

BDS Organizational Assessment Prioritized Recommendations

January 8, 2016

#	Priority	Step	Category	Recommendation
1	Top Priority	1	Strategic Planning	As a first step, BDS should commit to completing its draft Strategic Plan, including many of these recommendations below into the document.
2	Top Priority	2	Strategic Planning	A clearly articulated Strategic Plan, approved by the Commissioner in charge, may provide stable direction for the length of the planning window, regardless of shifts in the City Council. This document would allow BDS to hold ground by pointing back to a guiding vision, goals and priorities. The Strategic Plan update process should be very inclusive, and the resulting plan should be rolled out with a “road show” that helps employees understand how their daily work ties to the vision and mission of the organization.
3	Top Priority	1	Communication	The first—and perhaps most challenging—step will be to acknowledge that this condition (a culture where employees are afraid to speak up) exists. This is not a time for sidestepping or blame-placing, but rather for reflecting honestly that this culture has developed.
4	Top Priority	2	Communication	Once this condition has been acknowledged, the Bureau will need to find a way to actively demonstrate that input is valued and that constructive feedback is welcome. (This should in no way open the floor for destructive feedback.) This may take the form of including innovation as scoring criteria on annual reviews, sending the message that offering feedback and suggestions is an expectation for each employee.
5	Top Priority	3	Communication	Bureau leaders should communicate, in unequivocal terms, that sexism and racial discrimination will not be tolerated at BDS, and back that statement up with action when complaints arise. Changing the culture around this issue will require deliberate, consequential, and sustained action on the part of leaders and managers
6	Top Priority	4	Communication	Communication is the natural enemy of mistrust. Finding ways to foster better and more frequent communication between divisions may remedy some of the current trust challenges.
7	Top Priority	5	Communication	Create incentives for leaders to encourage inter-departmental communications among their reports. This will require trusting those employees to do the right thing.

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8	Top Priority	6	Communication	Perform a comprehensive audit of recent communications from leaders (perhaps over a six-month window). Consider clarity, effectiveness, timeliness, medium (in person, email, etc.), and tone. Consider whether communications have taken an “active listening” stance when necessary. Identify opportunities for improvement and institute a “best practices” approach to future communications. In the spirit of continuous improvement, re-check communications every six months until the audits begin to turn up few opportunities for improvement.
9	Top Priority	7	Communication	Require communications training for all leaders in BDS, as a prerequisite for promotion, and as a requirement for existing leaders. This training should focus on communication practices from both the “medium” and “message” standpoint.
10	Top Priority	8	Communication	Similarly, offer trainings in “critical communication skills” for those leaders who struggle more with the challenging conversations.
11	Top Priority	1	Employee Evaluations	A more robust employee evaluation protocol, possibly including 360 reviews, may work to negate this perception through regular measurement of employee skills and work quality.
12	Top Priority	2	Employee Evaluations	Incentivize two-way communication by including it as a review item for all employees.
13	Top Priority	3	Employee Evaluations	Adopt a system of frequent performance evaluations for all employees, especially those who make autonomous decisions related to customer projects. This should include measures related to quality and accuracy in the application of code.
14	Top Priority	1	Equity Work	Bolster the influence of the Office of Equity and Policy within the Bureau, and charge that office with the development of an Equity Action Plan with measurable goals.
15	Top Priority	2	Equity Work	Set a baseline of awareness within the Bureau as to what equity is and why the Bureau should strive for it.
16	Top Priority	3	Equity Work	Expand the purview of the Equity Committee to look at equity outcomes both within the Bureau and in relationship to its customers.

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17	Top Priority	4	Equity Work	BDS should set goals for equity in the Bureau, including the measurement of women and people of color in leadership positions, and the tracking of issue volume through the Equity & Policy office.
18	Top Priority	1	Quality Control	Include accuracy and consistency as measures in performance evaluations. Hold supervisors responsible for the consistency and accuracy of their workgroups, and for offering the training opportunities to their employees that will increase quality where deficiencies have been found.
19	Top Priority	2	Quality Control	Task the “seniors” with the responsibility for overseeing a system measuring the consistency with which codes are applied, linked to ongoing training.
20	Top Priority	3	Quality Control	Develop a “buddy system” or mentorship program that will provide a mechanism for periodic checks and documentation of quality, with a purpose of highlighting training and development opportunities.
21	Top Priority	1	Standard Operating Framework	Although it is being done in some sections, having a consistent operational framework that documents work processes, procedures, and areas of responsibility is a need for BDS, and the Bureau should not wait for these items to be organically documented as ITAP develops. BDS should consider instituting a near- term program that would complete a robust operational framework for each section.
22	Top Priority	2	Standard Operating Framework	Increase efforts to document Operational Frameworks as a basis for training, and as a reference for new employees.