Climate assessment and recommendations to address allegations of racism and discrimination in the Winston-Salem Fire Department; including resources and support the WSFD and the City will need to build an inclusive environment for all City departments, and employees, to include training, technical assistance, staff development and accountability.
December 31, 2020

Lee Garrity
City Manager
City of Winston-Salem
101 N. Main Street
Winston-Salem, NC 27101

Damon Dequenne
Assistant City Manager
City of Winston-Salem
101 N. Main Street
Winston-Salem, NC 27101

Trey Mayo
Fire Chief
City of Winston-Salem
725 N. Cherry Street
Winston-Salem, NC 27101

Dear Mr. Garrity, Mr. Dequenne and Mr. Mayo:

WPR Consulting, LLC is pleased to transmit this report, which contains our analysis, assessment and recommendations for the Winston-Salem Fire Department. The primary purpose of our assignment was to plan, develop, implement and facilitate a comprehensive diversity and inclusion project that will address allegations of systemic racial issues in the City’s Fire Department (WSFD) and to make recommendations to improve WSFD’s organizational culture, processes and policies to make them more inclusive.

During our assessment process, we were impressed by the high level of cooperation and input by WSFD personnel, including the Chief and his leadership team, various community organizations, including OMNIBUS and Hate Out of Winston, and multiple individuals who shared their thoughts, perceptions and concerns about the WSFD, and the City of Winston-Salem. While the WSFD is doing well in many areas, any human enterprise can be improved, so this report focuses on the opportunities, rather than the accomplishments.

We appreciate your cooperation and support as we did this work, as well as that of your employees, stakeholder groups and other interested parties. We also appreciate the assistance of everyone who supplied us with feedback, data and information as we completed this process. It was our pleasure to serve the community of Winston-Salem.

Sincerely,

Willie Ratchford
Willie Ratchford, President
WPR Consulting, LLC

Anthony W. Wade
Anthony W. Wade, PhD, SHRM-CP
WPR Consulting, LLC
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WPR Consulting, LLC (Consultants) was retained by the City of Winston-Salem, North Carolina to complete an assessment of allegations of racism and discrimination in the Winston-Salem Fire Department (WSFD); and develop a list of recommendations, resources and support the WSFD would need to build an inclusive environment for all of its personnel to include training, technical assistance, staff development and accountability. The primary purpose of this process was to perform a culture/climate assessment of the WSFD; gather information regarding perceptions of racism and discrimination in the department from WSFD employees and others; use a SWOT Analysis and visioning process to identify the fire department’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, and potential growth areas as it relates to diversity, equity and inclusion; and develop and facilitate a comprehensive diversity, equity and inclusion training module that can be used to improve the cultural competency of fire employees and other city staff as needed.

A key component to having a successful community is the ability of all residents to feel that they are in fact a part of that community; and that they can trust that the people they work with and meet everyday view them as fellow residents, or employees, who also care and have a point of view. Lack of community cohesion may be caused by historical issues, perceptions of historical mistreatment and injustice, collective failure to hold one another accountable, or a perception that no one will help or listen when they believe they, or people like them, have been treated unfairly or not fully accepted. Perceptions of a lack of community cohesion or a sense of belonging can lead to a view of Winston-Salem (and its fire department) as two communities, separate and unequal, along many lines, where some people enjoy relative comfort while some struggle to make a decent living or feel comfortable, safe and accepted.

There are many factors that lead to growth and expansion in a city like Winston-Salem and its fire department, including development of human and social capital; and cultural competency. To expand human and social capital, and improve cultural competency, a community must be intentional about investing in all people and having tough conversations that can lead to acknowledgement, reconciliation, healing, a
shared sense of community and a mutual vision of the future where everyone feels safe, valued, and that they are being treated fairly, regardless of their race, gender or ethnicity. With a series of focus group and community conversations and engagements beginning in October 2020 and ending in December, the Winston-Salem Fire Department has taken a giant step in the right direction to address perceptions of racism and discrimination in the department.

To create a future where the needs of all personnel in the WSFD are taken under consideration, like many cities across the country, Winston-Salem understands that it must address perceptions and issues of racism and discrimination, as well as diversity, equity and inclusion; find ways to create partnerships and collaborations across lines of difference, including race and cultural competence within the WSFD. The fire department must improve trust and transparency between various groups who make up the department, and the community, and find ways to continually improve its cultural competency, and human and social capital.

WPR Consulting used a variety of analytical and management techniques in completing this process and making an assessment on the cultural climate of the WSFD. We reviewed documents, read news articles, and met with and interviewed relevant staff and community groups and individuals to obtain information about opinions, perceptions, observations, beliefs and concerns on allegations of racism and discrimination in the WSFD. As a result of this work and engagement, the Consultants note the following key information:

**Consultants’ Assessment of Allegations of Racism and Discrimination in WSFD**

One of the primary requests of the Consultants was to complete an assessment of allegations of racism and discrimination in the WSFD. After engaging over 100 individuals (mostly fire service staff, city officials, community organizations and individuals), the Consultants make the following assessments:

- Some community groups, including current and former fire staff, have expressed a concern that they believe Chief Trey Mayo is racist. However, none of the more than 100 personnel interviewed across demographics (White, Black, Latino, Asian) shared this concern in the group sessions.

- The WSFD, in and of itself, is not a racist organization, however, there are individuals who are employed by the department who are viewed as racists. Multiple fire service staff (both Blacks and Whites), who participated in the focus group discussions, alleged that racism and discrimination occurs in the department.
• Racial, and especially cultural, tensions exist within the WSFD, due in part to the geographical demographics of the employee pool used by the department.

• There is a perception by some within the WSFD, both Black and White, that there is no racism or discrimination in the department.

• The WSFD has not done enough to tell its own story about the great things that happen in the department. Many of these things are identified in the WSFD history section of this report. Failure to do this has allowed other narratives in the community to define the WSFD.

• Due to the size of the WSFD, the demographic makeup, and the number of shifts, the number of fire personnel and fire stations needed to address fire safety in the city, the WSFD has single-race stations/shifts (all White or all Black), including in African-American communities.

• In the WSFD, there are major concerns about holding one another accountable on issues of race and other issues.

• There is a strong perception held by Black and White staff, within the WSFD, that the severity for discipline in the WSFD is dependent on the race of the individual who is being reprimanded.

• Racial tensions in the WSFD are driven, in part, by Facebook postings that are perceived as expression of First Amendment rights by some staff and perceived as racist by other staff.

**History of the WSFD**

• The history of the WSFD shows a very progressive fire department that hired and formed the city’s and the state’s first integrated Fire Company in 1951.

• In 1973 Sandra Waldron was hired as a Public Safety Officer, making her the first paid woman firefighter with the WSFD. Upon her retirement in 2001 she had achieved the rank of Battalion Chief. Later research revealed that she was the first paid woman firefighter in the United States.
Since 1980, the City of Winston-Salem has appointed six Fire Chiefs, four African-Americans and two Whites.

Since 2015 the WSFD has:

- Stopped the use of internal assessors for promotional processes. All assessors now come from outside the department.
- Promoted the first Black female battalion chief.
- Promoted the second White female battalion chief.
- Promoted the first Black female division chief.
- Promoted the first White female division chief.
- Promoted the first Black male division chief.
- Promoted the first firefighter directly to captain, a Hispanic male.
- Promoted the first Black female deputy fire marshal.

