director, to lift up the narratives we learn through outreach efforts and the opportunities for office staff to learn from and share power with community members in venues like the DWSB and LSAC.

Relationship with City Council

32. What is your general philosophy for working and communicating effectively with the City Council? How do you plan to ensure that Councilmembers and their staff receive information from your department to make policy and financial decisions? How will you be responsive to Council requests, specifically regarding priorities that may differ from those of the Executive Branch?

OLS has benefitted from a strong collaboration with the City Council since its inception. I am grateful for this background and the history of consistent support for the office's mission and work. I believe it is essential to be in close contact with the City Council as lead policy maker to both assess existing OLS

efforts, evaluate the office's resource needs and develop future initiatives that will meet our shared goals of supporting workers to make our city more livable and equitable, as well as address embedded racial and economic inequities in BIPOC communities. I hope to meet regularly with Councilmembers and Council staff as part of my work and will seek open, transparent communication because I believe it leads to better policy making. I understand the role of oversight and policymaking from my own experience as a school board member and also know that this role differs from the role of the executive. To the extent feasible and practicable, I want to be an honest broker focused on the underlying shared goals we all have for improving the lives of working families in Seattle.

Audit

33. On December 19, 2019, the City of Seattle City Auditor published a "Seattle Minimum Wage Enforcement Audit" with 14 recommendations for strengthening OLS's strategic enforcement efforts. In a written response to the recommendations, OLS agreed in full or in part with 12 audit recommendations and disagreed with two recommendations. In 2020, OLS made progress on implementation some of these recommendations. What will be your approach to implementing remaining recommendations? What recommendations are you prioritizing and why? What recommendations do you think might require further consideration or modification?

Though I have only been with the office for a few weeks now, a value that permeates the staff's work is innovation and a constant desire to continue to improve their craft to further their mission to improve worker's lives. This is why I believe the office, despite the challenges and outsized workload that the team carried last year, has made significant progress on incorporating many recommendations into its work. If the City Auditor accepts our assessment, OLS will have implemented half of the recommendations in 2020 and will have taken many steps to implement the remaining recommendations.

Based on my discussions with staff and initial assessment, there are some that will require additional evaluation. By way of example, one of the recommendations relates to development of a more comprehensive outreach plan. As in its response to the audit, OLS agreed with this recommendation and noted that the creation of a distinct outreach team headed by a newly created temporary position of Outreach Manager was necessary. OLS employs many winning strategies for thoughtful and targeted outreach, including its equity-driven approach to its Community and Business Outreach and Education Fund partners. And, I believe it is critical to resource the team's efforts through permanent leadership staffing which will enhance, amplify, and better coordinate existing efforts.

Another ever present priority, which is the subject of one of the Audit's recommendations, is ensuring that we are equipping ourselves with the most effective enforcement tools. The office has made many efforts to work with the City Attorney's Office to increase the efficacy of our enforcement and this will remain a priority moving forward, especially given that demand for our services will always outmatch our resourcing.