

**The Maryland State Police Department, Office of Equity
and Inclusion and Morgan State University Diversity,
Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Workforce Assessment Study**

Final Report

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I. Executive Summary

During the 2021 session, the Maryland General Assembly expressed concerns about racial insensitivity and lack of diversity among the Maryland Department of State Police (MSP) workforce. This language directed MSP to develop a diversity study group to develop an action plan to address these concerns and produce findings.

In May 2022, The Office of Equity and Inclusion (OEI) partnered with Morgan State University for the Maryland State Police Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Research Project and Workforce Assessment Study. This study was approved by the Morgan State University (MSU) Institutional Review Board (IRB), (IRB# 22/06-0120), and was conducted following the guidelines for human subject participants under the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) Program guidelines. All final materials used in the study was approved by MSU's IRB before the start of the study.

From August 2022 to April 2023, in-person moderated focus groups of internal MSP employees (Phase One) and external community stakeholders (Phase Two) were done to provide an insightful understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). This method was selected to encourage immersive learning, and subsequent solutions, through the lived experiences of others. Questions were designed to facilitate discussions surrounding DEI within the workplace, thus providing a framework for participants to identify salient barriers, challenges, or issues for themselves. This report presents the summary presentation of themes generated from the internal focus group discussions (See Appendix C and D), followed by recommendations.

II. Project Goals

The goals of this project are to:

- Collect and document employee and external community stakeholders' feelings, perceptions, beliefs, opinions, and ideas regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Identify general themes, patterns, and priorities from the moderated focus groups that will allow MSP to review and improve workplace culture, policies, and operational procedures.
- Provide data to inform MSP for internal future use.

III. Phase I: Internal Focus Groups

Phase one of the MSP DEI initiative explored sworn and civilian employee personnel's attitudes, perceptions, opinions, and beliefs. This study provided an incentive for participation due to the invasiveness of the topic and also functioned as a stimulus for MSP employees to attend focus groups. MSP DEI participants received a \$50.00 Amazon gift card and an 8-hour special assignment workday release. Participation in the focus groups of MSP employees was voluntary and scheduled at an off-site location during scheduled work hours. The selection of participants was based on two criteria: sworn employees and civilian employees with less than two years of experience, and sworn and civilian employees with more than two years of experience.

A recruitment letter for participation was uploaded and disseminated via PowerDMS for all interested employees to register by emailing the principal investigator three weeks before focus groups. Each eligible participant received a welcome email two to three days before the focus groups that included a copy of the *Human Subject Incentive Acknowledgement for DEI Focus Groups*, *Audio Recording Consent*, and the *Informed Consent* forms (See Appendix A) for participants to read in advance.

Informed consent procedures were explained at the beginning of each focus group and after distributing the *Informed Consent* and *Audio Recording Consent* forms. All focus group discussions were recorded digitally and transcribed verbatim with the participants' permission. Throughout the research process, participants were informed of their rights to consent.

During August and November 2022, eight focus groups were conducted across the state at four sites totaling 40 MSP employees. There were no registered sworn participants with 0-2 years of service. The below information represents the timeline and participation rates of MSP employees:

August 2022, Location Site: Baltimore City/Baltimore County

Central/Northern Region: Howard, Carroll, Baltimore, Harford, and Cecil counties.

Sworn MSP employees: 8

Civilian MSP employees: 8

September 2022, Location Site: Prince George's County

Southern Region (and Washington Metro): Montgomery, Prince George's, Anne Arundel, Charles, Calvert, and St. Mary's counties.

Sworn MSP employees: 8

Civilian MSP employees: 3

October 2022, Location Site: Queen Anne's County

Eastern Region: Wicomico, Caroline, Dorchester, Talbot, Kent, Queen Anne's, Worcester, and Somerset counties.

Sworn MSP employees: 3

Civilian MSP employees: 1

November 2022, Location Site: Washington County

Western Region: Frederick, Washington, Allegany, and Garrett counties.

Sworn MSP employees: 6

Civilian MSP employees: 3

IV. Phase II: External Focus Groups

Phase two of the MDSP DEI initiative explored community members' attitudes, perceptions, opinions, and beliefs about MSP. Incentives were also extended to community participants primarily because focus groups were held on Saturdays to better accommodate potential participants' schedules. Participants received a \$50.00 Amazon gift card and an MSP swag bag that contained various MSP promotional items.

To inform and invite potential community participants within regions across the state, flyers (See Appendix B) were disseminated by MSP sworn members under the direction of the Maryland Department of State Police, Office of Equity and Inclusion, three or four weeks before each scheduled focus group. Procedures were also repeated for the community focus groups. Interested participants received a welcome e-mail two to three days before that included a copy of the *Human Subject Incentive Acknowledgement for DEI Focus Groups*, *Audio Recording Consent*, and the *Informed Consent* forms (Language in the 'Human Subject Incentive Acknowledgement' form was tailored to accurately detail incentives for the community focus groups.)

Informed consent procedures were also explained at the beginning of each focus group and after distributing the *Informed Consent* and *Audio Recording Consent* forms. All focus group discussions were recorded digitally and transcribed verbatim with the participants' permission. Throughout the research process, participants were informed of their rights to consent.

During February and April 2023, one focus group was conducted due to low enrollment, cancelations by participants, or no registered participants. The below information represents the timeline and participation rates of the community focus groups:

February 2023, Location Site: Baltimore City/Baltimore County

Central/Northern Region: Howard, Carroll, Baltimore, Harford, and Cecil counties.

Cecil County community participants: 3

March 2023, Location Site: Prince George's County

Southern Region (and Washington Metro): Montgomery, Prince George's, Anne Arundel, Charles, Calvert, and St. Mary's counties.

Cancelled: No show

April 2023, Location Site: Queen Anne's County

Eastern Region: Wicomico, Caroline, Dorchester, Talbot, Kent, Queen Anne's, Worcester, and Somerset counties.

Cancelled: No registered participants

April 2023, Location Site: Washington County

Western Region: Frederick, Washington, Allegany, and Garrett counties.

Cancelled: No Show

V. Focus Group Research Design

This section discusses why qualitative or non-statistical procedures were used and how the data was collected and analyzed for this study. It provides a detailed outline of the data analysis plan. The selected technique used in this study was focus group interviews for qualitative data collection. Group interviews have gained traction in social science fields such as criminal justice, sociology, and psychology because of the in-depth and rich data obtained from participants. According to Macphail (2001), interactions using group techniques provide better contextual information resulting in the emergence of shared meaning commonly not found in individual interviews.

A focus group is a qualitative research technique in which a trained moderator conducts a collective interview of typically six to eight participants of similar backgrounds, characteristics, or both. Notably, selecting participants is guided by the purpose of the research objective, which may not necessarily be representative but is determined based on the ‘focus’ of the topic. In this initiative, the ‘focus’ is to learn about employees’ feelings, perceptions, and beliefs within the context of diversity, equity, and inclusion to help the Maryland State Police (MSP) better understand and consider the actions, behaviors, and policies that are counterproductive to MSP’s vision and goals.

Unlike statistical data, focus group data provides insight into how individuals feel about a topic, what conditions or factors lead to particular behaviors, and how diverse groups view an issue or specific topic. Also, information from focus groups can illuminate the differences in perspectives among individuals who may share a similar characteristic or trait. To facilitate this, open-ended interviewing protocol and participant observation techniques were utilized. In using open-ended questions, the moderator can encourage participation and ensure that answers are directly related to the questions while exercising some flexibility. Therefore, the narratives produced by participants generate a large amount of data about a range of themes or patterns in a relatively short time.

The internal and external focus group interview questions were developed under the direction of the purpose of this workforce assessment initiative and were designed to identify a range of experiences, attitudes, perceptions, beliefs, and specific concerns raised in this study regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) within the Maryland State Police. The discussion guide for the internal focus group was developed to achieve the following objectives:

1. Establish a baseline measurement of the current level of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) that exists within the department.
2. Identify barriers and obstacles that are preventing the department from achieving its DEI goals and objectives.
3. Identify new and existing practices that may prove/have proven beneficial to achieving the department’s DEI goals and objectives.