Other information of note since 2015 is that the WSFD has distinguished itself in the following ways:

- Assigned the first Black captain to Rescue 1, a company of personnel more highly trained and assigned to more technical duties than other companies.
- Four of six Safety and Training Captains are Black. These positions have more autonomy and responsibility than engine or ladder company captains.
- The department’s first and only graduate of the National Fire Academy’s Managing Officer Program is a Black male.
- The first two minorities (Black female, Black male) in department history have been credentialed as Chief Fire Officers by the Center for Public Safety Excellence.
- Two Black senior staff members are enrolled in the National Fire Academy’s Executive Fire Officer Program, and a third minority application is pending.
- First graduate of the International Association of Fire Chiefs’ Diversity Executive Leadership Program, Black female.
- A Black captain is currently assigned to acting status to fill a battalion chief vacancy.
- Assigned four Black captains to attend the Carl Holmes Executive Development Institute at Dillard University for the first time in the history of the WSFD.

Fire service minorities currently make up 55% of WSFD’s senior staff.
Focus Group & Individual Contact Process

The Consultants used “safe space” conversation modules to attain feedback from employees of the WSFD. These same modules, and conversations, to include Q&As, were also used with community groups identified later in this report. The modules are designed to provide a safe space for feedback on a vision for more positive race relations within the Winston-Salem Fire Department.

SWOT Analysis

On October 15, 2020 the Consultants completed a SWOT Analysis and visioning process with the WSFD Executive Team to identify the fire department’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, and potential growth areas as it relates to perceptions of racism and discrimination.

Tough Talk Conversation Module

From the community of Winston-Salem and within its ranks, race, racism and conflict resolution is at the heart of many perceptions and allegations against the WSFD. To address these issues, employees of the WSFD must be willing to take race and racism, and the conflicts they cause, head on. Staff must be willing to communicate with one another and to hold one another accountable. To address this, the Consultants created a race conversation module, “Taking Race and Conflict Head On,” for consideration by the WSFD.

DEI Training Module

The Consultants developed a comprehensive diversity, equity and inclusion training module that can be used to improve the cultural competency of fire employees and other city staff as needed. The Consultants, as a result of this process, will be available to provide “train-the-trainer” training for City employees to facilitate the module and train other employees of the City, including WSFD staff.

Racism and Bias Conversation Module

The Consultants developed a conversation module which will allow employees of the City of Winston-Salem, including WSFD, to have substantive conversations and dialogue on racism and bias, and the effect they have on Black, Brown and White people. The Consultants are also available to provide “train-the-trainer” training for City employees to facilitate this module.
Consultant’s Recommendations

Data and analysis were used to support creation of the nineteen recommendations developed by the Consultants. Some recommendations may require additional follow-up, research, and analysis. The recommendations are informed by all the feedback the Consultants received from participant parties in this process. Detailed summaries of the recommendations are provided on pages 25 – 34 of this report.

Resources and Support

The Consultants also developed a list of resources and support the WSFD and the City may use to build an inclusive environment for all City departments to include training, technical assistance, staff development and accountability. See pages 37 – 40 of this report for the list.

The work mentioned above, is the result of over 100 individuals, representing a wide range of Departmental personnel and external groups, coming together and having meaningful discussions and debates about race relations within the Department and what actions are needed to advance DEI internally and related positive perceptions externally. The possibilities that surfaced from the group sessions can serve as a platform to define and articulate clear and measurable change. While biases and misperceptions were expressed, it was important to hear and value all the individuals in the sessions. Their voices, representing both reality and the perception of it, factual or erroneous, will have to be managed effectively to maintain existing positive programs and initiatives while simultaneously promoting new ones that move the DEI organizational needle forward. The Consultants express their sincere appreciation to each session participant for their time and heartfelt thoughts that were expressed. It is the voices in these sessions that will serve as the catalyst and platform for continued dialogue and partnership in support of the work required to create and sustain diversity, equity, and inclusion in the WSFD.
BACKGROUND

The City of Winston-Salem is an organization of employees of different races, colors, faiths, ethnicities, nationalities and sexual orientations. The city holds the same diverse representation of life as does the world. Winston-Salem’s leaders and staff understand that there is more that unites their city than divides it; and that as an organization that values diversity, equity and inclusion they must remain mindful of the commonalities that comprise the very fabric and makeup of the city and its constituents. The Winston-Salem Fire Department’s (WSFD) workforce is a microcosm of the City of Winston-Salem with the same diverse representations.

It is right that as a diverse organization, Winston-Salem and the WSFD strive for an environment of fairness, equity, inclusion and respect. The WSFD’s path towards equity and inclusion is beneath the feet of its employees as it ventures to communicate about difficult issues, reflect and receive knowledge, foster mutual understanding, and model mutual tolerance and acceptance for all who choose to work for the fire department.

To address Winston-Salem’s desire to address allegations of racism and discrimination in its Fire Department, WPR Consulting, LLC completed an assessment of the areas referenced above and developed a list of recommendations, resources and support the WSFD and the City require to build an inclusive environment for all fire personnel.

The recommendations include training, technical assistance, staff development and accountability. The primary purpose of this process was to perform a culture/climate assessment of the WSFD; gather information regarding diversity and inclusion issues from WSFD employees and others; use a SWOT Analysis and visioning process to identify the fire department’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, and potential growth areas; and develop and facilitate a comprehensive diversity, equity and inclusion training module that can be used to improve the cultural competency of fire employees and other city staff if needed.

WPR Consulting’s team conducted interviews and focus groups with staff of the WSFD, the City Manager’s Office, the City’s Human Relations Department, OMIBUS, Hate Out of Winston, the Winston-Salem Urban League, the NAACP and other community stakeholder
groups and individuals. We reviewed numerous documents provided by staff, including the City’s EEO1 Report by departments, the City’s racial/ethnic demographics, WSFD’s outreach and recruitment strategies, the City’s DEI initiatives and policies, the City’s most recent survey of citizens to evaluate the City’s effectiveness, social media posts by WSFD employees that some found troubling, and steps the City takes to allow its employees, including WSFD staff, to have intentional dialogue/conversation about race and DEI issues.

During this process and engagement, the Consultants heard multiple opinions and perspectives that were gathered through the interviews and focus groups. Opinions and perspectives do not always represent fact, and it was beyond the scope of this process to verify each statement. However, it is important that the leaders of Winston-Salem and the Fire Department understand the range of perceptions in the community, and in the WSFD, and have a plan for addressing allegations that are corroborated and correcting misperceptions when they arise.

During our assessment process, we were impressed by the high level of support for firefighting as a career by fire personnel and the consistently good satisfaction with the work of the organization (WSFD). While the organization is doing well in many areas, any human enterprise can be improved, so this report focuses on the opportunities for improvement, especially around allegations of racism and discrimination in the fire department.

Using the information collected, we developed nineteen recommendations designed to strengthen and improve the organizational business model of the Winston-Salem Fire Department. The recommendations include steps to address concerns about racism and discrimination, address cultural competency, provide guidance for tough conversations on race, improve WSFD’s connections with Winston-Salem’s communities of color, and improve recruitment strategies in communities of color.
The Consultants are of the strong belief that for anyone to understand the present-day cultural climate of the WSFD, you must start off with some of the history of the department, and so we did.

