

## Questions for Markham McIntyre's Confirmation as Director of OED

### Personal background

- How does your professional experience position you to lead OED in its mission to build an economy where everyone in Seattle can participate? Please include any experience working directly with small business owners; community development and workforce development partners; regional business advocacy organizations; and governmental agencies, elected officials, and staff.

I was born and raised in Seattle and am deeply passionate about this city and its future. Between my time working on a farm in East King County, supporting food systems in the Puget Sound, working for Jay Inslee when he served in Congress, and advocating and supporting businesses large and small at the Seattle Metro Chamber, I have gained a deep understanding of our regional workforce and economic development systems. During those career stops, I have built a wide-ranging network of contacts in the public, private, and philanthropic sectors, including with many small businesses, BIAs, neighborhood and ethnic chambers of commerce, and community groups who do economic development work. I pride myself on making progress through partnerships – finding “win-win” creative solutions to complex and complicated problems.

A recent example highlights how I have experience building public-private partnerships that support businesses and communities. In 2021, as the pandemic raged and businesses across the region struggled to survive, King County established the mandate that many businesses check customers' vaccination statuses. To help keep residents safe but also support small businesses trying to keep their doors open, I worked with Public Health – Seattle/King County, King County, neighborhood and ethnic business groups, many cities, including Seattle, and a variety of other partners to create the KCVaxVerified.com website as a one-stop shop for information and best practices on how to comply with the mandate; distributed materials, like window signage, to businesses; and led a major earned and social media campaign to alert customers and businesses about the new policy and how to comply. Because of this coordinated approach, businesses got to keep their doors open, customers could enjoy a meal out or an in-person event, and most importantly, lives were saved.

In the Seattle region, we have all the ingredients to lead the nation in building a more equitable, more inclusive, and more prosperous regional economy – it is a matter of intention, organization, and trust to move from our currently fragmented reality into a more cohesive and functional future. I believe that I have the vision, experience, empathy, and network to “supercharge” OED into a key player in designing and achieving that future.

### Vision for OED

- What do you see as OED’s role in supporting workers, businesses, and residents? What’s new about your vision for a “New OED” compared to how it has operated in the past?

As I step into this role, OED is in major transition. We are recovering from a major pandemic, have embraced a new administration, and the staff have been through several leadership changes in a short period of time. The community – businesses and residents are looking for economic stability and for their local government to support and lead them to a stable economy, good jobs, and equitable opportunities. Most importantly, we can listen – and that is my vision for a new OED – to bring our community together and create a new, shared economic path forward. This is a time for strong, focused leadership that will listen and take bold action.

New demands, challenges, and opportunities require OED to advance beyond its traditional role as a manager of economic programs to become an “economic orchestrator” that:

- Connects dots through relationship building and collaboration
- Makes catalytic investments that launch new ideas and initiatives
- Removes barriers to shape a more equitable economic future.

OED will need to coordinate and collaborate with City and external stakeholders, act as a translator between public and private sectors, and show regional leadership – because economic and workforce development are team sports and for too long, OED has been siloed within the city, focused on a mishmash of programs, rather than driving an ambitious and regional agenda.

The ongoing recovery represents our greatest opportunity in recent history to chart a course to achieve greater prosperity for all. By leveraging institutional and community brainpower, resources, and a shared set of progressive values, OED will be a leader in the developing and executing an equitable economic prosperity agenda. We can achieve this by:

- Collaborating with Seattle’s business community and regional partners
- Aligning regional economic and workforce development systems
- Finding multiplier opportunities that leverage public, private, and philanthropic dollars for maximum impact
- Prioritizing innovative approaches to wealth-building opportunities for all residents.

Wealth-building opportunities have not been equally accessible to everyone in our region. The historical disadvantages impacting communities of color in Seattle continue to limit the ability of workers, entrepreneurs, and business owners to build wealth for themselves and the generations that follow them. Achieving racial justice in Seattle depends on equitable economic development focused on wealth-creation. This is foundational to our mission.