4. Develop actionable input from internal members, new and incumbent, that will assist the department in overcoming barriers and enhancing the department's success in achieving DEI goals and objectives.
5. Develop actionable input from external stakeholders and members of the community that will assist the department in overcoming barriers and enhancing the department's success in achieving DEI goals and objectives.

Questions for internal focus groups were categorized into four categories 1) icebreaker; 2) equity; 3) diversity; and 4) inclusion (See Appendix C); and into three categories 1) public perception, 2) diversity, and 3) community inclusion for the external focus group (See Appendix D).

Data Collection Procedures

This initiative's central aim was to understand better MSP employees' feelings, perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs related to the work culture environment and the MSP values of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Participant recruitment and selection were based on desirable employee characteristics defined by an employee's status (sworn or civilian) and amount of time served (0 to 2 years and two or more years) at the MSP Department. Due to the potential risk of harm (i.e., retaliation) associated with focus groups or group interviews, internal employees underwent two stages of screening and vetting. The vetting and screening processes helped identify participants who fit the interest criteria and determine eligibility. First, an employee (sworn and non-sworn) list generated by Human Resources was reviewed by the research team personnel to ensure that participants that registered for the focus group fit the time-served criteria.

Second, because this study interviewed sworn MSP personnel, we wanted to avoid combining more experienced personnel with the 0 - 2 years group or having two-plus years of experienced troopers in the same focus group with new recruits. These two groups' power relationships could adversely affect the group dynamic and participant security. The second screening and vetting process locates and control hierarchical vulnerability at the institutional level that may arise.

It is important to note unlike internal MSP employees, the two-part vetting and screening process to determine eligibility was not applied to external members. Phase two of the MSP DEI initiative explored the communities' attitudes, perceptions, opinions, engagement, and beliefs about their sense of representation and value relative to diversity, equity, and inclusion in communities. Therefore, we sought participation from community partnerships, community stakeholders, and residents regionally throughout the state.

Sampling

The goal for each regional focus group was to recruit 8 participants per criteria-based characteristic (time served, sworn and non-sworn MSP personnel, and external/community) after receiving the responses from the focus group participation announcement. Generally, six to eight participants in focus groups are widely considered sufficient due to manageability. One potential drawback of

using this method is the lack of guarantee that all recruited participants will attend the discussion, so we recruited 8-10 participants. Consequently, combined purposive and snowball or non-random sampling techniques were inherent to the study's objectives and goals. This approach is widely recommended since focus group discussion relies on the ability and capacity of participants to provide relevant information (Morgan, 1988). Consequently, solid recruitment strategies were used to explain the study initiative via PowerDMS communication for internal recruitment. In this message, MSP employees were provided information about the project, goals, research method, confidentiality, and the scope of the work before volunteering to be part of the study.

Internal and external focus groups were conducted off-site to increase participation and employee engagement. To minimize potential risks and protect internal MSP participants' privacy and confidentiality. This approach considered participants' comfort, access to the venue, levels of distraction, and hierarchical vulnerability at the institutional level; while simultaneously addressing the low participation rates commonly associated with employee surveys. Off-site locations were selected based on commute time, conference room availability and amenities, and the setting at the hotel.

Data Analysis

Data analysis for qualitative research, in particular focus group interviews, occurs in different stages, such as reviewing and filtering the data, creating and categorizing themes, and interpreting findings to address the goal of the study. The data analysis process is contingent upon the skillsets of the moderator to generate a wealth of data for the interview while documenting any pertinent observational information. In this study, moderators and/or student research assistants took notes to provide a richer analysis of the recorded data. Therefore offering a comprehensive coding framework that is not solely drawing conclusions from content analysis. Furthermore, this reduces any potential bias in the interpretation and analysis because of the systematic verifiable processes.

In this study, we needed to consider the post-interview processing of collected audio files. The total recorded time for the civilian focus groups was 5 hours and 58 minutes, and 8 hours and 50 minutes for the sworn focus groups. Audio recordings were manually transcribed before the audio files were imported and transcribed in NVivo software to increase our familiarity and comprehension with the recordings. The principal interviewer must review the audio files for transcript accuracy because software can still inaccurately capture words and sounds from audio-to-text transcription. This is best described as a spectrum between *naturalized* (or intelligent verbatim) and *denaturalized* (or full/raw verbatim) (Buscholtz 2000). *Denaturalized* transcription is a word-for-word transcription of spoken language that includes repeated words, fillers, or background noise, and *naturalized* transcription adds a layer of filtering or editing to extract the meaning of what was said. Using intelligent verbatim transcription omits fillers such as 'um,' 'you know what I'm saying,' 'whatever the case may be,' or 'like.' Once completed, imported transcripts were then converted from raw or verbatim transcription to intelligent verbatim transcription.

In this study, all electronically transcribed data were reviewed manually and converted from denaturalized to naturalized or intelligent verbatim transcription to reduce the inaccuracies of the intended meaning. In addition, this was cross-referenced with notes taken by the research team members for further accuracy and reliability in the data.

Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis was used in this study to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of the research participants. Thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis method that allows one to review the data systematically to identify themes and patterns. Notably, one major characteristic in thematic analysis data is the ability to create a visual representation of themes, codes, and their relationships within the context of similarities, distinctive details, or counterexamples. Consequently, allowing more range in the evaluation process. This method is commonly used in focus groups because it is flexible and optimal to use when there are large amounts of narrative data. Importantly, thematic analysis allows the researcher to generate insights and concepts from participants on a particular topic.

The steps and description for thematic analyses are:

- Familiarizing with the data
- Generating initial codes
- Group codes into themes
- Reviewing and revising themes
- Defining and naming themes
- Reporting

VI. Results and Findings

Qualitative data analysis revealed several themes across the eight internal focus groups. This section presents the thematic results and findings specific to the sworn and civilian MSP employees.

Internal: Sworn Focus Groups

Theme 1: Work-related traits and characteristics are valued but not the individual.

Across many focus groups, participants reported mixed responses about how their unique attributes, traits, skills, experiences, or backgrounds are valued at work. Participants discussed that the work they do on the job is appreciated, along with associated personality traits such as a strong work ethic, ‘going the extra mile’ attitude, compliance, and being a team player. One respondent shared that “stats and no complaints” are revered by barrack commanders, which was distinctly expressed across all focus group discussions. Notably, participants from diverse racial, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds reported higher rates of feeling unvalued at work across various individual

attributes such as education and previous work experiences and skillsets. As noted by three focus group respondents:

I don't think MSP utilizes my background to the fullest extent, or you know, put people in positions that where their strengths are being used.

My personal experience, I feel like the work I put in is valued. Maybe not me as a person, and I think that goes to what has been said at this table already is that I am just a person filling a position, but not as a person.

Being a police officer, you know, protector guardian, being a good neighbor, a volunteer, an advocate, a public speaker, an educator, community member. Those are valued. And to some degree, I feel that race in some degree is not valued very highly. Diversity is not valued very highly. And the individual characteristics that make somebody unique because of their race, whether it be their language skills or experience, whether it be some something unique to their heritage or experience as that person are not valued our agency.

One significant subtheme that was identified under this was value being associated with rank. As noted by one respondent below:

In other words, depending on how high the rank you have, it's perceived and expected that you have a certain level of experience and capability and intellect. And if you have lower rank, you're perceived to have much less than somebody who is superior to you. So not to say that because I'm lower ranked, you know relatively speaking, I've been kind of held in a little bit of a box. And my experience, my education, everything that I bring to the table has kind of been stymied because I don't have the rank to have a voice, and it's in part because of my race. But it's also in part because of lower rank.