According to the Winston-Salem Fire and Rescue Historical Society, the Winston-Salem Fire Department possesses a dynamic history stretching as far back as 1785, predating most other fire departments in the United States. The history of the WSFD is one of two cites, Winston and Salem, that after 128 years of service joined efforts in 1913 to become what is now known as the "Winston-Salem Fire Department." Throughout its history, the WSFD has made many great historic and technological strides — from having one of the first colonial water systems to having the first paid African-American firefighters in the south. The goal since its inception has been to provide the citizens of Winston-Salem with the best protection against disaster.

On March 1, 1951, Winston-Salem hired and formed the city’s and the state’s first integrated Fire Company housed at Engine Company Number 4 on Dunleith Avenue. During the training of these new additions, White as well as African-American firefighters worked, slept, and trained together. The names of the African-American firefighters were Raphael Black, Willie Carter, Lester Ervin, John Henry Ford, Robert Grier, John Meredith, George Penn, and John Thomas. The fire department was fully integrated by November 1967.

In 1973 Sandra Waldron was hired as a Public Safety Officer, making her the first paid woman firefighter with the WSFD. Upon her retirement in 2001 she had achieved the rank of Battalion Chief. Later research revealed that she was the first paid woman firefighter in the United States - over a Judith Livers who was hired in 1974 in Arlington County, Virginia.

Since 1980, the City of Winston-Salem has appointed six Fire Chiefs, four African-Americans and two Whites:

- On July 21, 1980, Lester E. Ervin was promoted to the position of Winston-Salem Fire Department Fire Chief making him the first African-American Fire Chief in North Carolina.
Chief Ervin was one of the original eight firefighters hired in 1951 to form the city’s first integrated firehouse. He served in that position for 10 years, 1980 to 1990.

- In 1990 Fred Harless, White, was appointed Fire Chief in Winston-Salem. He served in that position for 3 years, 1990 to 1993.

- In 1993, Otis Cooper was appointed Fire Chief in Winston-Salem, making him the second African-American to hold the position. He served in that position for 5 years, 1993 to 1998.

- In 1998, John Gist was appointed Fire Chief in Winston-Salem, making him the third African-American to hold the position. He served in that position for 10 years, 1998 to 2008.

- Anthony Farmer became the fourth African-American Fire Chief in the history of the Winston-Salem Fire Department. He served in that position from December 2008 to December 2015, a total of seven years.

- In 2015 Trey Mayo, White, was appointed Fire Chief in Winston-Salem and currently holds the position.

In addition to the history cited above, the Consultants looked at some of the hiring, promotion, and career development actions taken by Chief Mayo since he was appointed Chief on January 12, 2015 and note the following:

**Hiring**

- Utilized Media Placement Services to target electronic hiring ads to fire service minorities.
- Utilized Segmented Marketing Services for marketing in Black communities.
- Created a majority minority interview panel: one Black female, one Black male, one Hispanic male, one White male.
- Developed a validated physical ability test.
- Made use of a validated written test.
- Participation in local career and cultural fairs, such as those hosted by the Urban League and Hispanic League.
• Created “WSFD Recruiting Profiles” that feature minorities in the department telling their stories of how they found their way to fire service.
• Assigned mentors to recruits during the fire academy.
• Partnered with the Kernersville Fire Department to co-sponsor the fire certification program at Glenn High School.

Promotions

• Instituted the use of a validated written test for the ranks of engineer, captain, and battalion chief.
• Stopped the use of internal assessors for promotional processes. All assessors now come from outside the department.
• Promoted three of four minority candidates who tested for battalion chief.
• Promoted the first Black female battalion chief.
• Promoted the second White female battalion chief.
• Promoted the first Black female division chief.
• Promoted the first White female division chief.
• Promoted the first Black male division chief.
• Promoted the first firefighter directly to captain, a Hispanic male.
• Promoted the first Black female deputy fire marshal.
• Fire service minorities now make up 55% of the department’s senior staff.

Career Development/Job Enrichment Opportunities

• Assigned the first Black captain to Rescue 1, a company of personnel more highly trained and assigned to more technical duties than other companies.
• Four of six Safety and Training Captains are Black. These positions have more autonomy and responsibility than engine or ladder company captains.
• The department’s first and only graduate of the National Fire Academy’s Managing Officer Program is a Black male.
The first two minorities (Black female, Black male) in department history have been credentialed as Chief Fire Officers by the Center for Public Safety Excellence.

Two Black senior staff members are enrolled in the National Fire Academy’s Executive Fire Officer Program, and a third minority application is pending.

First graduate of the International Association of Fire Chiefs’ Diversity Executive Leadership Program, Black female.

A Black captain is currently assigned to acting status to fill a battalion chief vacancy.

Assigned four Black captains to attend the Carl Holmes Executive Development Institute at Dillard University for the first time in the history of the WSFD.

Other

- Recruited the department’s first Black chaplain.
- Appointed the department’s first honorary fire chiefs, two Black males.
- Supported inclusion of Willie Carter and Robert Grier, two of the first eight Black firefighters who integrated Station 4 in 1951, in AT&T’s 2019 Heritage Calendar.
- Supported Elizabeth Bergstone’s submission of “Red, Black—and White” to the 2018 Writer’s Digest Writing Competition. “Red, Black—and White” is the story of the integration of Station 4 in 1951. The piece won fourth place in the Magazine Feature Article Category.

Today, the city of Winston-Salem is the fifth largest city in North Carolina with a population of 242,125. The demographics are 46% White (non-Hispanic), 34.3% African American (non-Hispanic), 10.3% White (Hispanic), 3.03% Other Hispanic, and 2.41% Asian. Winston-Salem’s fire department is the fifth largest in North Carolina with 369 fire personnel. The demographics of the WSFD are 74% White, 21% African American, 3% Hispanic, 1% Asian, and 1% who identify as two or more races. A contrast of the demographics of the city of Winston-Salem with that of the WSFD shows the following:

- Whites make up 56.3% of the general population and 74% of the WSFD.
- Blacks make up 34.3% of the general population and 21% of the WSFD.
- Latinos make up 3% of the general population and 3% of the WSFD.
- Asians make up 2.41% of the general population and 1% of the WSFD.
A breakdown of all positions, by demographics, in the WSFD shows the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position/Rank</th>
<th>Number of Positions</th>
<th>Percentage White</th>
<th>Percentage Black</th>
<th>Percentage Hispanic</th>
<th>Percentage Asian</th>
<th>Percentage 2 or More Races</th>
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<tr>
<td>Chief</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>Shift Training Officers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fire Maintenance Supervisor</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
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<td>Fire Records Specialist</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>369</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
WPR Consulting used a variety of analytical and management techniques in completing this process. We reviewed documents, read news articles, and met with and interviewed relevant staff and community groups and individuals to obtain information about opinions, perceptions, observations, beliefs and concerns on allegations of racism and discrimination in the WSFD. The resulting work is outlined below and on the following pages.

**Focus Group & Individual Contact Process**

The Consultants used “safe space” conversation modules to attain feedback from employees of the WSFD. These same modules, and conversations, to include Q&As, were also used with community groups identified later in this report. The modules are designed to provide a safe space for feedback on a vision for more positive race relations within the Winston-Salem Fire Department. The modules provided feedback, which might be used to create platforms in the City where diversity, equity and inclusion are viewed as standard operating procedure. This feedback was also used to inform the Consultants on recommendations to be made to the City and the Fire Department to address the issues at hand.