Our wealth-creation efforts will be focused on three areas:

1. Real estate, like commercial affordability strategies
2. Finance, like creative models to improve access to capital
3. Market expansion, like exploring export strategies to enhance small business growth

And throughout, we will need to be sharper and more knowledgeable about current economic conditions and trends. We will be expanding our data and research capacity to better understand where we can make the most impact. That information will also be key to driving alignment with other city departments, with Council, and with external stakeholders.

A “new OED” will be more focused, collaborative, and intentional so that we can find shared objectives with our partners and make demonstrable progress toward a more equitable economy coming out of the pandemic.

- What are OED’s most significant challenges right now and how do you think they could be overcome?

Internally, OED’s most significant challenges are stability and capacity – we have had five directors over five years and 70% staff turnover in the past sixteen months. Before we can do anything else, we must stabilize the team, get clear about our identity and role in the regional economic development ecosystem, and build trust inside and outside the department.

That work starts with me. As the team leader, I have worked to establish good relationships with the staff and show them through my actions that we are a team and that I will stick by them.

We also need to develop a positive team culture that fosters collaboration, creativity, and communication. Foundational to that is having an effective leadership structure, so that staff get the support and direction they need and understand their role and performance expectations. We are working on this, but it will take time to develop. We have an all-staff retreat coming up in August where we will be able to step outside of our day-to-day responsibilities, get to know each other better (lots of new faces!), and talk about our future. As part of our preparation for that retreat, we have worked with a skilled consultant to conduct confidential, individual interviews to better understand each person’s concerns, ambitions, and ideas for where OED will go next.

Externally, our biggest challenge is adapting to the radically and rapidly changing economic environment. Each day brings fresh news about major challenges: rising inflation, a looming recession, questions about workers returning to the office, supply chain disruptions, etc. And through all of that, we are still not out of the pandemic, our small businesses are still hurting, we are still vexed by chronic homelessness and public safety challenges, and women and people of color are still disproportionately disadvantaged in our economy.

To overcome these significant internal and external challenges, OED must establish its identity and role within the regional economic development and workforce development ecosystems and focus on our priorities that allow us to make the biggest impact we can. We have strong agreement across geography, demographics, and even politics about what we want – a more

equitable and inclusive economy in which everyone can fully participate. We need to develop solutions and act, not dwell on the problems.

- In the wake of COVID-19, the ongoing endemic, heightened city needs, and the changing nature of work (including remote work, desire for flexible work hours), how do you see Seattle best positioned to support economic resilience? How does “economic development” expand beyond business support to engage a broad swath of supports that provides robust economic resilience and what are your ideas for providing a more diverse and resilient economic base for the City?

Economic resilience requires economic diversity, balance, and sustainability. OED operating as an orchestrator, can help shape regional economic development strategies and make catalytic investments that help create a diverse, balanced, and sustainable economy—rather than simply managing a collection of programs.

To support economic resilience, we need to:

- Build authentic partnerships with and listen to our businesses, workers, and communities about their struggles, both acute and chronic, and their needs for sustainable growth. We need to understand their short- and long-term problems and make choices about how to prioritize addressing them. For instance, what does the future of downtown look like if workers do not return to the office in the same numbers as pre-pandemic?
- Understand our economic and workforce development systems, the capacity gaps in each of those systems, and what the City can do to improve them.
- Be a regional leader – economic resilience requires investment and efforts toward shared goals from other agencies beyond the city, and we have the opportunity and responsibility to be an excellent regional partner.
- Have a clear perspective on our economic resilience goals. We must answer the questions: Who benefits from our investments? Why is economic resilience important for community development? What is the right mix of economic activities and industry sectors? How do we design our systems to be more equitable and inclusive? Which indicators are we using to measure progress?

To do that work, OED needs to be:

- Flexible. Economic conditions change and we need to quickly adapt to changing circumstances.
- Opportunistic. Too often, economic development relies on plans. Plans are useful as guiding documents, but real impact happens when we find unique opportunities and fit the pieces together to make lasting change.