Similarly, another respondent stated:

I was still non-rank. I didn't have stripes on my sleeve. My experience was not like yours, and I don't know what changed in that time. But when I was there, my particular workgroup was dismissive.

Theme 2: First impressions are lasting impressions.

In all focus groups, participants expressed a variety of factors that shaped their first impression of MSP regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) that either fostered or impeded their current views of DEI in the workplace. In some focus groups, respondents did not notice or 'think about' any DEI-related factors when they first joined the agency. This was true for non-minority respondents. One concern that arose was having diversity for face-value purposes such as the hiring or recruitment process. Respondents raised concerns about a need for more diversity in numbers in leadership positions and specialized units that are not limited to one's race or gender.

This included both ethnic diversity and representation of the LGBTQ community. A number of participants agreed with the shared sentiment by one respondent:

...Like I said it's just this overall lack of the Department acknowledging that members of the LGBTQ exist in this Department... The Department has done nothing to make LGBTQ people welcomed in this organization from the top...they need to be diverse for sexual orientation.

Also influencing one's current view, mainly sworn members of color, several respondents discussed how they were mentored by senior personnel on how to overcome challenges that may emerge, such as microaggressions in the workplace. In this report, microaggressions are indirect or subtle behaviors or language against members of a marginalized group.

Many respondents of color talked about how they dealt with microaggressions, and in some instances macroaggressions, by their racial counterparts or navigating predominantly non-diverse spaces. As noted below by one respondent:

When I first arrived at the barrack, there was that that bias that you had to overcome. You know, people are watching you. How you know, "How is this person going to take this? If I say this? How far can I go with this?" And it's kind of a burden that you have to, you have to - everywhere you go, you have that burden that you have to set, to set the line that that cannot be crossed.

In other focus groups, participants expressed how 'speaking' out is unfavorable and unsupported. As noted by the two respondents below:

If you see something, don't say something. You know? You'll be fine. But if you a person that will call a flag if something's wrong, then you see it as a problem. And if you're seen as a problem, then the agency has ways to deal with you. Sometimes overt, sometimes subtle. But they have ways to deal with you?

I was treated unfairly, and I'm not one to sit back and not say anything, so I would spoke up for myself. And they did not like that at all! They didn't like it at all.

Another notable mention, some sworn respondents noticed an effort to ensure that specific provisions were made to ensure the success of some groups over others. In turn, this fostered mixed discussions about targeted recruitment and its effectiveness. As noted below:

Right now we're holding up classes all the time, because we don't meet our racial metrics despite recruiting for God knows how long?

Similarly, another respondent expressed:

So we're kind of in a catch-22 right now until we fix some of these issues, or at least find a solution to move forward. So again, I do think that there is some targeted recruiting or hiring, which if

that's what they need to do though in order to at least initially get a more diverse work group. Then I guess if it's meeting the goal for now, then I guess that's a good thing. It would be nice if we didn't have to do that. But I don't think we're there yet.

Theme 3: Location, location, location.

Many respondents associated feelings of support with the location and rank of their peers. For many, being themselves depended on their assignment, where they worked, or their relationship with their shift workers and direct supervisors. However, in some focus groups, respondents reported leaving any personal or non-work related issues at the door because they did not belong in the workplace or were not welcomed within their workspace location because it did not fit the status quo norms. This was further explained by respondents in several focus groups that being vulnerable may lead to retaliation or other nefarious acts that may impede one's promotional advances.

Respondents discussed their feelings of support are tied to assignment locations and the relationships built within those structures. In this case, most respondents expressed positive experiences in their work environments among members of similar ranks, as denoted by the two respondents below:

It entirely depends where you are. I say a lot of us feel pretty comfortable around the people we immediately work with. The further your connection you get from somebody, a lot less comfortable you are to speak around those kind of people, especially rank. I don't feel comfortable talking to somebody who's a different rank than me versus the same rank or someone I know.

I feel very comfortable being myself, just more so in the lines of this agency and everything. I think coming from like the military you walk that straight line. At least with this agency I feel more comfortable being myself because we're all doing the same job - everyone's done the same job. The struggles I have and stuff in the way that I go about handling them, I feel like that others would understand at least if you're being truthful about what you're going through. Sometimes it's your shift partners or supervisors you're more likely to get help in certain situations or learn how to deal with things better or handle things better.

Similarly, another respondent noted:

I would say 90 percent of the time, I feel comfortable being myself at work and if there is 10 percent of the time I'm not. I don't think it's caused by anything specific to my work environment. It's more of me just reserving portions of my personality while at work. But I don't think it's a necessarily negative thing.

Many respondents attributed their level of comfortability, being themselves, and seeking support to their work environment, culture and/or subcultures. The responses under this theme distinguish between MSP culture as an organization and the subcultures found within each barrack or

assignment location. This was shared across all racial, ethnic, or culturally diverse lines. As noted by one respondent:

Maryland State Police has the Maryland State Police culture. There are subcultures, different units have their own cultures within the Maryland State Police is all revolves around the job, but individual cultures are not recognized. I mean, heaven forbid that you have a very unique culture that's, you know, not very represented within the within the department. Nobody's going to ask you about it. Nobody is going to value that.

Theme 4: Promotional Advancement Opportunities and Subjective Exclusions

Across most focus groups, respondents discussed that although there are formal policies and guidelines on promotion and advancement, they reported negative or adverse experiences in which supervisors or members with higher ranks subjectively influenced awards and recognition. This was also shared when respondents discussed their experiences with the appraisal evaluation process. Many respondents reported that awards, award recommendations, or promotional advancements are decided on arbitrary or unwritten rules which can exclude some members. Further, many noted the challenges of preparing for the promotional process depending on their assignment and staff shortages. This was true for persons of color who reported the challenges they faced in getting time off to attend training or the difficulties of being in the know.

However, respondents across all racial and ethnic groups reported the challenges in getting into specialized units. For instance, the respondents below noted:

There's nothing in this Department that's done fairly. Really nothing, specialized units is all in who you know it, and they can put you wherever they want to in the ranking. It's just what it comes down to.

Similarly, another respondent noted:

...My point is he jumped from specialized to specialized. Another guy, same thing. How do all these guys go from specialized to specialized, to specialize?... How does that make sense? It doesn't.

Theme 5: Promotion over Accountability

Significant across all focus groups, respondents discussed a number of experiences in which they witnessed a lack of accountability exercised when members, mainly high-ranking individuals, have violated an MSP policy, ignored MSP policy, or displayed a form of microaggression against a marginalized member publicly. Also, many participants discussed how the “buddy system” supersedes MSP’s core values creating an unfair and inequitable work environment. Further, many stated that they believed the rules do not apply to everyone across the board, specifically to members from racially, culturally, or ethnically diverse backgrounds creating a ‘double standard’ of adherence to the rules as expressed by one respondent below:

So it may not be true, but this is the feeling. Is that punishment is not equitable. So, it's not fair to all those examples, basically, and this kind of comes with the 'talk' too. If you do it, they going to try to come down with the full force of MSP. If he does it, a white guy or something, it's going to be a slap on the wrist. And we going move on with the day, with the day's event.

One subtheme that was identified under this was the use of power by members with high rank. As expressed by one respondent:

And anybody who speaks truth to that power, whether it be because they're offended culturally, they feel like their workplace policy was violated. They feel like their rights as a human or as an employee were violated. They will come down on you with the full weight of the Maryland State Police, the full weight of their power, the full weight of their influence to either discredit you, make your life miserable or actively seek out a way to fire you.

Similarly, this was expressed by another respondent:

It seems like the higher you climb the ladder, all of those things just go by the wayside. We have something called the core values of the Maryland State Police: integrity, fairness and service. That's just words on paper. It means absolutely nothing to a lot of the higher ups.

