



A Step-By-Step Guide to Assess Your Organizational Culture

What is Culture— Elements of culture include Behaviors, Language, Symbols, Communication Style, Social Norms, Office Norms, Values, and more. Webster’s Dictionary defines culture as “the ideas, customs, habits, skills, arts, etc. of a people or group that are transferred, communicated, or passed along to succeeding generations.”

How Skeo Solutions Defines Culture:

Only visible in the presence of difference— If you visited an island with an isolated tribe and asked the chief, “tell me about your culture” would he be able to answer the question? No. He would say, “Do you mean tell you about life?” Because he has never interacted with someone of a different culture, his culture would be invisible to him.

Not always based on race and ethnicity— Women have a culture; men have a culture; athletes have a culture; prisoners have a culture; city staff have a culture; churches have a culture; neighborhoods have a culture.

Layered phenomenon— Some aspects of culture are visible; some are invisible. You might meet someone who appears to have a different cultural background than you and then discover that you both have a child with the same disability or you both really love the US Open. Every person you meet is shaped by multiple cultures.

Sense of comfort and belonging— What is potato salad ... only your grandmother makes “real” potato salad.

Shorthand based on shared assumptions— Includes code words and ways of interacting that everyone agrees on. This makes working together simpler when everyone shares these assumptions; however, when people do not share these assumptions it can cause misunderstandings.



Leading an Organizational Culture Audit

Step 1: Assess the Culture

Everyone in your organization should take time to assess how culture shows up in your workplace using the Choose Clean Water Coalition's "[Culture Audit Worksheet](#)". This will allow staff to recognize elements of culture they have yet conceptualize to include physical representation, behavior, communication, norms, and where the organization places value.



Culture Audit Worksheet

Artifacts and Physical Representation of Culture: symbols, signs, offices, architecture, furniture, technology, location, dress, various designated spaces (offices, coffee shops, students), titles, etc.

Behavior and Communication: Interactions, access, networks, formal/social. Meeting behavior: inclusive/exclusive, staff/admin, relative locations, language (formal/informal), time to acquire meeting/access, office norms etc.

Values and Assumptions: What do the artifacts suggest/reinforce or in some cases create? Who/what is valued in the culture?

Culture Gap: After you have identified the artifacts, physical surroundings, observed behaviors, and communication styles taking place in within your organization, compare and contrast them with your mission statement and any values you place on diversity, equity, and inclusion. Example questions to think about: Does the layout of your office place emphasis on equity? How are your meetings inclusive to staff? Does your office place emphasis on collaborative work culture? As you think through and answer these questions, assess areas for improvement.

For more information please contact Mariah Davis, Policy and Campaigns Manager for the Choose Clean Water Coalition. Email: davism@nwf.org



Step 2: Conduct the Audit

Formal culture audits can be done through a third-party consultant, a board member, or someone on staff (other than the director) that can be trusted with confidential information. Ideally, this person should have management experience, familiarity with concepts of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ), and knowledge of day to day operations taking place within the organization. Culture Audits should be conducted in a way that make staff feel safe, protected, and free to be honest. They can be conducted in different forms that suit the needs of your staff. Examples include one-on-one interviews or anonymous surveys. Responses collected from the Culture Audit must be anonymous to protect the identities of staff. Click here to view Choose Clean Water Coalition's [Culture Audit Survey Sample Questions](#)



MARC Culture Audit Survey

This Culture Audit is designed for NWF staff based in the Mid-Atlantic Regional Center (MARC). Responses from this survey are anonymous. They will be collected and reviewed in an effort to improve the workplace culture of the MARC. The survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

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Tip Questions in the survey should include a mixture of free response, multiple choice, and ranking

Is your current work environment ideal?

- Yes
- No
- Needs improvement

Do you feel comfortable participating in MARC Staff Meetings? *

- Yes
- Sometimes
- No
- Other...

Are MARC Staff meetings productive for you? *

- Yes
- Sometimes
- No
- Other...

⋮

Communication channels are very open among MARC employees *

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I work well under pressure with MARC staff *

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Management actively solicits input from staff before major decisions are made *

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The MARC office is open to change *

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Step 4: Develop a Report

Calculate the results from the Culture Audit and develop a formal report to present to staff and leadership at your organization. The report may include positive highlights, statistics, graphs, and areas for improvement that define the culture of the organization.



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Highlights from the Survey Results

Positive Feedback:

- XX% of staff are bought into [insert organization's name] mission
- XX% of staff feel supported by management
- XX% of staff feel [insert organization's name] office is accessible
- XX % of staff get along with their colleagues
- XX% of staff trust their colleagues
- XX% of staff feel [insert organization's name] welcomes diversity
- XX% of staff are satisfied with their physical work environment
- XX% of staff are fulfilled by their teleworking experience
- XX% of staff feel supported by management
- XX% of staff trust leadership with decision making

Areas for Improvement:

- Creating metrics to meet DEIJ goals
- Improvements in communication between teams
- Investments in DEIJ trainings for staff and leadership

"I'm so happy [insert organization's name] is taking the steps needed to improve our workplace culture"