- Networked. We must have a regional perspective and understand who is at which table, who is not at the table, and how we connect the dots between unlikely players to create opportunities for partnership.
- Focused. There will always be too many things that we could do. We need to be focused on our goals and understand the trade-offs we will make as we stay focused.

I am excited about the opportunities and challenges ahead as we strive to answer those questions and make choices that will have lasting and meaningful impact for our workers, businesses, and communities.

- What is your strategy for recruiting and retaining strong talent in OED? How are you leveraging the expertise of OED's current employees?

First, we have strong and talented staff at OED. It has been a challenging environment at OED for a while and our current staff have experience, expertise, and grit that is critical to our department's success. I and the current management team are developing a retention strategy aimed at better meeting the needs of our staff, so that OED can be a place where staff want to work and can thrive in their careers. We are focused on ensuring staff are in positions that play to their strengths, have the right support to succeed, and have already begun making shifts to staff work portfolios. I am excited to see what those team members do in their new or modified roles.

Second, we must add more talent. We are under capacity and until we get more people, we will underperform against expectations. We have been actively recruiting for new positions, and I am pleased that we have had strong application pools for each position – that means there's enthusiasm for the work and the direction we are going. As we add new people to the team, we need to do a better job of onboarding them into the work and office culture. It is important that our positions are well-defined, appropriately scaled, and well-resourced. If we do a better job onboarding and integrating people onto the team, they should see more success earlier and want to stick with the team as we gain momentum.

Both retention and recruitment require what I have discussed above: trust, stability, a positive team culture, and clear goals and priorities. Without those core components, we will struggle to retain and recruit the talent we need. An example of what we can do right now to help with those core components and retain staff is celebrate our work loudly and more often. This team has accomplished a lot, but we have not had the capacity or time to appropriately reflect on those efforts or enjoy those successes. We need to make sure that our leadership understands how our team members like to be recognized (for example, some might enjoy public recognition while others might enjoy private words of encouragement) and then recognize their work often.

I will be working with our team managers to develop new strategies to promote teamwork and team spirit, while actively looking for opportunities to make sure that each OED staffer can

actively contribute to the work of their team and understands the work of the other OED teams to create opportunities for internal collaboration.

- You've said that the new comprehensive planning process and the upcoming housing levy renewal offer opportunities to support small and micro-businesses as well as affordable housing, and give us the opportunity to plan for thriving neighborhoods. Can you provide more specific ideas that you intend to pursue to meet this goal, and take advantage of these opportunities? How will OED partner in this work with OH and OPDC, and what programs do you expect to offer?

There is shared commitment across OED, OH, and OPCD to leverage investments in neighborhoods to maximize community benefit. We want to collaboratively invest in equitable recovery and create wealth-building opportunities for small businesses and communities to close the racial wealth gap.

We are in early discussions with OPCD as they start scoping their downtown and sub-area planning processes as part of the Comprehensive Plan update, and there is great opportunity to collaborate. We are exploring how to meaningfully work together to both support near/medium term activations to support recovery and the public realm and consider longer term strategies to repurpose underutilized properties.

The City is making historic investments in affordable housing. We are talking with OH about how we can leverage those investments to maximize community benefit, particularly in high displacement risk neighborhoods.

As we have discussions about increasing the size of the next Housing Levy, we will work with OH to map opportunities to leverage affordable commercial investments in projects in high displacement risk neighborhoods, to provide opportunities for BIPOC businesses to stay in neighborhoods (or return if they have been displaced) and grow.

Throughout these discussions with our partner departments, OED is developing a continuum of strategies for near-term and long-term commercial affordability – Seattle Restored, Tenant Improvement Program, and our Small Business Ownership Fund. The goal is to test this continuum so that as the City invests in affordable housing projects, OED will be ready to scale them up to create affordable commercial space opportunities for businesses.