Theme 6: Agency Recommendations

In all focus groups, respondents offered a range of recommendations that are categorized into the following areas: 1) Reevaluate recruitment strategies; 2) Offer more DEI-related training; 3) Change the culture from the top; 4) Ensure that change or goals are measurable; 5) Improve transparency; and 6) Fair treatment.

Internal: Civilian Focus Groups

Theme 1: Us versus Them

Across many focus groups, respondents reported the differences between professional staff and sworn members. Feelings about the 'us versus them' mentality or attitude stemmed from the differences within the subcultures and, in some instances, observed preferential treatment toward sworn members. Some respondents expressed the need to dismantle the second-class ideology toward civilians. Notably, many discussed how this separation creates a divisive environment making it difficult to improve the diversity within MSP, build trust, and foster collaboration. In addition, some respondents discussed how this would subsequently increase more opportunities for civilians on the sworn side. Therefore, increasing inclusivity across all ranks, appointments, or classifications. Addressing this area, one respondent noted:

On the other hand, I've also seen a lot of other organizations in my career elsewhere, and I've seen much better here than I have in other state and federal agencies in a comparative way. But I'd also see the schizophrenic nature of MSP, where there's the sworn uniformed branch, which knows very well their roles and has a plan from entry level recruit, up to the Superintendent. But the

civilian side is not really seen as part of the same team, but a necessary burden because there aren't enough troopers to do stuff that troopers shouldn't be wasting time doing. That sometimes carries over enough in a negative way.

When asked about discrimination or prejudice in the workplace, respondents referenced the difference in treatment between sworn and civilians. One respondent in a leadership position noted:

(Moderator) Have you faced or witness prejudice or discrimination in your workplace?

(Respondent) I would say no. The only thing I ever notice really is there is a division between civilian and sworn. I obviously noticed more in one location (stated her previous location), than I did at (stated location of work), because the majority of the people working out of one location were civilians. And I wouldn't say prejudice. I just do notice a difference.

(Moderator) What do you mean by difference? Are you referring to treatment?

(Respondent) Would say, like, obviously, if you're sworn, you're being addressed as your title or rank preference. So I do notice that difference.

One subtheme identified within this theme was the 'us versus them' perspective discussed within the context of inclusion. In two focus groups, participants applied the phrase to discussions about recruitment efforts. One respondent explained:

I think it is, it is welcoming to some extent. You know, there does have a tendency of 'us versus them' mentality. And that's sworn...I want to say MSP versus civilians, I don't mean civilians that are employed, I mean the outside civilians. So there is sometimes the 'us versus them' mentality. Inclusivity, they're desperately trying and if could be blunt, they're almost trying too hard that it's borderline patronizing to people of non-hetero white male. You know? It's almost patronizing.

Theme 2: We hit the ceiling fast

Across all focus groups, respondents expressed how they hit the promotional ceiling fast when describing access to educational opportunities for promotional advancement. Participants described their frustrations and difficulties in seeking or attending continuing education opportunities. For instance, one respondent discussed the challenges of obtaining continuing education hours and the process of getting training approved. Another expressed their feelings of not being recognized for their capabilities to do more. Also, some respondents noted no attempt to use their diverse backgrounds, talents, or skill sets to create educational and career opportunities, advance their employment, or improve the agency. For instance, one respondent expressed a lack of opportunities to move up and discussed the 'promotion-by-succession' process. The respondent noted:

The opportunity to learn here is not available to be able to move up. You get in a position and you're stuck, and it's not a lot of movement. Someone literally has to leave for you to move up, but

they won't allow you to get the education that you need to get that next slot. So they kind of hold on to information. And then when that person leave now there's nobody there to take their place, because nobody else knows what they do. Instead of looking back and reaching back and saying, "Hey, you're my subordinate, you need to know what I do, and you just in case I leave you may have the next possible slot."

A sub-theme identified within this overarching theme is that some respondents discussed that education could be used towards promotion, especially if one has a Master's as noted:

We hit a ceiling very fast. So in my position our jumps are a little bit different than their division, I think. We move from a level I and jump to a level II within a year. And if you've got your Masters you automatically a level II because of time. And I don't know if completing training as a part of that or not yet or still. But then if you've got a Master's degree, you promote as high as you can within another year. So two years in with a Master's degree or as high as you can go until somebody retires out of a position that you could move into?

Notably, respondents raised concerns about the lack of information on what the process is and what the requirements are, impeding their ability for promotional growth. As expressed by the respondent below:

In terms of promotions and things like that, my only promotional opportunity is for supervisor positions, and then everything else is just time based. So I, you know, in terms of that, I don't I don't know if it's a matter of equity, but they don't really do it for anyone. So I guess it is equity and they just don't they don't care about anyone like it's never really been explained to me. You know, like as like if I wanted to become a supervisor, what I would need to do to prepare for that? What kind of documents should I read? What kind of things should I brush up on? You know, whatever? What's the process like? Would I want to apply for it? You know what I mean? And I don't know.

Theme 3: Our opinions matter

Across all focus groups, respondents expressed frustrations about their opinions or ideas not being valued or taken seriously. Many respondents shared several experiences in which their ideas were not considered, quickly dismissed, or later revisited when it was too late. Also, similar to sworn personnel, the value of shared concerns and opinions was influenced by rank or level of authority. For instance, one respondent noted:

And at a certain point, you know, you can only point things out so much and be ignored before you just say, "Why even bother anymore?" You know, and I feel like that's the attitude that trickles down. You know, I feel like some of the people directly above me might care, but they don't think that anybody above them is going to care. So why bother?

Similarly, another noted the following when asked what they wished management and leadership understood about their identity.

I wish that they would recognize not necessarily just me, but the those of us on the ground level in our units have a very good understanding of what we're doing and what affects us. And I wish they would ask our opinions on how their decisions would affect us, and if we agreed with the things that they wanted to change before they just changed it.

Another respondent stated:

I'm used to coming from a background where you have staff meetings and you share you exchange ideas, you get input back. You know? And I came in like, "Hey, I got some ideas," or even a situation where you have like a team building kind of thing. So, when you sit down at lunch or whatever, "Let's do some games, to get to know each other," or things like that. And it was like quickly, "You doing too much." Actually, I was told about some things, "You're moving too fast, you're moving too fast. You have to give people time. You have to 'Troop-approve' things." I was like, "What does that mean? I don't understand?" That and a couple of other things, I just step back. I really got into a bubble and it's like, 'ok they don't want those ideas, they don't want that, so I'm just going to stay here.

Theme 4: Mistrust in the process

Many respondents in focus groups discussed how the process and/or policies are not properly followed, which can perpetuate prejudicial behavior or forms of discrimination in the workplace. In most focus groups, respondents discussed various factors that fostered mistrust in the application process. This was exemplified when respondents reported that they did not trust that the principles in the working definitions existed or would be applied in practice when feedback on the definitions was asked as one respondent noted:

It is a fairly good definition. But if they had the trust... if it was positive, people [would] be saying, "...you know what, man? This is what happened. They have really stepped their game up" in that. And without that trust, you're not going to get that. They're going to say, "Man...this happened to me, and I see that they're really trying to live up to this definition because of the outcomes of this case, that case." And that comes from trust, and the outcomes. Once you get that trust factor, people will be able to get along. But when they don't trust you, because they look at these underlying manipulations and they say, "wait a minute"... I'm not going to say anything.

Also, a lack of confidentiality was cited as one factor, and failure to follow hiring policies was noted as the second. For many, these factors contribute to feelings of disappointment, frustration, and deflation. One respondent noted:

I've witnessed statements being made before jobs are even posted that it's going to go to a particular person. So everybody just knows before it even gets posted that it's 'so-and-so's job.' So why even bother? I mean, I applied for a job and was told, "Oh, so-and-so got hired." ...It's not the first time that's happened to me. It's just fine, you know? So those are the kinds of things that make you go, "Really people?"