The initial in-person contact with leadership staff of the City of Winston-Salem occurred on Friday, September 11, 2020. The consultants met with and interviewed the WSFD Command Staff, the City Manager and his Executive Team, and the City’s Human Relations Director.

The in-person focus group contacts with leadership staff of the WSFD and other fire personnel occurred on October 12 – December 15, 2020. The consultants met with and interviewed the WSFD Command Staff and eleven other focus groups, which consisted of 20 captains, 20 engineers, and 60 firefighters selected from the total population of each rank within the fire department.

In conjunction with the WSFD Chief and his executive staff, the Consultants worked to determine the number and make up of WSFD staff focus groups and conducted 12 sessions with numerous WSFD staff beginning on Monday, October 12 through Tuesday, December 15. Over 100 diverse staff participated, including the Chief, his executive team, and other fire fighters in various classifications.
The WSFD Chief and his executive team worked collaboratively with the Consultants on a selection criterion for the WSFD focus group participants. The Consultants requested the participation of about 25% of the department’s employee population and asked that racial, ethnic and gender diversity be strongly considered. Because of their low numbers, all females and Hispanic employees were selected to participate. For the WSFD Operations Branch, names by rank and seniority were loaded into a spreadsheet and a random number generator was used to select the participants. Twenty captains, 20 engineers, and 60 firefighters were selected from the total population of each rank. This list of names, including gender/race/ethnicity, was sent to the Consultants for review.

After reviewing the list submitted, the Consultants asked the WSFD to amend the list in order to get a better sampling that more closely approximated the current demographics of the WSFD. As a result, a random number generator process was used to remove an even number of White males and increased the sample by the same number of Black males.

Non-senior staff members of administration, the Life Safety Branch, apparatus mechanics, and the battalion chiefs were loaded into a spreadsheet and a random number generator was used to select the focus group. The entire senior staff met as a focus group. WSFD employees not included in the focus groups were also afforded an opportunity to speak with the Consultants one-on-one. In order to do so, they were asked to contact Ms. Francesca Adams of the city’s Internal Audit Division to request a one-on-one meeting with the Consultants. To date, only two requests were made, however, those individuals did not show for their appointed times.

The in-person focus group contacts with Hate Out of Winston and OMNIBUS occurred on October 31, 2020. In addition, the Consultants met virtually with Gary Waddell (OMNIBUS) and the local presidents of the Urban League and the NAACP. The Urban League president and the president of the NAACP spoke highly of the WSFD and how they have collaborated over the years with job fairs and multiple community events. Moreover, the Consultants also participated in multiple consultations with staff of the City Manager’s office and the Chief of the WSFD as needed.

**SWOT Analysis**

On October 15, 2020 the Consultants completed a SWOT Analysis and visioning process with the WSFD Executive Team to identify the fire department’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, and potential growth areas as it relates to perceptions of racism and discrimination.
Tough Talk Conversation Module

From the community of Winston-Salem and within its ranks, race, racism and conflict resolution is at the heart of many perceptions and allegations against the WSFD. To address these issues, employees of the WSFD must be willing to take race and racism, and the conflicts they cause, head on. Staff must be willing to communicate with one another and to hold one another accountable.

If a WSFD employee feels that he or she is a victim of racism or discrimination, that they are slighted racially, or that a fellow employee has said something that may be perceived as racist while at the work place (or otherwise), does something that has racial implications, or that racial accusations are being made, staff members need to feel they can talk about it and can hold one another accountable. Staff should also understand that this means that they agree to be held accountable themselves as well.

To address this, the Consultants created a race conversation module, “Taking Race and Conflict Head On,” for consideration by the WSFD. The module is a useful life skills tool that can be used to address difficult issues, especially race, by personnel of the fire department and allow WFSD staff to agree it is okay to hold one another accountable. Personnel in other departments of the City might also find the module useful. The conversation module is contained in Appendix 1 of this report.

DEI Training Module

The Consultants developed a comprehensive diversity, equity and inclusion training module that can be used to improve the cultural competency of fire employees and other city staff as needed. The Consultants, as a result of this process, will be available to provide “train-the-trainer” training for City employees to facilitate the module and train other employees of the City, including WSFD staff. The DEI module is contained in Appendix 2 of this report.

Racism and Bias Conversation Module

The Consultants developed a conversation module which will allow employees of the City of Winston-Salem, including WSFD, to have substantive conversations and dialogue on racism and bias, and the effect they have on Black, Brown and White people. The Consultants are also available to provide “train-the-trainer” training for City employees to facilitate this module. The module is contained in Appendix 3 of this report.
CULTURAL CLIMATE ASSESSMENT

Based on all variables presented during this process, interview feedback from a Black female division chief, the WSFD Command staff, the City Manager’s Executive Team, and the Human Relations Director; feedback from community groups and individuals; the history of the WSFD; and a review of documents provided by staff, including the City’s EEO1 Report by departments, the City’s racial/ethnic demographics, WSFD’s outreach and recruitment strategies, the City’s DEI initiatives and policies, the City’s most recent survey of citizens to evaluate the City’s effectiveness, social media posts by WSFD employees that some found troubling, and steps the City takes to allow its employees, including WSFD staff, to have intentional dialogue/conversation about race and diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) issues, the Consultants make the following assessments regarding the cultural climate of the WSFD:

• **Perceptions of racism involving Chief Mayo.** Some community groups, including current and former fire staff, expressed a concern that they believe Chief Mayo is racist. However, none of the more than 100 personnel interviewed across demographics (White, Black, Latino, Asian) shared this concern in the group sessions. This coincided with the assertion stated earlier in this document across racial and ethnic demographics that the Winston Salem Fire Department is not a racist organization. Additionally, it was expressed that some of the allegations raised against Chief Mayo occurred under the leadership of previous Fire Chiefs. Many staff, both Black and White, asked why those allegations were not raised, or addressed, at the time that those actions occurred under previous leadership.

• **The WSFD, in and of itself, is not a racist organization, however, there are individuals who are employed by the department who are viewed as racists.** Multiple fire service staff (both Blacks and Whites), who participated in the focus group discussions, alleged that racism and discrimination occurs in the department. During the focus group process and feedback, many fire personnel, both Blacks and Whites, expressed this sentiment. One White male acknowledged that he has heard fire personnel use...
the “N-word” on multiple occasions. Another White male stated that “I’m sure there’s racism in some at the individual level. I hope that it’s at the fringe. When things happen, you talk with your peers to get perspective on how to process what you’ve heard.” A Latino male stated, “a long time ago, you had some captains who were near retirement who made racist comments.” One White male stated matter-of-factly “we have racism in the Winston-Salem Fire Department.” Others, both Black and White, also spoke of instances where women and Black firefighters were victims of discrimination and treated differently by their counter-parts because of their gender or race. A White female stated, “I have not experienced race discrimination in WSFD. I have experienced gender discrimination.”

