Department of Utilities (DOU) Progress Report FY 2023/24

Message from DOU Director Pravani Vandeyar

The mission of the Department of Utilities is to provide customers dependable, high quality drinking water, storm water, and wastewater services in a safe, fiscally responsible, and environmentally sustainable manner. Our vision is to be an innovative steward of a trusted utility department. Our goal of Organizational Performance -- to develop and retain an engaged, diverse, and professional workforce in an organization that demands accountability and innovation, ensures cost-effective operations and employee safety --is related to the City's overall equity strategy.

Establishing a culture of racial equity demands deliberate action and dedication. The DOU racial equity statement serves as a catalyst for enhanced collaboration with a strong commitment to fostering equity. Guided by our racial equity statement, we pledge to seamlessly integrate racial equity across all facets of our operations and initiatives. We acknowledge and appreciate the staff who have dedicated time and effort to move our department's plan forward.

Our long-term goals and the action items for the upcoming year include:

1. Increase the basic knowledge of the city's youth on careers in government service and receive opportunities for preparing for those careers.
    a. Identify high schools and strengthen community partnerships with career technical education programs that fit STEM, utilities, and technical careers to provide City career information.
2. Develop an applicant pool for all positions that reflects the racial and gender diversity of the City of Sacramento.
    a. Improve access to printed and online recruiting materials in communities of color and women by profession, industry, and fields.
    b. Create flyers or other materials that provide more detail about DOU and/or specific recruitments.
    c. Create a method to highlight the good work of City employees and the importance of City work.
    d. Continue to advocate for apprenticeship program approval by the unions working with Human Resources.
3. Foster employee career development while supporting racial and gender equity.
    a. Create career ladders to provide equitable career pathways to employees, within the Department or across the City.
    b. Develop a tiered-approach Skills Matrix to fairly and consistently evaluate job performance in an effort to eliminate bias.

This year, we reached key milestones, including:

1. Developed educational materials and videos that showcased DOU careers along with recruitment information to promote city employment.
2. Partnered with Sacramento Community Colleges and Sacramento City Unified School District to promote and fill student intern positions.
3. Coordinated career matrix development by engaging Supervising Plant Operators and administrative staff. Valuable lessons were learned through this process that will influence the future development of this tool.

I am pleased to present this progress report on our ongoing efforts to advance racial and gender equity within our department. Our workforce is rich in diversity, reflecting the varied communities we serve, and it is crucial

that our policies, practices, and opportunities are equitable for all. This report outlines the progress we have made, while also highlighting areas where we must continue to improve. As a provider of water-based utilities, our commitment to equity is not just a priority, it is a cornerstone of our mission to serve our community with integrity and fairness.

Sincerely,

Pravani Vandeyar

Director, Department of Utilities

DOU Equity Team

The Department of Utilities has a core committee of managers who lead the department's efforts related to the City's Race & Gender Equity Action Plan, which includes recruitment outreach and the development of tools to aid with career pathways. Two sub-committees have been established to focus on these efforts, named Career Pathways and Community & Youth Career Outreach (CYCO).

The CYCO sub-committee leads the department in seeking out opportunities within the community to promote our career opportunities. We have built partnerships with the local high schools and colleges, sharing information about our variety of jobs and careers that many people don't know exist. We developed a webinar that we held for the Sacramento City Unified School District, showcasing many of our careers. We continue to develop materials to educate the community about career opportunities in utilities. In this past fiscal year, we attended 20 career fairs or similar events, and the Water Division hosted Water Discovery Day at the Sacramento River Water Treatment plant, offering tours of the facility to the community. We have seen a decrease in our vacancy rates, going from a high of 18% in May 2022 down to 13% in 2024. Although we cannot be certain of the reason for this change, we would like to believe that our outreach efforts have contributed to this positive change. Also interesting to note is according to the Citywide Applicant Diversity dashboard, there was a significant increase in the number of Department of Utilities applicants in 2024 from 3,036 to 4,316 (+1,280). There were minor increases in the number of Black or African American and Asian applicants (2% in each category) and a 2% decrease in White applicants. There was also a 3% increase in the number of female applicants.