Similarly, another respondent stated:

I've seen it in several instances, where there's been finagling to get someone in. They're going through this whole process of interviewing people knowing that they already have selected the person, which is dangerous in itself. When you look at how these people are getting in, and they don't match the work. If MSP and their values are stating that integrity matters and no one is above the law, yet these practices contradict themselves.

Similarly to sworn participants, respondents also raised concerns about subcultural systems put in place to promote or nominate others for positions. One respondent noted:

I'm going to definitely say it varies depending on the position, at least from what I've seen over the years, but typically experience, expertise and education absolutely have an integral part in people moving up. But I've also seen a lot of buddy system promotions throughout the years where people have said "Don't apply for that job, that's so-and-so's," before the interviews even start. And those sorts of comments, I don't think bodes well for a fair type of a system.

Another respondent discussed the lack of adherence to policy as noted below:

I recently found out that our reward system, not that, promotional system within our division is limited to one thing. Basically, how you do in the interview versus the culmination of everything like your job performance, your experience, your background, etc., we have to submit all that. But then it boils down to the one - the interview. That's how they solely make their decision. And I thought it was just done in our experience, but then talking to other people in the division, it turns out it's every unit that's how they're determining, which seems unfair.

Theme 5: Agency Recommendations

In all focus groups, respondents offered a range of recommendations that are categorized into the following areas: 1) Value ideas and recommendations by employees; 2) Provide more promotional advancement opportunities; 3) Provide more educational or training opportunities; 4) Reevaluate the internship program; 5) Dismantle divisive subcultural silos; 6) Improve transparency; and 7) Fair treatment.

External: Community Focus Group

Thematic analysis was not performed for Phase II of the project due to recruitment challenges, thus limiting the results and findings. Despite this, this section provides three insights from the community focus group discussion.

First, participants expressed limited knowledge about MSP and the role of MSP in the community. Unlike local police departments, respondents discussed very few encounters with state police. They associated their encounters with the police due to their line of work or proximity to state highways, i.e., Interstate 95. Knowledge about MSP was also extended into their local

communities. Respondents discussed that residents in their communities generally have a negative view of the police and law enforcement, regardless of formal or informal reasons. Notably, participants recognized the limited involvement of the MSP on community boards, neighborhood watches, or community meetings.

Second, respondents expressed a need for MSP, and police agencies in general, to consider a diverse approach in helping communities because not all communities have the same topographic and cultural characteristics. Notably, respondents noted that hiring of officers should reflect the diversity of the communities they serve. Also, they asserted that community subcultures should be considered to improve community-police relations, specifically handling calls from members of the population who are commonly stereotyped and stigmatized because of drug use, addiction, or chronic homelessness.

Finally, while respondents expressed that they noticed some improvements by the Maryland State Police, they noted that these improvements were minimal when compared to local police agencies. One major takeaway from this insight was the need for MSP to attract members from diverse backgrounds by creating employment opportunities outside of policing that deviate from the ‘no nonsense’ Stetson-wearing, white male caricature associated with MSP.

Although the results and findings are limited, as explained, attention should be placed on the insights provided, substantiating the need for more community input toward MSPs achieving their DEI goals. Therefore, community focus groups should be continued throughout the state to have, diverse robust data and findings to better meet the DEI objectives.

VII. Recommendations

Internal Sworn:

1) Reevaluate recruitment strategies. Respondents offered a number of recommendations to improve the recruitment strategies. Recommendations highlight the need for MSP to do the following:

- Establish meaningful relationships or partnerships with culturally, ethnically, LGBTQ, or racially diverse communities and/or organizations to organically improve diversity in The Academy classes.
- Incorporate diversity, equity, and inclusion in all promotional literature and videos.
- Refrain from exploiting one’s racial makeup for strategic marketing and recruitment efforts or valuing one’s race only for agency marketing goals.

2) Offer more DEI related training. Several recommendations were offered by respondents for improving knowledge about DEI. Recommendations highlight the need for MSP to do the following:

- Create an environment where employees feel safe discussing experiences of discriminatory treatment without fear of retaliation or being blacklisted.

- Prioritize DEI in-person training for all sworn members and increase the frequency to twice a year, offering different training modalities, i.e., in-person interactive training and online modules.
- Couple DEI training(s) with an improved system of bias response process and networking or mentoring opportunities for employees from underrepresented groups.

3) Change the culture from the top. Several recommendations for changing MSP's culture from the top. Recommendations highlight the need for MSP to do the following:

- Need to increase diversity across racial, ethnic, gender, religious, and LGBTQ cultural lines.
- Agency needs to educate members in high-ranking position about microaggressions and the impact it has on work productivity and employee morale.
- Improve communication between upper command and lower command staff.

4. Ensure that change or goals are measureable. Many respondents expressed skepticism about improving MSP DEI culture when they heard the working definitions for diversity, equity, and inclusion. The recommendations highlight the need for MSP do to the following:

- Have realistic short-term goals that address the issues employees present and identify an action plan.
- Monitor and ensure adherence to plan or intervention by a combined civilian and sworn Performance Committee.
- Gather employee feedback about the implemented change.

5. Improve transparency. Recommendations for improving transparency were offered in several areas:

- Providing employees the opportunity to learn how to improve appraisal evaluation reviews.
- Supervisors should provide employees formal documentation explaining why they were denied promotion, award nominations, and attending educational training.
- Supervisors and members with rank should create a work environment in which employees, regardless of their rank or status, are welcome and encouraged to provide feedback or ask questions without fear of humiliation, retaliation, or microaggressions.

6. Fair treatment. Recommendations for improving fair treatment were offered in several areas:

- Hold everyone accountable and model correct behavior that aligns with MSP core principles.
- Reaffirm that all employees will receive equal opportunity for career development and to be recognized.
- Identify new evaluation metrics or improve established metrics to determine changes.
- Acknowledge everyone's contributions and acknowledge the efforts of employees.

Internal Civilian:

1) Value ideas and recommendations. Respondents offered a wide range of ideas and suggestions to improve the agency while improving inclusion within the workplace. Recommendations highlight the need for MSP to do the following:

- Create team building activities with management, supervisors, or leadership to brainstorm or share ideas.
- Train supervisors and management on how to provide continuous feedback, therefore creating a feedback-friendly work environment.
- Department, division, and unit leaders (sworn and civilian) should demonstrate collaborative behaviors by example, i.e., creating opportunities for employees to share their ideas.
- Create a measurable policy that values employee engagement and practices.

2) Create more promotional advancement opportunities. Respondents expressed a need for career and promotional opportunities to expand and improve skillsets while retaining quality personnel. Recommendations highlight the need for MSP to do the following:

- Reevaluate and/or update standard operating procedures or policies explaining employee value and the needs of the agency.
- Properly advertise the promotional opportunities.
- Create a measurable policy that requires all employees to obtain a formal feedback evaluation of their performance that provides comments that the employee endorses before it is presented with their application materials. Or evaluate and/or update employee evaluations that incorporate the above recommendation.
- Provide opportunities for employees to showcase their knowledge and abilities at management or staff meetings.
- Recognize employees who are ‘self-starters,’ productive, innovative, problem solvers, or who demonstrate leadership qualities.

3) Create more educational or training opportunities. Respondents expressed a need for more educational opportunities and better support to attend. Recommendations highlight the need for MSP to do the following:

- Recognize the transferrable skills of employees and how they can be applied to a position or uncreated position, such as grant writer or communication specialist.
- Create incentives for employees to develop and lead informal or formal professional development lectures.
- Rotate employee roles to build cross-departmental skills and gain new knowledge.
- Form partnerships with other industries or police agencies with other experts in the field to offer a broader range of training opportunities and to reduce out-of-pocket expenses.

- Encourage employee engagement and collaboration through ongoing workplace programs or micro-learning activities, such as ‘lunch and learn’ or ‘brown bag’ lectures (online or in person).