**Racial and cultural tensions exist within the WSFD.** The WSFD hires personnel from urban communities (often Black or Latino) within the city of Winston-Salem and rural areas/small towns (often White) surrounding the city. After new hires have received their firefighting training, and brought on board, they may be required to work a 24-hour shift ten days per month without getting an opportunity to know one another culturally. This dynamic, in part, is one of the causes of racial and cultural tensions. This was mentioned by multiple personnel including one White male who said, “we spend so much time learning the technical aspects of the job which we spend about 10 percent of our time performing (fighting fires). We need to spend more time learning about interacting with others.” A Black male stated, “some of the White guys have never been around Black people [before]” while another White male stated we have a “whole bunch of people trying to figure it out.” Another Black male stated, “we have an issue with station culture. Issues with unintentional bias because of our differences. A lot of these guys are young. They don’t live in our community. They haven’t had as much exposure or experience with people who don’t look like them. There can be turmoil and conflict due to a lack of understanding.”

**There is a perception, within the WSFD, that there is no racism or discrimination in the department.** This sentiment was expressed by both Blacks and Whites, in multiple instances. Many (both Black and White) expressed that they did not know that there might be a racial concern/problem in the department until they heard that concern in the media. Several Blacks stated that they were not represented by any activist group and that the activist groups who were in the media did not speak for them. One Black male stated “[I] never came across racism in [the] WSFD. First time I heard about it was in the media.” Another Black male stated, “the first time I became aware of the rumors was at a press conference by retired firefighters. People tend to hide their true colors that sometimes show up on Facebook. As for the WSFD, it’s a good
department and I haven’t had any experiences with racism.”

• The WSFD has not done enough to tell its own story about the great things that happen in the department. Many of these things are identified in the WSFD history section of this report. Many of the WSFD staff who attended the focus group sessions, both Blacks and Whites, have concerns and beliefs that the department has not done enough to tell their story considering attacks and narratives on the department by outside groups and media. A White male stated, “I don’t like people in the department being painted as racist and leadership hasn’t said anything to defend us in the media.” Many participants stated that the WSFD has good stories to tell and should be more proactive getting those stories out and into the community.

• Due to the size of the WSFD, the demographic makeup, and the number of shifts and fire stations needed to address fire safety in the city, the WSFD has single-race stations/shifts (all White or all Black), including in African American communities. There is a perception and concern that these decisions are intentional for racial reasons. This was a concern that was expressed by multiple Black staff during the focus groups and by others. While some White staff mentioned being on a one race shift or station, it did not seem to be concerning. At the same time some White staff stated that they felt isolated because of these assignments.

• In the WSFD, there are major concerns about holding one another accountable on issues of race and other issues. This was expressed multiple times by Black and White staff during the focus sessions. Many expressed concerns that when inappropriate racial behavior happens in the department, they would just ignore it. One White male acknowledged that he has heard fire personnel use the “N-word” on multiple occasions; however, he never said anything about reporting it or said anything to the persons using the offensive term. Another White male stated “I’m sure there’s racism in some at the individual level. I hope that it’s at the fringe. When things happen, you talk with your peers to get perspective on how to process what you’ve heard.” A White male stated, “Historically, people have heard racist stories and if left unchecked people will continue to believe those stories and they live in people’s minds through
generations." Another White male asked, "Why does that perception exist? It is because I think that there are racists in the WSFD. There have been racists in WSFD historically and there are today, and in other FDs across the country. There have been discriminatory practices and, if left unchecked, they would still go on today."

Other issues expressed around accountability included multiple allegations that whenever one person in the department “messes up,” rather than hold that individual responsible for his/her transgression, the department or division would send an email or communication to the whole department or division about the need not to do what the offending party had done. Staff’s sense is that the WSFD should address the issue with the offending party only, including on racial issues.

- There is a strong perception held by Black and White staff, within the WSFD, that the severity for discipline in the WSFD is dependent on the race of the individual who is being reprimanded. Many Black staff expressed concern during the focus groups that when discipline was called for, Blacks were more severely punished for transgressions than their White counterparts who may have committed the same or a similar transgression. Moreover, some Whites expressed concern that there has been at least one instance where a Black staff committed a transgression(s) that should have called for termination and no action was taken against that person.

- Racial tensions in the WSFD are driven, in part, by Facebook postings that are perceived as expression of First Amendment rights by some staff and perceived as racist by other staff. This may be called a situation of “intent vs. impact.” The intent by staff who may have posted on Facebook is to express their First Amendment rights (regardless of content); however, due to the current racial climate in the country (and in Winston-Salem) and the content of the postings, other staff see the posting as being racist, the impact. Some Black staff in WSFD expressed that because of the impact of the postings they were not sure that they could trust a fellow firefighter to have their back on the job since they may now see that person as being racist. Conversely, some White staff expressed that the racism is coming from Black staff for calling out the staff who may have made the post – that there is now a loss of trust.

The observations in this climate assessment reflect the feelings of over 100 Fire personnel across multiple small group sessions in October and November and December 2020. The overarching themes that surfaced in the group dialogues included, but were not limited to, issues of cultural consciousness, structural and systemic process improvement specific to diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), positive internal/external public information
management, resource support, and individual accountability. The opportunities for positive change emanating from staff commentary during these sessions are both bold and feasible. We believe that the information shared in this document, as well as the full report, will be extremely valuable in DEI deliberations and planning by Fire leadership and City Management. Both have expressed their commitment to sustaining the positive actions of the Fire Department in these areas while continuously promoting those actions internally to its employees and externally to the City’s residents.

Over 100 individuals, representing a wide range of Departmental personnel and external groups, came together and had meaningful discussions and debates about race relations within the Department and what actions are needed to advance DEI internally and related positive perceptions externally. The possibilities that surfaced from the group sessions can serve as a platform to define and articulate clear and measurable change. While biases and misperceptions were expressed, it was important to hear and value all the individuals in the sessions. Their voices, representing both reality and the perception of it, factual or erroneous, will have to be managed effectively to maintain existing positive programs and initiatives while simultaneously promoting new ones that move the DEI organizational needle forward.

We would like to express our sincere appreciation to each session participant for their time and heartfelt thoughts that were expressed. It is the voices in these sessions that will serve as the catalyst and platform for continued dialogue and partnership in support of the work required to create and sustain diversity, equity, and inclusion in the Winston-Salem Fire Department.
CONSULTANT’S RECOMMENDATIONS

Data and analysis were used to support creation of the nineteen recommendations listed below, developed by the Consultants. Some recommendations may require additional follow-up, research, and analysis. The recommendations are informed by all the feedback the Consultants received from participant parties in this process. Detailed summaries of the recommendations are provided below.

1. Design and Implement a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategic Plan and corresponding action plan to provide a sense of direction and measurable goals and objectives for the WSFD, to include:
   a. A vision to make DEI standard operating procedure in the WSFD.
   b. Determine short and long-term goals.
   c. Target initiatives/actions to address allegations of racism and discrimination in the department.
   d. Determine trainings needed to address implicit/unconscious bias; and cultural competence.
   e. An intentional focus on providing implicit bias training for all WSFD employees so that they are aware of how unintentional biases can influence decision-making and perceptions about the department.
   f. Determine how progress will be measured and assess that progress based on meaningful measures.
   g. On-going feedback and a willingness to adjust as needed.
h. Holding all WSFD leadership positions accountable for this plan/work by incorporating DEI quality measures into leadership’s annual performance evaluations/expectations.

i. Building a WSFD that values all personnel and their needs equally and allows for a representative voice and presence throughout all divisions of the department.