The Career Pathways sub-committee supports department efforts to reduce bias in the performance evaluation process and provide resources for supervisors and staff to support professional growth and development conversations. In FY2023-24, the sub-committee completed the first draft of the career pathways matrix and training program for the DOU Plant Operators classification series. Additionally, the sub-committee received valuable feedback from the Supervising Engineers on the use of their matrix, which they have been using for several years, used as a basis for the Plant Operators matrix. Based on this feedback, additional edits have begun to improve the useability of the Plant Operators matrix.

DOU Racial Equity Statement

The Department of Utilities is committed to racial equity in all aspects of our work. We recognize that achieving racial equity requires intentional effort and continuous action. We are dedicated to addressing systemic disparities, discrimination, and biases to create a more equitable and just society.

We advance racial equity by providing equitable water, wastewater, and stormwater services to City utility ratepayers. We must ensure compliance with regulations and permits, such as state law, “Proposition 218.” This can cause challenges for us to explicitly address racial equity because we are limited by the parameters of some of these regulations.

Our commitment to racial equity is addressed by providing a high level of service to all our customers to ensure public health and safety.

We are accountable to our many care holders, including City staff, City departments, ratepayers, regulatory agencies, Sacramento Utilities Rates Advisory Commission, City Council, and regional partners.

We will identify historical inequities in our service and infrastructure to help us determine what issues must be addressed and how to move forward more equitably. We will develop policies, procedures, and practices to make sure we don’t continue to perpetuate inequities and serve our community and customers equitably.

As we identify inequities, we must determine what data can be collected and analyzed to determine where we are at and the growth we are making over time. We should identify and work with other departments that may be using this data to more effectively collect and map out this information.

We will seek to engage with a diverse group of community members to get new perspectives on how the policies, practices, and procedures of government agencies have created inequities related to water, wastewater, and stormwater services. We will seek to create a policy to ensure we incorporate equity into our planning and decision making by asking those same questions. We will also explore how to create a group of public advisors to evaluate these discussions and decisions.

Establishing a culture of racial equity demands deliberate action and dedication. The Department of Utilities racial equity statement serves as a catalyst for enhanced collaboration with a strong commitment to fostering equity. Guided by our racial equity statement, we pledge to seamlessly integrate racial equity across all areas of our operations and initiatives.