It is important to note that these are not stand-alone investments but are paired with strategies on equitable access to capital, business technical assistance, and on-the-ground connections and support through community business district partners. We are trying to develop programs that stack and link with each other – that is a recipe for success.

The final kicker is that we want our dollars to be catalytic, so we are looking at how we can leverage our investments with private and philanthropic dollars. For instance, we are matching

business ownership fund 1:1 with private funds, which is a huge value add for the City's investment and for our businesses.

### **Pandemic supports**

- How are you thinking about the creative economy as you consider leading OED's work and strategies? You've provided information about your intent to focus on the film industry in the short term; what can you tell us about your mid- and long-term thinking for Creative Industries workers?
  - a. During the pandemic, Creative Industries were removed from OED's short list of key industries that drive our city's future – despite the fact that the city's 2019 Creative Economy Study found that the creative sector drives 18% of Seattle's GDP. That's 4x the national average. And we know that a subset of workers in this sector, our arts, culture, film, and music workers, have been among the hardest hit and slowest to recover from the pandemic. Focusing efforts on this sector has the potential not only to help Seattle rebound faster, but to preserve what is so special and unique about our city.

I agree that the creative economy is vital for the health of the local and regional economy. As urban studies researcher Richard Florida asserted in his seminal work, *The Rise of the Creative Class*, "the creative economy is driven by the logic that seeks to fully harness – and no longer waste – human resources and talent."

The creative economy is defined as: "all jobs that use creative skills and produce creative results across all industries". Specifically, the creative economy includes 60 different occupations that represent 250,000 jobs in the Seattle metro area. The creative economy is not one industry. It is a diverse array of industries connected by their shared use of creative skills. Importantly, the creative economy contains – but is not limited to – what are commonly called "creative industries" and "creative workers". OED's creative economy framework builds on the fact that family-sustaining, future-proof, middle-skill jobs are increasingly concentrated in occupations that require creative skills. Therefore, economic and workforce development agencies must focus on connecting the workforce to pathways that provide these skills and contribute to the growth of industries where these occupations are concentrated.

As OED looks for opportunities in the creative economy, strategic priorities will focus on occupations that are projected to grow significantly over the next five years, pay at minimum family-sustaining wages (for entry-level or early-career workers), and do not require a four-year degree for entry.

Currently, OED is working to transmit a Creative Economy framework to city council that will outline the three-phased approach the department recommends that will:

- Strengthen the current support the office provides for creative industries —film, music, special events, and nightlife

- Use existing funding to support economic recovery for creative economy small businesses, entrepreneurs, artists, and other creative workers
- Identify key gaps to fill in the department's current creative economy portfolio for future investment and policy development, and
- Work with creative economy partners to develop long-term priorities for investment

To aid us in that work, OED is working to unlock the proviso on the Creative Industries staff role to add expertise and capacity to our team.

Again, a healthy creative economy is vital to the health of our local and regional economies. But we will focus on capitalizing on opportunities that have the greatest potential to generate high quality jobs and wealth-creation opportunities for marginalized communities.

- What lessons have you taken from the new supports for small businesses that OED stood up during the pandemic, such as the Small Business Stabilization Fund, TA for businesses applying for federal relief in multiple languages, and a commercial lease amendment toolkit? Should any of this be sustained as we begin to emerge from the worst of the pandemic restrictions?

The pandemic made it starkly clear how challenging it can be to own and operate a small business, especially a main street business, and how thin the margin is between a business that is struggling and in need of support and a business that is on stable footing and able to weather challenging times and emerge poised for growth.

The pandemic also made it clear how resourceful and innovative our small businesses can be – how many times did we hear or read about a small business that pivoted into a new model or line of business or way of operating?

The overall lesson we should take from the pandemic is that small businesses are vital to our economy, both as employers and wealth-creation engines, and that the broader economic ecosystem needs to do a much better job supporting them and making it easier for them to do business.