**Consultant Feedback:** According to the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE), many current inequities are sustained by historical legacies, structures and systems that repeat patterns of exclusion. Government can implement policy change at multiple levels and across multiple sectors to drive larger systemic change.

Racial equity means you eliminate racial disproportionalities so that race can no longer be used to predict success, and you increase the success of all communities. You set goals and measures to track your progress, with the recognition that strategies must be targeted to close the gaps. Systems and structures that are failing communities of color are failing all of you, economically and psychologically. Advancing racial equity is to your collective benefit.

**2. Increase WSFD DEI awareness and knowledge through employee engagement by:**

a. Reviewing current methods of engagement with staff and the community, especially communities of color, to determine opportunities to leverage resources which promote DEI, transparency, open communications and internal personal relationship building.

b. Developing a cohesive and collaborative communications and marketing plan; take onus to own and tell the WSFD story (externally); highlight WSFD DEI initiatives and opportunities internally.

c. Educating all WSFD staff on the history of race within the department, the good, the bad and the ugly.

d. Training and development.

e. WSFD staff surveys.

f. Engage the WSFD leadership teams.
3. After development, completion and implementation of the WSFD DEI Strategic Plan, follow up with efforts on a communitywide basis by engaging:

   a. Elected officials and other City departments and staff.
   b. Community members.
   c. Community organizations (NAACP, Urban League, Hate out of Winston, OMNIBUS, faith leaders, etc.).
   d. Others – TBD.

4. Community Forums be created to bring residents together for deliberative community dialogues on tough issues and community concerns about the WSFD.

**Consultant Feedback:** In Winston-Salem, racial, ethnic and socio-economic tensions may lead to public discourse and cause polarization in many segments of the community. This does not have to be. The City and the WSFD should take the lead to develop and implement community forums/dialogues to address various topics of concerns about the WSFD, especially those topics that may be difficult to talk about due to race, ethnicity or the many ways we tend to divide ourselves.

Many communities across North Carolina have taken to hosting “Can We Talk? – Conversations” that invite residents of a community to wrestle with significant issues, including allegations of racism and discrimination that confronts the community. Winston-Salem and the WSFD might consider, as a start, community dialogues to address “Can We Talk about Living Together in a Divided Community?” In such a dialogue, a panelist of elected officials, residents of the community, and/or subject matter experts might discuss the following generic questions and concerns:

- Do you think we live in a divided community? What do you point to as evidence? What divisions do you see? Where are the dividing lines?
- If yes, why and how does that affect your ability to advocate or work for change? How does it impact the ability of elected officials to lead?
• Who do you trust? Why? What would make a difference?
• When times are difficult – or when tough decisions are made – how can we work in a way that unites rather than divides us?
• How do we address concerns about the WSFD?

It is recommended that the City and the WSFD be more intentional moving forward and seek ways to engage all residents in deliberative community dialogue around tough issues, especially those related to perceptions about the WSFD.

5. Increase outreach to diverse populations in Winston-Salem.

Consultant Feedback: Over the past 30 years, cities in North Carolina, including Winston-Salem, have become more diverse. The City and the WSFD need to be in the forefront of providing culturally competent services and outreach to Winston-Salem’s growing diverse community. The WSFD needs to provide information on its services through local channels as well as having a presence at local fairs and festivals honoring other diverse cultures. The department should also work collaboratively with local translation and interpretation agencies to provide services to all clients who may need the department’s lifesaving services.

WSFD should work to enhance customer service with a focus on cultural competency by assessing and addressing the special needs of their diverse customer base and reducing the impact of cultural barriers through intentional partnerships with community-based organizations and non-profits serving these groups. The WSFD should also write and design specific departmental publications and materials that are culturally and linguistically appropriate.

6. Provide diversity, equity and inclusion training to employees of the City and the WSFD on a continuous basis.

Consultant Feedback: As components of local government, the City of Winston-Salem and the WSFD are dealing with a customer/client base that has become more diverse. Diversity, equity and inclusion are no longer a matter of Blacks and Whites, but Hispanic/Latinos, Africans, people of Middle Eastern descent, Asians, and many more, including new residents from various parts of America. To address the needs of this expanding and diverse customer base, both the City and the WSFD must engage in outreach that includes the development and implementation of diversity, equity and inclusion training, as well as opportunities and conversations within all cultural groups of the City. The WSFD should be instrumental in the provision of diversity, equity and
inclusion training and engaging its employees, and others, in honest and substantive dialogue and organizational development around DEI.

The training provided by the WSFD should play a role in assisting the City in their commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion, their management of DEI and their support of DEI. This is important because DEI contributes to employee performance and the services the City and the WSFD provide. By promoting an inclusive environment where everyone respects individuals and values contributions of people of different backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives, the employees of the WSFD can enrich and strengthen the quality of the services they deliver, and the careers of all fire service personnel.

The DEI training that the WSFD and the City provide should also be helpful in providing a foundation to develop an overall DEI strategy that might include the following elements:

- The diversity, equity and inclusion strategy is a component of the City's overall plans; and is viewed as standard operating procedure.
- It is used by WSFD, and the City, as a competitive edge.
- The strategy supports the City and the WSFD’s respective missions.
- The strategy is consistently communicated by the City and the WSFD.
- City management and WSFD management walk the talk (their audio matches their video).
- The City and the WSFD solicits and responds to feedback from all their respective employees.
- The diversity, equity and inclusion strategy are used as a selling tool.
- WSFD and the City use a diversity, equity and inclusion competency skill set successfully.
- The strategy provides additional employee benefits for City and WSFD employees.
- There is a clear sense of commitment and responsibility on the issue of diversity, equity and inclusion by the City and the WSFD.
7. **Use community gatekeepers to keep up with the pulse of various community factions.**

**Consultant Feedback:** Residents of Winston-Salem live in a great community; however, like most cities across the country, when it comes to the issues of fairness, equity and inclusion, your work is not done. Based on feedback received during this process, there is a perception among some that tolerance has not always been a common human ideal in the community or the WSFD. Through your work, you understand that as a community you have an obligation to provide equal opportunities for all who choose to participate in the “WSFD experience”. You also understand that you must strive to take assurances that everyone, regardless of their station in life, has an equal opportunity to succeed in the WSFD. To make sure that this happens, the WSFD must continually have its hands on the pulse of the community and its employees. The WSFD cannot do this alone. They must leverage resources, collaborations and partnerships with all relevant constituent groups in Winston-Salem (including especially communities of color) and keep their eyes open and their ears attentive to the many needs of all residents of the community. WSFD partners and collaborators must also be willing to share what they know, what they see, what they hear, what they observe, and what they feel with the WSFD.

8. **Provide funding to the WSFD to hire four Fire and Life Safety Educators who will take the lead on community engagement initiatives, including DEI actions, community conversations, coordination on job fairs and fire education to community groups and neighborhoods.**

**Consultant Feedback:** Address grassroots community engagement where the fire department works to establish relationships with the informal leaders of various neighborhoods/community groups in the City in the same way the Winston-Salem Police Department does with their community engagement units. This can take the form of a risk reduction team operating from the Fire and Life Safety Branch. One of the City Council’s objectives in the 2017-2021 Strategic Plan is to “expand Fire Department community engagement,” including “evaluate the creation of a Community Education Team to provide additional resources for community education programming.” This is a great idea and this initiative needs to be funded by the City.

