



RECOMMENDATIONS

A Dysfunctional Culture

The Review revealed that, in the past, establishing and cultivating a positive, supportive, and inclusive working environment has not been treated as a priority by the organization. But culture will happen, whether or not it is intentionally nurtured in a particular direction. The culture that “happened” at Sunlight is a cautionary tale.

CREATING A SUPPORTIVE & INCLUSIVE CULTURE

1. Incorporate Operational Values into the Performance Management Process.

The organization needs to hold all employees accountable not just for the “what” that Sunlight does but also the “how” that work is accomplished.

2. Revisit Existing Policies and Procedures Regarding the Reporting and Investigation of Concerns & Complaints.

Sunlight needs to update its policies and procedures to bring them in line with best practices and to tailor them for the unique nature of Sunlight’s work, interactions, and obligations.

3. Train All Staff on Preventing & Addressing Harassment and Inappropriate Workplace Behaviors.

Sunlight needs to train all employees on the nuances of how harassment and inappropriate conduct play out in the workplace, on strategies for self-advocacy and by-stander interventions, and on updated mechanisms for reporting and investigation that the organization puts into place. Sunlight should also ensure that it has trained management on the heightened obligations of supervisors.



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Need for Professionalizing Managerial Infrastructure

There was consensus that many of the structural flaws that exacerbated the culture issues continued to undermine both a healthy culture and the effectiveness of the organization more generally. Feedback from stakeholders identified several areas for growth with respect to management infrastructure that go beyond the obvious need for more robust HR policies and protocols.

DEVELOPING & MAINTAINING APPROPRIATE MANAGEMENT NORMS

1. Train Management on Inclusive Decision-Making & Transparent Communications.

Sunlight should ensure that all people supervisors have been trained in the fundamentals of management, including maintaining open lines of communication and soliciting the feedback and perspectives of their team-members.

2. Provide Regular & Meaningful Opportunities for Upward Feedback to Leadership and the Board.

Sunlight should institute mechanisms for regular upward feedback for all supervisors, including avenues that will be incorporated in the performance management of supervisors, in periodic assessments of organizational health, and in staff perspectives on Board contributions.

3. Establish Clear Expectations and Accountability Mechanisms for Senior Leadership.

The Board needs to set clear, specific, and measurable goals and expectations for the Executive Director and Sunlight needs to articulate similar goals and expectations for other senior leaders within the organization.



RECOMMENDATIONS

INSTITUTING BOARD GOVERNANCE BEST PRACTICES

Board Governance Assessment

In addition to and as a part of the stakeholder review, the Board asked that an assessment of overall board governance be completed. Based upon the feedback of current and former board members, Sunlight employees, and other stakeholders, five key areas of focus emerged as vital to the organization's future success.

1. Refresh and Revitalize the Board.

The Board should institute term limits, establish formal guidelines for officer positions and elections regarding the same, and commit to a concerted effort to recruit new members to grow the Board and its capacity.

2. Engage in Meaningful Oversight of Significant HR Matters.

The Board should require regular briefings on staff turnover, HR investigations, and employee engagement and should identify one member to serve as a clearinghouse for culture-related concerns that staff chose to elevate to the Board.

3. Articulate Expectations for Board Members & Evaluate Contributions.

The Board should formalize expectations regarding time commitments, fundraising efforts, availability, and other elements of Board service and evaluate how individual members meet those expectations on an annual basis.

4. Model Transparency.

The Board should open non-executive sessions to staff on a regular basis, should incorporate staff presentation into the regular agenda, and should maintain and circulate minutes of non-executive sessions.

5. Chart A New Course Forward.

The Board should work closely with Sunlight staff to develop a comprehensive strategic plan that addresses whether and how the organization might need to modify its mission and vision, funding strategies, brand identity, programming priorities, staffing, and relationships with other stakeholder organizations. The Board should incorporate benchmark measures for the realization of that plan.