4) Reevaluate internship and hiring practices. Recommendations highlight the need for MSP to do the following:

- Regularly revisit recruitment goals and strategies to meet the comprehensive needs of the agency. Recruitment strategies for new hires and interns should be evaluated across various key performance indicators following the SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely) principle.
- Implement an employee referral program or initiative.
- Include and value the input of peers (civilian and sworn) in the evaluation process of applicants.
- Ensure that all employees (civilian and sworn) follow the rating and ranking process and hold employees accountable if found to be in violation.
- Consider inviting prospective candidates to visit and interact with future coworkers or create a committee to represent the employee body to interact with potential candidates during the search process.
- Contact qualified past applicants (job and internship) to improve recruitment efforts.
- Optimize online and social media presence and improve job posting descriptions.

5) Dismantle subcultural silos. Respondents expressed the need to change the ‘us versus them’ mentality within the agency to improve workplace environment. Recommendations highlight the need for MSP to do the following:

- Foster open and honest communication without punishment or retaliation.
- Include a unified vision statement in MSP’s mission to formally communicate and set the precedence of self, team, and community.
- Train employees (sworn and personnel) to engage in behaviors that support teamwork, collaboration, and cultural education.
- Create cross-leadership opportunities for civilians by providing cross-training for civilians to work in predominantly held sworn leadership roles.

6) Improve transparency. Recommendations for improving transparency are listed below:

- Evaluators should identify critical issues or behaviors to discuss or further review.
- Provide employees the opportunity to learn how to improve appraisal evaluation reviews.
- Regularly update performance indicators and communicate changes effectively with employees.

- Establish a consistent ratings policy to reduce scoring inconsistencies among supervisors or management, across different units. Regular training on performance reviews is recommended.
- Leadership should create a work environment where employees, regardless of their rank, are welcomed and encouraged to provide feedback or ask questions without fear of humiliation, retaliation, or microaggressive behaviors.

7) Fair treatment. Recommendations for fair treatment and practices are specific to needs expressed by respondents. Recommendations highlight the need for MSP to do the following:

- Foster an environment for employees to share their challenges or experiences and hear them out.
- Leadership should be transparent about the decision-making process to mitigate surprises and feelings of dismissiveness.
- Hold everyone accountable and model correct behavior that aligns with MSP's core principles.
- Recognize everyone's contributions and acknowledge the efforts of employees.

VIII. Limitations

The limitations of this study are listed and explained below:

1. Small sample size

As explained, a small size is inherent to focus group discussions to support in-depth analysis that is guided by its purposive nature. However, in some focus groups, participation fell below eight registered participants, which limits the production of useable data and the use or effectiveness of the qualitative data methodology.

2. Low participation rates

Low participation rates were associated mainly with Phase II and members with less than two years of service in Phase I of this study. Various reasons for this could be:

- Location of focus group site
- Rank or status of internal members
- Fear of retaliation or blacklisted
- In-person focus group method
- Availability/frequency of focus group discussions
- Recruitment flyer dissemination and frequency
- Lack of details on recruitment flyers
- Limited or no contact with community members, organizations, stakeholders, or residents

3. Limited operationalization of communication

Recruitment of study participants was operationalized under the directives of key MSP personnel (internal and external) and MSP communication software platforms to advertise the focus group study (internal participants), which limited the monitoring of recruitment practices by the research team.

4. Topic selection and methodology

It is important to acknowledge the invasive nature of the questions because of the study topic. Furthermore, the chosen data collection method required participants to feel comfortable expressing their views, attitudes, perceptions, or experiences in an open group discussion, raising general concerns about confidentiality and anonymity among MSP employees.

IX. Conclusion

This report is based on a qualitative research-based examining about perceptions and attitudes on diversity, equity, and inclusion at MSP. This examination is not a wide generalization of the MSP Department, but only an overview of the aggregated focus groups data collected. The findings and recommendations in this support is aimed at providing better DEI strategies by addressing these raised challenges and concerns successfully.

It is critical MSP employers and employees address microaggressions when witnessed or heard to support DEI efforts and changes to policies effectively. The discourse and practice of specific forms of exclusionary or divisive behaviors are further cemented in a set of culturally specific practices within workplace environments that perpetuates a subset of MSP ideologies and attitudes. Our sample of narratives about feelings of being valued or themselves at work unveiled microaggression slights and insults across various social categorizations (i.e., sexual orientation, rank/social standing, race, or political views) that communicate systemic valuing or devaluing of a person.

Our analyses further revealed the need to foster a 'top-down' culture of accountability involving everyone. MSP needs to implement a better internal checks and balances system to ensure that all policies and procedures are followed, regardless of rank or social standing. Discussion of complaints within the Maryland State Police examples include:

- Internal agency policies
- Implementation of procedures
- Supervision of officers
- Performance and reward evaluations
- Internal procedures for reporting and investigating reports of misconduct

However, many personal and non-personal narratives expressed the subjective interpretation of punishment, which disproportionately affect persons of color with harsher sanctions than their counterparts. Furthermore, strict monitoring of adherence to policy and MSP's core principles

would remove distrust, cynicism, and confusion between the employer and employee and, subsequently, between the police and the community.

Central to the MSP DEI Research Project objectives is to explain how the general themes produced from the focus group discussions will allow MSP to review workplace culture, policies, and procedures for internal use. The qualitative data from multiple focus groups guided the provided recommendations. Solutions were comprehensive, encouraging a multifaceted approach to understanding diversity, equity, and inclusion principles. Cultural competence training using micro-affirming practices such as active listening, recognizing and validating experiences, and affirming emotional reactions for all employers and employees is strongly recommended to reduce microaggressions in the workplace that has influenced how some members valued their worth.

This study sought to strengthen conversations and initiatives surrounding diversity, equity, and inclusion at the Maryland State Police Department. Given the weaknesses of this research – small sample size, low participation rates, i.e., community focus groups, limited operationalization of communication, and topic discussion - future MSP DEI research may consider expanding this work by engaging more deeply with MSP personnel and community stakeholders using different communication streams.

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Appendices

Appendix A Required Forms

MARYLAND STATE POLICE DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION AND WORKFORCE ASSESSMENT

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Please read this consent form carefully, and take time to ask as many questions as you want. This consent form must be signed before you can participate in the focus group.

We ask for your participation in the *Maryland State Police Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, and Workforce Assessment* focus group research study that is led by Associate Professor Dr. Asha Layne, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Morgan State University. This consent form will describe the study to you and answer any questions.

This study examines employees (sworn and civilian) and community members' opinions on diversity, equity, and inclusion. Participating in this study will help us learn the best recommendations to improve the work culture environment at the Maryland State Police Department (MSP) by addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion issues. As a result, your input is invaluable. There are no foreseeable disadvantages or significant risks related to participation in this study. However, some of the questions may be related to one's experiences with bias or prejudicial experiences, and you may find answering some of the questions personal or upsetting. Participants may feel some pressure to reveal feelings or experiences to the group. If a participant experiences any emotional discomfort due to the study questions, please inform Dr. Layne or a research team member.

As part of this study, you will be asked to participate in a focus group and answer structured and open-ended questions. This study will take approximately 90 minutes. The focus group will be audio-recorded to capture what is said accurately. If you participate in the study, you may request that the recording be paused at any time. You may choose how much or how little you want to speak during the group. You may also choose to leave the focus group at any time. **MSP employees (sworn and civilian) who participate in the study will receive an 8-hour special assignment workday and a \$50.00 gift card.**

The information you will share with us if you decide to participate in this study will be kept completely confidential to the full extent of Morgan State University's Institutional Review Board research policy. Participants will be asked not to use full names during the focus group discussion. Please be advised that although the researchers will take every precaution to maintain the confidentiality of the data, the nature of focus groups prevents the researchers from guaranteeing confidentiality. **The researchers would like to remind participants to respect the privacy of**

their fellow participants and not repeat what is said in the focus group to others. Reports of study findings will not include any personal identifying information. Audio recordings and typed transcription of the focus groups will be kept on a password-protected Morgan State University-issued computer in Dr. Layne’s locked office. Only Drs. Layne, Pratt-Harris, Daniels, and our trained research student assistants’ team will be able to listen to the recording and/or examine the typed transcripts.