WSFD has had one fire and life safety educator position authorized since 1980 and the department still has that single position today. About 90% of WSFD resources go toward emergency responses, the part of the fire department everyone can identify. If the City
wants good public engagement/risk reduction programs in the WSFD, then the City should position the department to recruit, hire and train employees with a passion for this type of work then the WSFD must have the necessary funds to support this effort.

Put fire services staff door-to-door, have community talks, engage fire staff in the community more to hear things directly - like the Winston-Salem Police Department’s community-oriented policing approach. Be involved in the community when it is not an emergency. Intentional placing of services door to door in the city. More feet in the streets. Duplicate the police department’s community-oriented policing techniques. If they could do education in the community, they might avoid some of the fires.

Fire service staff in this work would also be expected to interact with neighborhood associations, community watch groups, youth at parks and recreation centers, in schools, etc. to establish relationships that lead not only to a public better educated in risk reduction measures but that also show communities of color that the fire service is a great and attainable career option.

9. **Provide intercultural training for all WSFD staff.**

**Consultant Feedback:** Intercultural training for fire staff who must live together for 24 hours at a time, ten days per month. WSFD has an issue with station culture and issues with unintentional bias because of racial/ethnic differences. Many firefighters are young and don’t live in the community. They haven’t had as much exposure or experience with people who don’t look like them. There can be unintentional turmoil and conflict due to a lack of understanding. This issue was addressed by many of the fire fighters, both Black and White, during the focus feedback sessions.

10. **Partner with the local public-school system to create programs in middle and high school that lead to firefighting certifications and firefighting career training.**

**Consultant Feedback:** Work with the school system to create programs in inner city schools for interested students to attend classes that will allow them to get firefighting certifications by the time they graduate high school. Be more intentional with the school system to encourage them to put the programs in inner-city schools – “that’s where you reach a lot of your Blacks and Hispanics (Glenn HS).” More intentional about encouraging students of color about the possibility of fire service as a career. Both Black and White staff who attended the focus group sessions spoke of the need for this.
11. **Ramp up WSFD public relations, public service announcement (PSAs), and internal communications.**

**Consultant Feedback:** Profile Black and Hispanic firefighters, and especially those in leadership, in WSFD public relations efforts – be intentional to make sure this info reaches the communities of color in Winston-Salem. Many WSFD staff expressed concern in the focus group sessions that the department was not doing enough to get their story out and this allowed the narrative about the department to be driven by outside groups. WSFD might also consider profiling interracial or ethnic friendships/relationships in the department as human-interest stories. Many staff (Black, White and Hispanic), during the focus groups, spoke of solid relationships and friendships across racial and ethnic lines, including gatherings after work and breaking bread together.

Be more intentional about providing platforms which will allow fire personnel to develop personal relationships across racial/ethnic lines – transparency, trust and good race relations will be the by-products of good relationships. “Fellowship table talks.”

Audit internal communications at the fire department. Management’s position is that the WSFD does a good job with this, however, that view is not shared by many down in the ranks. Audit and plans for communications improvement (and consistency) needed due to perception that they are not good, especially from the top down. Perception is reality.

12. **Be more intentional about diverse shifts across all shifts and fire houses.**

**Consultant Feedback:** If the numbers allow, be more intentional about integrating all fire houses and shifts across the community. While the numbers may not allow this at this time, as the WSFD takes future steps to increase the diversity of the workforce, this recommendation will become easier to accomplish. It would also be helpful to educate WSFD staff and the community on why the numbers, at this time, do not allow for the diversity that may be desired per this recommendation.
13. **Conduct a discipline audit at the WSFD.**

**Consultant Feedback:** Conduct a study of discipline in the WSFD to assure consistency across the department and across racial/ethnic lines. Multiple allegations (perceptions), by Black and White staff, that more severe disciplinary outcomes are tied to the race of the person being disciplined even if the offense is the same or similar.

14. **Conduct demographics audit of WSFD by positions.**

**Consultant Feedback:** Revisit WSFD demographics to determine where the department may be short in representation by positions across the department/divisions and develop and implement a strategic plan to address this by a certain time/date in the future (2025 for example).

Be intentional about hiring/promoting persons of color as instructors at the recruiting school – multiple allegations/perceptions that all current instructors are white.

15. **Revisit and strengthen the City’s social media policy.**

**Consultant Feedback:** Revisit the City's/WSFD social media policy – first amendment rights (intent) vs. how what is said is received by coworkers (impact) and make necessary adjustments. Many of the Black fire fighters who felt racism and discrimination is a problem in the WSFD cited the controversy around Facebook postings as evidence that racism is a problem and the department, nor the City is willing to do anything to address the issue.

16. **WSFD Executive Team – have the “talk.”**

WSFD Executive Team meet and talk with departmental leadership (battalion chiefs, division chiefs, captains and others) and talk about, and hopefully, understand why many in the department feel that racism and discrimination exist in the department; get specifics and address as needed; hear them out. Uncover what WSFD truly needs to work on to address these allegations and perceptions.
17. **City of Winston-Salem and WSFD review and assess all administrative policies and use a DEI lens to update them.**

**Consultant Feedback:** City of Winston-Salem and WSFD review and assess administrative policies for updates using a DEI lens. Research peer cities who may be using racial equity and social justice tools to gauge the effectiveness of DEI in decisions, policies, functions and budgets. Such toolkits can be useful when assessing inequities in the development, implementation and evaluation of diversity, equity and inclusion programs and initiatives. Using racial equity and social justice tools to gauge the effectiveness of DEI may provide opportunities to standardize decision-making and strategically maximize diversity, equity and inclusion opportunities for the city and the WSFD.

18. **Designate DEI staff oversight.**

**Consultant Feedback:** City of Winston-Salem designate staff oversight and funding resources at the executive level for the coordination of DEI programs across all city departments:

- Prioritize and identify funding commitment.
- Designate a lead staff position as DEI Manager, with executive level authority.
- Establish department liaisons to continuously identify areas of improvement.

19. **WSFD develop and implement an anti-hazing policy.**

**Consultant Feedback:** Several Black firefighters complained of being victims of hazing where the hazing incident had racial overtones. To avoid any claims of racial hazing, it would be prudent to ban this behavior by policy, if in fact it is not prohibited currently. Cultural insensitivity or a lack of cultural awareness could inadvertently increase racial tensions in the WSFD and escalate to more problems.
CONCLUSION

One of the more interesting aspects of this process was a question to the Consultants by many of the WSFD employee focus group participants and the community focus group participants. “Are you investigating for systemic racism within the Winston-Salem Fire Department?” The answer to this question is no.

The Consultants were contracted to complete an assessment of allegations of racism and discrimination in the Winston-Salem Fire Department (WSFD); and develop a list of recommendations, resources and support the WSFD and the City would need to build an inclusive environment for all City departments to include training, technical assistance, staff development and accountability. The primary purpose of this process was to perform a culture/climate assessment of the WSFD; gather information regarding perceptions of racism and discrimination in the department from WSFD employees and others; use a SWOT Analysis and visioning process to identify the fire department’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, and potential growth areas as it relates to diversity, equity and inclusion; and develop and facilitate a comprehensive diversity and inclusion training module that can be used to improve the cultural competency of fire employees and other city staff if needed.