The OED team stepped up big time to put federal dollars to work helping businesses in need, for example getting over \$13 million grant dollars out to businesses via the Small Business Stabilization Fund or \$6.8 million in Neighborhood Economic Recovery Fund grants to support our neighborhood business districts. We need to continue getting smarter about “the color of money” and how to use different revenue sources for different projects. We also need to do more regional organizing to go after significant federal and state dollars, since they have larger pots of money for economic development.



We also learned what a barrier language can be for small businesses. While OED has done incredible work to translate and interpret materials for business owners, including standing up an innovative and effective Language Line, we still were not able to meet all the businesses language needs, especially on tight deadlines. We will continue to prioritize language access for our technical assistance and other communications and will do more work with other departments to make sure that we are coordinated in our language access approach. For instance, I want to make sure we work with the utilities and departments responsible for business licensing to make sure we are thinking through how we are conducting outreach to businesses, what languages we are using, and how responsive we are being to requests for help.

Finally, we need to make it easier to start and run a small business in Seattle. It's hard enough doing the day-to-day work of running a business without the City making it harder, whether that's paperwork, inspections, fees, etc. I am not suggesting that we do away with all of that. I am suggesting that we take a comprehensive look at what we ask our small businesses to do to exist and ask why and if we can streamline it, make it more accessible, or consolidate it. The public wants a healthy small business ecosystem. They want vibrant, prosperous neighborhood business districts. And they want small businesses generating wealth and jobs, especially for people who have been excluded from economic opportunities. The City should be doing everything it can to encourage those things and taking a hard look at anything that prevents them from developing.

- How are you assessing work that OED set aside to respond to the pandemic – such as Legacy Businesses and mitigating the impact of construction on small businesses – and how are you determining what should be prioritized for implementation now?

Since the world has changed, we need to take the opportunity re-evaluate every project, including work that we set aside during the pandemic. We should prioritize our work based on the new role OED will play as an “economic orchestrator” – identify the opportunities and put together the pieces to take advantage of them.

To maintain our focus, I want to work more closely with Council to understand your economic interests and concerns and how we are positioned to address them. The earlier we can have conversations about your priorities, the earlier we can start thinking about how to address them within our capacity and workplans. What I want to avoid is a variety of rogue expectations that we cannot deliver on and creates the sense that OED is not listening to or working with council.

So, the way that we will prioritize is by understanding where the opportunities are, discussing those with relevant partners at the City and in community, and making smart choices based on our capacity and ability to deliver results.

- What kind of small business rent stabilization regulations do you believe will be needed to help small businesses and nonprofits transition to stability once the existing City COVID civil emergency is lifted (at which point protections that Council previously approved – such as a ban on rent increases and protections around payment plans for arrears to support small businesses and nonprofits seriously impacted by restrictions tied to the civil emergency – will end)?

Ensuring that small businesses and nonprofits that serve community can remain and thrive in place is critical – these institutions are the connective tissue between people and places. While the City has limited control on the real estate market, OED plays a critical role in two primary channels (however, the latter is not a space we have direct control over).

1. Program Development: Rent stabilization cannot be accomplished via mere short-term grants. OED has several programs to help small businesses grow and remain sustainable in an everchanging marketplace.
  - OIS Business District team invests in community-based organizations that can offer direct assistance and coordinate with organizations like Communities Rise to provide legal assistance.
  - OED can help with reimaging small business models in a changing labor market and macroeconomic headwinds, like inflation, so that businesses are more resilient have diversify revenue sources.
2. Policies and regulations: This is a complex and complicated area, where, again, OED does not have a lot of control, but to really address commercial affordability, we will need policy solutions not just more programs. Here are just a few ideas:
  - Property tax exemptions or reduction of fees for historical buildings owners that are willing to keep small business in place via subsidized rent
  - Unlocking commercial space in Office of Housing investments to ensure business growth rooted in communities
  - Exploring pathway to community ownership models, which would ensure that successful small businesses are able to obtain commercial space ownership and generate generational wealth

### **Relationship with Council**

- What steps will you take to ensure that you work effectively with the City Council? How will you ensure that Councilmembers and staff have the information needed to make policy and financial decisions?

