

The City's Open Government Steering Committee has prepared the following Summary of Responses and Initial Action Plan.

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#### I. Summary of Responses

Responses were submitted by 291 employees. We thank them for their willingness to take the time to provide their views.

Employees were asked to answer two questions about openness on a "1 to 5" scale and to provide specific comments about the basis for their "1 to 5" rating. We also asked employees what they thought the City already was doing well and what they would like the City to do to provide greater openness.

We are summarizing those comments here, but we are also making available online the text of all the comments for those who wish to dig deeper. <http://slcnet/transparency.htm> (We have not edited the comments, but we have deleted for personal privacy reasons the names of individual employees who were referred to in the comments.)

#### Openness of Salt Lake City with Its Employees

The responses broke down as follows on Question 1—On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being very "open" or "transparent" and 1 being "closed" or "not transparent," where would you place Salt Lake City government today in its openness and transparency with City employees?

1	2	3	4	5	Weighted Average
33	45	105	95	17	3.05

This indicates that overall the respondents basically see the City as being in the middle—neither fully open, nor closed in its openness and transparency with City employees. The average of 3.05 is similar to the public response in the survey on how open or transparent the City is with the public.

### Openness of City Employees with Each Other

The responses broke down as follows on Question 3—On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being very “open” or “transparent” and 1 being “closed” or not “transparent,” where would you place City employees today in their dealings with each other?

1	2	3	4	5	Weighted Average
23	68	105	86	10	2.97

Again, overall, the respondents saw employees as being neither fully open nor closed in their dealings with each other.

### Specific Comments

The “open-ended” questions were intended to gain an understanding of why the respondents held the views on openness that they do. We gained more insight into the thinking of employees with a negative view of openness than we did for employees with a positive view.

Question 2 asked employees for anything specific that influenced their view of how open the City was with its employees. Roughly 70% of the respondents who viewed the City as not being open with its employees (“1” or “2”) provided specific comments. However, only about 40% of the respondents who viewed the City as being open with its employees (“4” or “5”) provided specific responses.

Question 4 asked employees for anything specific that influenced their view of how open City employees are with each other. Only 25% of employees with a positive view (“4” or “5”) provided specific comments, while 50% of those employees with a negative view provided specific comments.

Question 5 asked employees to identify specific things that Salt Lake City already does well in providing openness in City government. Overall, roughly 40% of respondents identified specific things.

Question 6 asked employees to identify specific ways the City could provide greater transparency within City government. Again, about 40% of the respondents provided specific suggestions.

### Basis for Employee’s Ratings/Areas for Improvement

Employee responses to Questions 2, 4 and 6 tended to cover the same general themes, so we are summarizing those responses together.

Those with a middle or more negative view of the existing state of transparency in City government primarily expressed their concern in three general areas – organizational culture, lack of information, and a desire for greater employee participation in decision-making. Themes within those three areas were as follows:

- Organizational culture
  - Competition between and within departments vs. being on the same team
  - “Knowledge is power” style of management (in some departments)
  - “We are the last to know” – lack of communication, especially from upper management
  - Lack of openness and honesty by management – fear of repercussions if someone comes forward with a complaint
- Additional information would be welcome
  - Information about things that affect employees personally, e.g.
    - Pay
    - Benefits (health and retirement)
    - Policies
  - Information about what the City/other departments are doing
    - Timely (before we read about it in the newspaper)
    - What everyone else is working on (to coordinate efforts better)
    - Other department’s policies and procedures
  - **Where** to access desired information?
- Desire for more collaborative decision-making/opportunities for employees to participate in decision-making
  - Ask the employees for suggestions/input **before** decisions are made
    - Comment made about both external and internal decisions, but made most often re: budget/pay cut decisions
  - Ask employees for their ideas and suggestions for ways to save the City money
  - Tell employees **why** decisions are made, especially those that affect them personally

Among the respondents with the most negative assessment of the current state of transparency, the recent 1.5% pay suspension and health insurance increase were frequently mentioned. A number of employees felt that the basis for the decision had never been explained to them and in particular why funding for capital programs such as the Gallivan Center was preferred over funding for employee compensation.