I understand that my responses will be kept in the strictest of confidence and available only to Drs. Layne, Pratt-Harris, Dr. Daniels, and the trained Morgan State University student researchers. No one will identify me when the results are reported, and my name, rank, or other identifiable data will not appear in the written report. I understand that the consent form will be kept separate from the data records to ensure confidentiality. The Morgan State University faculty and student researcher(s) would like to remind participants to respect the privacy of their fellow participants and not repeat what is said in the focus group to others. Please do not share other people’s identities or responses from the focus group with others to maintain the anonymity of the participants outside of the focus group.

If you have questions, you may contact Dr. Asha Layne, Principal Investigator at asha.layne@morgan.edu or 443-885-4268.

Consent to Participate

I have read the above information, and I understand that I am participating in a study of my own free will. I consent to take part in the study.

Printed Name of Participant: _____

Signature of Participant: _____ Date: _____



Human Subject Incentive Acknowledgement Form for DEI Focus Groups

Dear Participant:

Thank you for participating in the study, “Maryland State Police Diversity, Equity, And Inclusion (DEI) Research Project And Workforce Assessment,” conducted by Principal Investigator Dr. Asha Layne.

The research study you took part in is a focus group, meaning that your shared information will remain confidential and no names or emails will be included in any reports.

You are receiving an incentive as a thank you for participating in this research study, and we are requesting that you acknowledge receipt of the incentive by reading the statement below and **initialing** at the bottom.

Since this is a focus group study, in accordance with IRB #22/06-0120, we ask that you DO NOT place your name or any other identifiable information on this form. Please know though we need your initials for record keeping, your name or e-mail will never be identified.

Participant Acknowledgement Statement:

I have participated in the study described above. I understand that this is an anonymous study and no identifiable information will be collected from me.

As an appreciation for participating in this study, the investigator will provide me with a \$50 gift card.

I verify receipt of this incentive.

Initials: _____

Date: _____

**MARYLAND STATE POLICE DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION FOCUS
GROUP STUDY**

AUDIO RECORDING CONSENT

Please read this consent form carefully, and take time to ask as many questions as you want. This consent form must be signed before you can participate in the focus group.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Throughout this study your confidentiality will be respected and no names will be used in any presentation. Transcripts of focus groups will only include your first name only. Morgan State University staff may record personal or professional information about you as part of the recruitment process, but that information will not be shared with anyone. The collection and submission of all information will be done with strict adherence to professional standards of confidentiality under Morgan State University’s Institutional Review Board.

AUDIO RELEASE

I _____ (Print Name), fully consent to being audio recorded by the focus group moderators in regard to the *Maryland State Police Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Research Project* on **xx, xx, 202x**.

I further agree that the recordings of me shall be the property of the Morgan State University and focus group moderators shall have the right to use (or not use) these recordings in reviewing and reporting on the focus groups.

I have read this consent form. I understand what I am being asked to do, and my questions have been answered. By signing below, I agree to be in this focus group study for the purposes listed above and agree to be audio taped as part of the focus group. I am at least 18 years of age and competent to sign this release.

Signature

Date: _____

Printed Name

Appendix B

External Focus Group Flyer



The Maryland State Police, in partnership with, Morgan State University is seeking input from members of community-based organizations, community stakeholders, and the community in Garrett, Allegany, and Washington counties.

**When: Saturday, April 22, 2023 from 1:00- 3:00 p.m.,
Courtyard by Marriott in Hagerstown, Maryland.**

Participants would receive a \$50 Amazon gift card for their time!
For more information or to register email: asha.layne@morgan.edu

Appendix C

Internal Focus Group Moderator's Guide

A. Introduction – (10 min.)

Welcome and Purpose: Thank you for joining us today. We really appreciate having you with us to discuss your opinions regarding diversity, equity and inclusion issues currently impacting the Maryland State Police.

- *Explanation:*

1. First, in a focus group there are no wrong answers.
2. **THIS IS A SAFE ROOM!** While there are no wrong answers—there are different points of view. Say what you believe, whether or not anyone else agrees with you. I want you to feel comfortable to express yourself, disagree—encourage you to disagree—your diverse thinking will help my clients truly know what you think, need, and feel.
3. **Confidentiality**
Throughout the discussion and reporting process your confidentiality will be respected and no names will be used in any presentation. While these sessions will be video-taped and transcribed to help understand feelings, values and perceptions, data will be de-identified as much as possible and stored in password protected files separate from any personal private information. Please keep any personal stories you hear today in confidence. Any information from our discussion will be stored in such a way that any disclosures will remain confidential. Findings from multiple focus groups will be aggregated into one final report, further reducing the potential to identify individual respondent input from any specific focus group session.
4. I am not an employee of the Maryland State Police or the State of Maryland, so your comments do not affect me personally.
5. Not everyone has to comment on everything that comes up, but please everyone participate. I would like to hear from everyone in this room today, maybe not on every question but throughout the discussion.
6. If you hear something and want to piggy-back on it, please feel free to do so. If you disagree or hold a different view, please speak-up as well. Even though we do not know each other, please comment on each other's remarks as we go through the session, whether you agree, disagree, want to build on something, or whatever. I am interested in knowing when there seems to be consensus and when there is not.
7. We are recording but that is only so I can get your input right in my report. Just a reminder, the report on the findings will not identify anybody by name (or pseudonym).
8. Please speak as loud as me.
9. I may need to move on to another area of discussion sooner than you are ready, and I may have to cut a conversation short in the interest of time. I MAY need to interrupt to get to everything on the agenda that is planned.

10. Finally, I am counting on you today to help make the most out of our discussion today. I will be asking you to do your best to be creative and honest. So let me thank you in advance for all your hard work—thank you!

BRIEF SELF-INTRODUCTION/ICE BREAKER

Moderator Direction: Moderator starts to set the tone by starting introduction and completing ice breaker question. Once all have been introduced, moderator thanks all participants.

DO NOT STATE YOUR FULL NAME! First name only!

Do you have any questions before we start? Ok, let's get started!

B. Warm up exercise. – (15 min.)

To encourage focus group participants to think about what makes them unique, ask each participant to draw a tree with bare branches. On each branch, ask them to write a different aspect of their identity. Examples include gender, age, race, nationality, languages, ethnicity, religion, skills and expertise, professional background, academic background, significant relationships, interests & passions, obligations outside of work, health status, personality, etc.

This activity helps participants to recognize and reflect on the varied components of their identity, each of which is of value to the organization.

Directing participants to their unique identity tree, ask the following questions to uncover whether employees feel their uniqueness is valued and whether they are bringing their whole selves to work:

1. Do you feel that your unique attributes, traits, characteristics, skills, experience and background are valued at work?
2. Do you feel comfortable being yourself at work?
3. What was your first impression of MSP in regards to diversity, inclusion, and equity?
4. Have you ever masked or downplayed any aspect of your physical, cultural, spiritual or emotional self at work? Probe: Why? Did that experience make you feel excluded at MSP?

C. Inclusion – (20 min.)

1. Do you feel that you are a valued and essential part of your team? Why or why not? Probe if needed. [Give example if needed.]
2. Do you feel emotionally and socially supported at work? Probe: Either informally or formally through policy?
3. In your opinion, what characteristics, traits, contributions and behaviors are most valued and rewarded at your organization?
4. What do you wish that management/leadership understood about your own identity?

5. In what ways is the department (MSP) welcoming and inclusive? Would you give me an example of what you mean or explain further?