First, I want to work with City Council. I see so many opportunities to help businesses, workers, and communities coming out of the pandemic and the only way we will be able to fully take

advantage of those opportunities is for the City to be coordinated, to have trust between the different branches, and to work collaboratively to find, shape, and sharpen the best ideas we can come up with.

Second, I will be transparent and forthright about what OED's doing and try to establish trust and communication channels early on. I strive for no surprises and having an open door. And I would hope for the same in return. I believe those values are foundational to functional relationships.

Third, and this goes back to some of what I wrote for other questions, OED needs to be clearer about its role and identity in the economic development ecosystem so that Council has a clear picture about what we are trying to do and how we are trying to do it. Now, different Councilmembers might have differing ideas about OED, which leads to different expectations and different project ideas, and that can lead to misunderstandings. I hope that we can work together to make sure that OED is focused and executing well on a set of common priorities that create meaningful and measurable impact.

Fourth, OED needs to build out our research and data capacity. I want our team to be able to answer questions about the local and regional economy swiftly and accurately. We should be helping drive and shape the economic indicators that we are all using to evaluate what's working, what's not, and how we can make more progress.

Finally, we put together fantastic field trips to visit businesses and business districts across the city. We have already partnered with some councilmembers and other departments on walking tours, and I would like to do more of those with you – a great way to be on the ground and see what's going on in our local economy while also building useful relationships.

- How will you be responsive to Council requests, specifically regarding priorities that may differ from those of the Executive Branch? Please provide a specific example of how you have effectively dealt with conflicting priorities at the leadership level.

First, gather as much information as possible. Ask questions to understand motivations, intents, and interests from the Mayor's office, from Council, and from businesses and community members.

Second, evaluate the differing priorities – is it because of the concept? Or a budget constraint? Or a process limitation? Communicate and be transparent about constraints, limitations, and process. Often, this step can resolve differences in perspective and help describe a practical way forward.

Third, seek a Venn diagram idea based on information learned and understanding of the problem parameters. This step can often unlock a creative approach to a way forward that achieves mutual interest.

Finally, if it is not going to work out, for whatever reason, be clear about the reasons why.

Those steps are not a prescriptive way of dealing with problems, but rather outline my thinking on setting expectations about my process for dealing with conflict – I am an optimist, so I generally believe that there's a better way to deal with a problem than the initial point of view that generated a disagreement. That is not always the case, which is why being forthright and clear about what is not working and why is important to me. Disagreement is healthy and should be embraced as a necessary and useful part of government, but rarely is it worth burning bridges or destroying trust over.

At the end of the day, I work in the Executive Branch. OED will actively work with Council to achieve their priorities, but sometimes the call is out of my hands.

### **Race & Social Justice**

- What part of the mandate to advance equity and race & social justice, which is central to the missions of most City departments and offices, is unique to the work of OED?

In 2020, as the acting President and CEO of the Seattle Metro Chamber, I gave a speech to a group of business, media, and civic leaders about how the future of our region must be both pro-business and antiracist. My perspective hinges on a quote from Dr. Raphael Bostic, chair of the Atlanta Federal Reserve, who wrote, in the wake of George Floyd's murder,

“By limiting economic and educational opportunities for a large number of Americans, institutionalized racism constrains this country's economic potential. The economic contributions of these Americans, in the form of work product and innovation, will be less than they otherwise could have been. **Systemic racism is a yoke that drags on the American economy.**

**This country has both a moral and economic imperative to end these unjust and destructive practices.”**

An inclusive economy is a competitive, prosperous economy. Any economy's most valuable asset is its people. The total knowledge and capabilities of U.S. workers is worth \$240 trillion, or 10 times as much as the total value of all urban land in the country. This means that developing and deploying talent – whether in the form of skilled workers, innovators, or business owners – is the fundamental driver of economic prosperity.