Sincerely,

Pravani Vandeyar

Director of Utilities

Department of Utilities

Outcome Statement, Action and Objectives	Status/Progress to Date	Performance Measures	Careholders	Successes
From the 14 Outcomes of the Race & Gender Equity Action Plan (RGEAP). Include any areas of the 43-Equity Point Assessment Roadmap Tool connected to this outcome, and any specific actions or objectives from the Outcome.	Share major steps your team has taken to move toward the stated objectives.	What indicators did you or will you use to measure success? (Quality and Quantity of Effort)		Provide a narrative of notable best practices and successes that have been achieved beyond just restating the performance measures achieved.
#2. Sacramento youth of color and young women have a basic knowledge of careers in government service and receive opportunities for preparing for those careers a. Engage with diverse youth about career readiness and development. b. Strengthen community partnerships with educational institutions. c. Identify high schools with career technical educations programs that fit STEM, public safety, and technical careers with the City of Sacramento. **#4. The applicant pool for all positions reflects the racial and gender diversity of the City of Sacramento** a. Improve printed and online recruiting materials in communities of color and women by profession, industry, and fields. b. Create flyers or other materials that provide more detail about DOU and/or specific recruitment. c. Create a method to highlight the good work of City employees and the importance of City work.	In FY 2023-24, the Youth Education/Outreach and Community Outreach subcommittees merged into one subcommittee this past fiscal year. This new sub-committee is called Community & Youth Career Outreach (CYCO) This sub-committee meets on a monthly bases to discuss outreach opportunities and prepare for those events. 1) DOU participated in 20 outreach events, for both youth and the community. 2) Outreach Flyers updated: a) Current Job Openings with QR code linking to city's employment website b) Entry Level jobs in DOU c) How to sign up for notifications of job postings with QR code d) Specific Job ladders with qualifications for each level within a specific classification series. E.g., Plant Operator, Serviceworker, & Machinist series. 3) Developed & conducted webinar for Sacramento City Unified School District (SCUSD) 4) Created informational binders for the educational path to becoming a Plant Operator. 5) Continue to utilize the boost function in NeoGov to advertise recruitments on diverse sites to enhance outreach efforts beyond our commonly used, area specific websites. 6) Continue to interview DOU employees who want to share their "career journey". This info is intended to be used to share with the community about our jobs and what path lead to the different areas of work within DOU.	1) Number of job fairs & community events attended for recruitment outreach 2) Number of brochures produced educating the community about our career opportunities 3) New locations identified for advertising job postings 4) New materials produced showcasing our department's careers NOTE: We intend to develop new performance measures and goals for the upcoming fiscal year	Recruitment Engagement Committee members, DOU Executive Team, & DOU Employees	1) Developed exciting videos, showcasing our careers and staff members. 2) Partnered with Sacramento City College to hire 2 students from their Chemical Technology Program in our Water Quality Lab for the semester. This was successful, so we are continuing this partnership this fall, hiring 2 new students from their program. 3) We had an foreign exchange student from UC Davis work with us as a volunteer for 2 months, learning about our water quality and treatment processes, to bring back to his country, Timor-Leste. 4) Through our webinar with Sacramento City Unified School District (SCUSD), we had interest from a high school student to work with us over the summer, interested in some of our hard-to-fill positions.
#10. Fosters employee career development while developing and supporting racial and gender equity. a. Create career ladders to provide race and gender equitable career pathways to employees, within their Department or across the City. (Outcome 10, Action 2). b. Develop tiered approach Skills Matrix to fairly and consistently evaluate job performance & communicate race and gender equitable promotion pathways and potential, providing clear expectations and removing bias. (Outcome 11, Action 1) c. Provide training and clear performance expectations for both supervisors and supervisees. (Outcome 11, Action 2b) d. Develop tiered approach performance evaluation system that support supervisors in providing developmental feedback that communicates standards of excellence, racial and gender equity values, high expectations, and eliminating bias. (Outcome 11, Action 2)	In FY 2023-24, the Career Pathways Sub-committee made significant progress toward the development of its first career pathways matrix and development of a training program for the DOU Plant Operator series. Specific accomplishments included: 1. Working with the Supervising Plant Operators to complete a draft of the proposed Plant Operator series matrix, including the specs and skills sections for each classification in the series. 2. Receiving valuable feedback from the DOU Supervising Engineers who have been using a matrix operationalized years ago for performance evaluations and career development discussions with staff in the Engineering Classification series. 3. Utilizing an episode from the “Big Bang Series” television show, performed mock performance evaluations of the main character, Sheldon, to test the functionality of the Engineering and Plant Operator matrices and its scoring criteria. 4. Leveraging feedback from the “Big Bang Series” performance evaluation training exercise and meetings with Supervising Engineers and Plant Operators, held discussions regarding how to simplify the use of the matrix and how it is used - for professional development/coaching only or also to provide standards for each classification tied to ratings to reduce potential for bias on performance evaluations.	1) Number of classifications with career pathway matrices 2) Number of employees supported with career pathway matrices by classification 3) Number of supervisors using career pathway matrices to provide equitable and bias-free performance evaluations 4) Number of new career pathway matrices developed in the last year 5) Number of employees and supervisors who completed career pathway matrix user training.	Recruitment Engagement Committee members, DOU Executive Team, & DOU Employees	Though the process of developing the Plant Operators matrix and associated training program has been lengthy, there are a couple of successes we can celebrate. First, a major success this year was the engagement and participation of the Supervising Plant Operators and administrative staff in the matrix development process. Each meeting included a collaborative exchange of many great ideas and demonstrated a deep investment in creating a tool to improve the performance evaluation process and help staff with career advancement. Last, while it may not seem like a success since we are still working through finalizing the matrix, the process of creating the draft has helped us to understand where opportunities exist to improve it, which will ultimately help DOU with the timely creation of more matrices in the future. The sooner these tools become available, the more employees we can help and achieve the performance measures this committee has set out to accomplish.