6. The MSP are creating definitions for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion for the organization. MSP's definition for Inclusion states:

“The Maryland State Police is committed to moving past implicit bias toward conscious inclusion where all employees work in an environment where they feel respected, have a sense of belonging, and are able to develop professionally with access to resources and encouragement to achieve their full potential.”

Do you feel that is a good definition for inclusion? Based on your experiences, do you feel MSP is living up to this definition of Inclusion?

Probe: (If yes, how so? If not, how so? Could you share a little more about your experiences? How would you describe the department's environment for inclusion? Have you faced or witnessed prejudice or discrimination in your work setting? Describe what happened. Reflecting back on your experience at the MSP [Academy or Probationary Period], please describe how you were treated compared to other candidates. Any negative experiences?).

D. Equity – (20 min.)

1. In your opinion, do you feel that everyone has equal access to promotional opportunities at work? Are the standards and guidelines clear?

2. Have you faced any challenges in your career progression at MSP? Please explain.

3. Does MSP offer educational training to advance your career?

4. The MSP are creating definitions for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion for the organization. MSP's definition for Equity states:

“The Maryland State Police is committed to creating, evaluating, remedying, and implementing fair and just policies and practices that acknowledge and address structural inequalities. This includes providing all employees the tools and resources they need to attain their potential, fostering positive and effective relations between those with protected characteristics and those without and to be transparent and accountable in order to build trust among ourselves and the citizens we serve.”

Do you feel that is a good definition for Equity? Based on your experiences, do you feel MSP is living up to this definition of Equity?

Probe: (If yes, how so? If not, how so? Could you share a little more about your experiences? How would you describe the department's environment for equity? Have you faced or witnessed prejudice or discrimination in your work setting? Describe what happened. Reflecting back on your experience at the MSP [Academy or Probationary Period], please describe how you were treated compared to other candidates. Any negative experiences?).

E. Diversity – (15 min.)

1. Can you describe a typical Maryland State [Trooper, Police employee]? Typical leader?

Probe: Can you identify people similar to yourself in leadership positions at MSP?

2. In your opinion, what characteristics, traits, contributions, and behaviors are most valued and rewarded at MSP?

3. What would MSP look like if it were more diverse and inclusive?

4. The MSP are creating definitions for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion for the organization. MSP's definition for diversity states:

“The Maryland State Police recognizes that our employees are our most valuable asset and is committed through policy and practice to recruit, hire and retain a workforce that is composed of a variety of human identities and life experiences including, but not limited to: race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, social class, religious or ethical value system, age, physical ability and national origin.”

Do you feel that is a good definition for Diversity? Based on your experiences, do you feel MSP is living up to this definition of Diversity?

Probe: (If yes, how so? If not, how so? Could you share a little more about your experiences? How would you describe the department's environment for diversity? Have you faced or witnessed prejudice or discrimination in your work setting? Describe what happened. Reflecting back on your experience at the MSP [Academy or Probationary Period], please describe how you were treated compared to other candidates. Any negative experiences?).

F. Conclusion – (10 min.)

1. Of the diversity, inclusions and equity issues we discussed today, which is the most important to you?

2. In your opinion, what can MSP do to value and support you as an employee?

3. Is there anything regarding diversity, inclusion, or equity that we should have addressed today during our focus group?

Appendix D

External Focus Group Moderator's Guide

A. Introduction – (10 minutes)

Welcome and Purpose: Thank you for joining us today. We really appreciate having you with us to share your opinions and experiences. The purpose of today's focus group, is to assist **the Maryland State Police in identifying and establishing diversity, equity, and inclusion strategies so that they will better serve the community.**

Explanation:

1. First, in a focus group, there are no wrong answers.
2. **This is a safe room!** While there are no wrong answers—there are **different points of view**. Say what you believe, regardless of anyone else's opinion. I want you to feel comfortable expressing **yourself; if you disagree—I encourage this—your diverse thinking will help us to know what you think truly, need, and feel.**
3. **Confidentiality:** Throughout the discussion and reporting process, your confidentiality will be respected, and no names will be used in any presentation. While these sessions will be audio-taped and transcribed to help understand feelings, values, and perceptions, data will be de-identified as much as possible and stored in password-protected files separate from any personal-private information. Please keep any personal stories you hear today in confidence. Any information from our discussion will be stored, to keep any disclosures confidential. Findings from multiple focus groups will be aggregated into one final report, reducing the potential to identify individual respondent input from any focus group session.
4. I am not an employee of the Maryland State Police or the State of Maryland, so your comments do not affect me personally.
5. Not everyone has to comment on everything that comes up, but please participate. I would like to hear from everyone in this room today, maybe not on every question but throughout the discussion.
6. If you hear something and want to 'piggyback' on it, please feel free to do so. If you disagree or hold a different view, please speak up as well. Even though we do not know each other, please comment on each other's remarks as we go through the session, whether you agree, disagree, or want to build on something. I am interested in knowing when there seems to be a consensus and when there is not.
7. We are recording, but that is only so I can correctly get your input for the report(s), though the report on the findings will not identify anyone by name.
8. **Please speak as loud as me!**
9. **I may need to move on** to another area of discussion sooner than you are ready, and I may have to cut a conversation short in the interest of time. I MAY need to interrupt to discuss everything on the planned agenda.

10. Finally, I am counting on you today to help make the most of our discussion. I will ask you to do your best to be **honest**. So let me thank you in advance for all your hard work and willingness!

BRIEF SELF-INTRODUCTIONS/ICE BREAKER

Please introduce yourself to the group and tell us what diversity, equity, and inclusion mean to you. **DO NOT STATE YOUR FULL NAME! First name only!**

***Moderator Direction:** The moderator sets the tone by starting the introduction and completing the icebreaker question. Once all have been introduced, the moderator thanks all participants.*

Do you have any questions before we start?

B. Public Perceptions – (10 minutes)

1. Before attending this meeting, what did you know about the Maryland State Police (MSP)? Probe: Did the media (news, social media, or movies) or friends/acquaintances influence your response?
2. In your opinion, what characteristics, traits, contributions, and behaviors are typical or associated with MSP Trooper?
3. In your communities or where you reside, how do residents view MSP?

C. Diversity – (20 minutes)

1. What is your first impression of MSP regarding diversity? What guided your answer?
2. Can you describe a typical Maryland State [Trooper or police employee]? What description comes to mind?
3. Do you believe that the hiring of officers should reflect the diverse communities they serve? If so, why? Please explain.
4. What would MSP look like if it were more diverse and inclusive?
5. The MSP Department is creating definitions for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion for the organization. MSP's definition of diversity states:

“The Maryland State Police recognizes that our employees are our most valuable asset and are committed through policy and practice to recruit, hire and retain a workforce that is composed of a variety of human identities and life experiences including, but not limited to: race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, social class, religious or ethical value system, age, physical ability, and national origin.”

Do you feel that this is a good definition of diversity? Based on your observations and/or experiences, do you feel MSP is living up to this definition of diversity?

Probe: (If yes, how so? If not, how so? Could you share a little more about your observations and/or experiences? How would you describe MSP's current diversity status?).

D. Community Inclusion – (10 minutes)

1. How has MSP been involved in the community? Have you, or anyone you know, had any contact with an MSP employee? If so, in what capacity?
2. Do you believe that, as an organization, the MSP understands the cultural differences and racial or ethnic differences that make up your community? If yes, how? Please explain. Can you give an example? If not, how? Please explain. Can you provide an example? Please describe that experience.
3. In your opinion, can community partnerships help retain officers from underrepresented populations? Please explain your response.
4. What do you wish the MSP understood about your community?

E. Conclusion – (10 minutes)

1. Of the public perception, diversity, and community inclusion topics we discussed today, which is the most important to you?
2. In your opinion, what can MSP do to value and support you and members of your community?
3. Is there anything regarding public perception, diversity, or community inclusion, we should have addressed today during our focus group?