This is not just a theory: a remarkable 40% of U.S. economic growth from 1960 to 2010 was driven by inclusion of women and people of color in the labor market. Yet massive racial inequities persist in terms of employment, income, and wealth – and many of these disparities worsened in Seattle over the past two years. These disparities are holding back the entire economy. The Seattle metro economy would be an estimated \$33 billion larger *each year* if

racial income disparities were eliminated. Seattle's ability to chart a trajectory of long-term vibrancy will depend on its ability to realize the full potential of all of its workers, businesses, and neighborhoods.

Closing the racial wealth gap, diversifying talent in high-income jobs, championing inclusive business practices, and targeting investments to help BIPOC business grow will all be core elements to OED's work. As we become more of an "economic orchestrator" we will not be doing these things alone – we will be using our position to drive alignment inside and outside the City toward these important activities all in service of the moral and economic imperatives to end systemic racism and create One Seattle, where everyone will be able to participate in our economic success.

- How can OED build upon work to advance equity and race & social justice in other departments/offices (Office of Housing, Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs, OPCD, etc.) while avoiding redundancies or "reinventing the wheel"?

There's great potential for more collaboration with other departments to have greater impact. We need to be coordinated on our goals and approach to equity.

When OED interacts with other departments on projects and programs, I think it is important to start with the question "who benefits?" If we start there, that can ground our work in making sure we are thinking through the "why" for a project or program at the front end.

I have already experienced cross departmental efforts that jump right into the details and mechanics, which creates the risk that we just go about City business in the same way rather than taking the time to evaluate the opportunity and be creative in our approach. I think that is part of how some of the economic and workforce development work has gotten so fragmented and siloed.

A few examples of work we are doing with other departments that illustrate how we are working to advance equity:

- Working with OIRA on how we conduct outreach to businesses and communities about workforce opportunities. We will be asking for a shared position focusing on workforce development issues and OED will also ask for a position focusing on immigrant business outreach and engagement.
- As mentioned above, working with OH and OPCD on a coordinated approach to generating affordable commercial spaces as part of new affordable housing developments.
- Working with DON on their intergenerational wealth project, which dovetails with much of our efforts.

- How do you intend to create an inclusive, welcoming workplace environment that empowers employees to take the initiative and potentially challenge existing practices to advance more equitable solutions? Please provide a specific example of how you changed your approach to an issue or project in response to feedback from employees.

A welcoming and inclusive workplace starts with each person on the team feeling valued, listened to, and that their contributions have meaningful impact.

I am always interested in finding ways to make our office function better and never concerned with who generates those ideas – we want each of our staff to feel like they are empowered to make recommendations and proposals.

A recent example is this year's budgeting process. Our employees had not felt engaged or included in developing prior department budget proposals. Yet many were vocal about their desire to have more input and understand the process. So, in response, our M Team asked staff for their ideas and tried to be clear about the vision for the budget proposal and the different components that we were developing. We are still in the budget development process, but I have been impressed and excited by the participation and the ideas generated by the team in this more inclusive process.

### **Climate Action**

- What role, if any, does OED play in meeting our Climate Action Plan goals or climate protection in general?

First, OED needs to collaborate more with OSE, on both strategy and tactics for the Climate Action Plan. As I have written above, opportunities abound, it is more about how we prioritize and organize to take advantage of them. For instance, we should coordinate more about workforce needs – there will be quality jobs in the trades on projects large and small to improve energy efficiency and climate resiliency.

Second, OED should support our growing clean technology industry. We have incredible clean tech companies here, but the City has not been consistent or clear how we will support the industry. We need to build relationships, listen to their needs, and find ways to provide support to this important and transformative sector.

Third, we need to communicate clearly with small businesses about how they can be a part of climate action – sometimes it can feel too big or too costly for small businesses to engage, but there is an opportunity for OED to work with City Light and SPU, among others, to design programs tailored to small businesses and meet them where they are to take meaningful action. Plus, if designed correctly, those programs can end up saving businesses money, like the Envirostars program.