A number of employees viewed the transparency initiative as a distraction or a waste of time.

For employees with a more positive view of the current state of openness (“4” or “5”), dissemination of the Mayor’s schedule and public announcement of major policies by e-mail were frequently cited as examples. Several employees did feel that the pay issues were handled openly. Several employees said that the Mayor and his staff were more accessible than in the past.

However, even in this group there was still some criticism. For example, several employees felt that their immediate supervisor was open with them, but that the higher level supervisors were not open.

## What Does the City Already Do Well?

Question 5 asked employees for specific things that the City already does well in providing openness inside City government.

Regardless of whether the respondents had a positive or a negative view of the current state of transparency in City government, they tended to identify the same things that they think the City currently does well:

- Website (intranet and internet)
- SLCTV Channel 17
- City Council notices/agendas, etc.
- Mayor's weekly schedule and other information from Mayor's Office
- Mayor's meetings with employees/willingness to listen
- Disclosure of employee expenses

A number of employees with a negative assessment of transparency acknowledged the value of the transparency initiative, but a similar number also viewed the initiative as a waste of time. Some employees also felt that things like the Mayor's weekly schedule were too much information and not relevant to their work.

### II. Initial Action Plan

A number of employees included this survey as one of the specific things that the City is doing well to promote openness. However, one employee pointed out that doing a survey and finding a problem is not enough—"how about the solution?" The Working Group agrees. We therefore are providing here our initial thoughts on how to address the concerns raised by the employee responses. We emphasize the word "initial" because the concerns that have been raised cannot be effectively addressed with quick, simple solutions. Cultural change is never easy. Multiple, interrelated actions will be required over time to fully address the concerns raised. The following thoughts are on how we think the process should be started.

#### A. Sharing of Information and Expressing Constructive Criticism Without Fear of Retaliation

As discussed above, many respondents said that employees are afraid to express critical viewpoints because of a fear of retaliation. The Working Group strongly believes that if City employees fear that they cannot tell the truth, City government at best will be ineffective and at worst completely dysfunctional. An effective organization supports candor. Some respondents also expressed concern about a lack of sharing of information between and within departments.

We reviewed the current draft Salt Lake City Policy on Open Government and concluded that it does not adequately address these concerns. Therefore we will recommend the addition of language that makes clear that employees must be free to criticize without fear of retaliation and that information must be shared. We are not so naïve as to expect that these principles will be uniformly followed overnight, but we do believe that a clear statement of policy by the Mayor and City Council is a fundamental first step.

## B. The City's Websites (Internet and Intranet) and SLCTV Channel 17

The City's websites are a tremendous asset, but we all know that they can be made even better. Independent of this survey, efforts have been underway to improve them. A uniform format for the various departmental and other sites has recently been introduced for the internet site to make it more user-friendly. The same will be done for the intranet site shortly. We will work with HR to make more accessible and understandable important benefits information.

A Technology Working Group has been created as part of the Open Government Initiative and they already are looking at how more effective use can be made of the websites and SLC Channel 17. Increased searchability and sortability are specific concerns on their list.

We also will work with the department directors to address the needs of those employees who do not have access to e-mail or the City's intranet site.

## C. Organizational Culture in General

We recommend this be addressed at multiple, complementary levels. As noted above, we are recommending changes to the draft of the Open Government Policy. Employee suggestions will continue to be welcome. We will recommend that organizational culture issues be discussed at the next Department Directors' Retreat with the Mayor. Within the individual departments, we will recommend that the directors encourage managers/supervisors to identify ways that individual work group or team members can be included in project or task decision-making processes. Similarly, we will recommend that the directors encourage managers/supervisors to provide channels for suggestions/new ideas/feedback, with non-monetary rewards for ideas used. We will also work with HR on appropriate training approaches.