Winston-Salem is a changing community. You are experiencing growth in population, jobs, businesses, schools and the environment. Many of these changes impact the work of the Winston-Salem Fire Department. To address the changes, the City and the WSFD must move forward with intentional work performance, vision, strategic thinking, collaborative partnerships; and teamwork with the community. The participation of WSFD personnel in the many activities around diversity, equity and inclusion; conflict management, communication and community harmony contribute to the efforts to improve your social capital. Your work, along with your available resources, methodically contributes to the community’s goals of promoting diversity, equity and inclusion, improving the lives of all residents, enhancing communications across the many lines that separate you, addressing public safety, strengthening neighborhoods and advocating for a Winston-Salem Fire Department that works with multiple community groups to encourage acceptance and tolerance; and address perceptions of racism and discrimination within its ranks.
The WSFD is valued by multiple stakeholder groups in Winston-Salem and the work of the department is viewed as essential to the long-term development of the community and the ability of diverse community groups in the community to live together and care about what happens to everyone. The fire department must strive for continuous improvement, never being satisfied with the accomplishments of the past or the success of just a few.

The Consultants received a great deal of feedback from fire personnel, community groups and individuals, City leaders and others. While there were many, both Black and White, who expressed that racism and discrimination are not an issue in the WSFD, just as many, both Black and White, felt strongly that racism and discrimination has been and continues to be an issue in the department. Be that as it may, the Consultants have identified and made suggestions to:

- Address perceptions of racism and discrimination in the WSFD.
- Improve communications.
- Improve organizational development and support.
- Improve community engagement.
- Address diversity, equity and inclusion.

The best organizations strive for continuous improvement, never being satisfied with the accomplishments of the past, both good and bad. They move aggressively and decisively to address problems and seek long term solutions that address the underlying cause. By implementing the recommendations in this report, the City of Winston-Salem and the WSFD can be confident that it is on the right track to making diversity, equity and inclusion standard operating procedure with the City and the fire department.
The Consultants developed a list of resources and support the WSFD and the City may use to build an inclusive environment for all City departments to include training, technical assistance, staff development and accountability. The resource groups are listed below:

**Kelley Consulting Firm**  
Morrisville, North Carolina  

Kelley Consulting Firm is a Human Resources and Management Consulting firm that specializes in management, HR, equity, diversity and inclusion consulting. Kelley Consulting services include HR programs and audits, diversity, equity, inclusion, investigations, training, organizational development, assessments, policy review and development, I-9 Form Audits, grievances, and conflict resolution. Kelley Consulting Firm assists organizations and groups in creating effective relationships to drive group and organizational missions.

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Charlotte, North Carolina  
[wprconsult@gmail.com](mailto:wprconsult@gmail.com)

A full-service *diversity, equity, and inclusion firm* that partners with clients in the public, private, non-profit and higher education sectors to build sustainable social and transformative change. WPR Consulting collaborates with organizational leaders, management and employees to build respectful and inclusive environments that create diversity, equity and inclusion across all business functions. WPR’s range of services include, but are not limited to, environmental scans/SWOT analyses, in-person and virtual employee engagement, personalized DEI training models to improve staff cultural competencies, and culture and climate assessments that will guide the partnerships and actions required for welcoming and inclusive environments.
Racial Equity institute (REI)
Greensboro, NC
https://www.racialequityinstitute.com/

The Racial Equity Institute remains committed to helping leaders and organizations to proactively understand and address systemic racial inequities — both in the organization and in the community where the organization is working.

REI is an alliance of trainers, organizers, and institutional leaders who have devoted themselves to the work of creating racially equitable organizations and systems. REI helps individuals and organizations develop tools to challenge patterns of power and grow equity. REI offers virtual services in addition to in-person services (in accordance with local and state gathering and social distancing regulations).

VISIONS-Inc
Rocky Mount, North Carolina
https://www.visions-inc.org/

VISIONS has a highly trained team of consultants around the United States and abroad. Since 1984, VISIONS has trained more than 115,000 people and, in the last decade, worked with over 500 organizations. VISIONS’ mission is to empower the creation of environments where differences are recognized, understood, appreciated, and utilized for the benefit of all through both time-tested and innovative training and tools, public advocacy, and consulting models addressing the personal, interpersonal, cultural, and institutional levels.

National Coalition Building Institute
Silver Spring, MD
https://ncbi.org/

The National Coalition Building Institute is an international leadership organization that provides training in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in community organizations, K-12 schools, college and university campuses, corporations and law enforcement. The work of NCBI — its mission, its workshops and trainings, its network of resource teams, and its contribution to long-lasting institutional and social change has resulted in recognition including, but not limited to, the Nelson Mandela Award for outstanding international work on fighting racism; the ‘United States Department of Education’s Gender Equity Expert Panel’ cited NCBI’s work on college campuses as a national “best practice”, awarding it the rating of "excellent" regarding educational significance, quality, usefulness, and replicability; and DuPont Corporation designated NCBI’s work as a “Corporate Best Practice.”
Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE)
gare@raceforward.org

GARE’s focus is on normalizing conversations about race, operationalizing new policies, practices and organizational cultures, and organizing to achieve racial equity. GARE sees more and more jurisdictions that are making a commitment to achieving racial equity, focusing on the power and influence of local institutions, and working in partnership across sectors and with the community to maximize impact. There is an increasingly strong field of practice. GARE is organizing in government with the belief that the transformation of government is essential to advance racial equity and is critical to our success as a nation.

Racial Equity and Inclusion – Living Cities
Washington, D.C./New York
www.livingcities.org

Living Cities harnesses the collective power of philanthropy, financial institutions and local governments to close racial income and wealth gaps in American cities.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan
Beaverton, Oregon
www.beavertonoregon.gov

The City of Beaverton’s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan is our commitment to making institutional changes to support equity and justice for all. Drafted by the city’s Diversity Advisory Board, it’s a community-led roadmap to addressing institutional racism and furthering equity across all areas of the city’s work. See this document as well as the foundational research that helps ground it in the lived realities of local communities of color at https://www.beavertonoregon.gov/1217/Cultural-Inclusion

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
City of Elk Grove
www.elkgrovecity.org

In 2018, the City commissioned a Diversity Audit of City government that resulted in the creation of an Inclusion Strategy. See it at http://www.elkgrovecity.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server_109585/File/cityclerk/citycouncil/2018/attachments/08-22-18_10.1.pdf
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
City of Norfolk, Virginia
www.norfolk.gov

Initiative to reflect the city’s diversity and to champion equity and inclusion in city services and call for the sharing of power and creating equitable division of resources and assets.

Diversity and Equity
City of Sacramento
www.cityofsacramento.org

Initiative that called for an inclusive environment that ensures equitable access to resources and opportunities for all. Enables individuals and groups to feel safe, respected and engaged.

The Kaleidoscope Group
Chicago, Illinois
https://kgdiversity.com/about-us/

The Kaleidoscope Group, LLC is a full-service diversity and inclusion (D&I) consulting firm. It is committed to providing customized strategic solutions to address the specific needs of an organization’s culture. We drive sustainable measurable results in the workforce, workplace, community, supplier base, and marketplace. The Kaleidoscope Group partners with its clients to create customized solutions with a consulting approach that brings about tangible sustainable results.
APPENDICES

• Appendix 1: Tough Conversations Module
• Appendix 2: Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Training Module
• Appendix 3: Safe Conversations on How Race and Bias Operate Today Module