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*YOUR FEEDBACK IS IMPORTANT!*

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## U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

Actions Taken Based on Federal Employee Viewpoint  
Survey (FEVS) Employee Feedback

### **Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA)**

BEA employees' dedication to collaboration and innovation is a huge part of how they make BEA a better place to work. BEA convenes Change Committees and councils, comprised of employees at all levels of the organization, to solicit additional input and to make recommendations to shape the future of OneBEA. In addition, BEA often conducts follow-up surveys, focus groups, and town hall-style events to foster collaborative management and employee engagement. Frequent messaging to staff keeps them informed of bureau happenings and contributes to an atmosphere of sharing and partnership.

In 2021, the BEA Change Committee conducted a follow-on FEVS survey focused on workload sustainability and staff involvement with processes that affect their work. Recommendations that will be put into action include enhancing employees' telework experience by providing additional hardware and technical knowledge, as well as establishing etiquette and communication practices. In order to sustain current and future work, BEA program areas will also address gaps in process documentation by conducting self-assessments to identify areas of risk and begin to develop strategies, based on best practices, to address those risks with improved documentation. Directorates will discuss these topics at their strategic planning meetings and report on progress in 2022. BEA program areas will also conduct a self-assessment of communication practices on production schedules to identify areas for improvement.

Recent initiatives also include the launch of an Individual Development Plan and Training Needs Assessment and a 90-day review of leadership training options and requirements for supervisors, leading to enhanced leadership development programs and resources.

### **Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS)**

A BIS Employee Engagement Focus Group was formed as part of the Bureau's strategic plan for improving BIS employee engagement, thus improving the BIS FEVS scores. Part of the focus group charter is to evaluate the FEVS scores, propose new initiatives and present the proposals to BIS senior leadership for approval. One of the proposed initiatives was the Innovation Program, based on the "idea hub" concept, where employees submit proposals for potential improvement projects within the organization. The BIS Innovation Program had 52 ideas submitted by the employees with 7 projects selected by executive leadership for implementation. One of these 7 ideas, the BIS In-House Knowledge Sharing Sessions concept, has officially been approved by leadership, and the first session will be held before the end of the year.



Another proposal from the Employee Engagement Focus Group is the High Five Award Program and the BIS Peer-to-Peer Recognition Program. In FY 2021, 28 recipients received the 2021 High Five Award and approximately 50 peer-to-peer recognitions were posted on an internal BIS website. Other actions taken by leadership to improve employee engagement include: re-establishing the BIS Student Loan Repayment Program, which has 33 participants; implementing the BIS Communications Enhancement Program, which conducted employee surveys and all hands meetings for the purpose of obtaining feedback and enhancing communication; creating SharePoint sites for the Office of Administration and Office of the Under Secretary with additional pages expanded to include the program offices in FY 2022; offering of professional infographics services; and the 2021 FEVS virtual communication plan with the slogan "Participation is the key to change".

Additionally, BIS established its first BIS Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Council that developed a strategic plan which aligns with the Secretarial goals and objectives. On September 16, 2021, the Council hosted Microaggression training via Microsoft Teams. Guest speaker Melissa Band, Director of Civil Rights Office within the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, discussed the impact of microaggressions in the workplace and how to respond to them. The training was noted as having over 100 employees in attendance. BIS also continues to work with the Department to encourage employees to enroll in the Office of Civil Rights' BIAS Sync Pilot Program.

### **Bureau of the Census (CENSUS)**

In support of the 2020 FEVS, the Census Bureau continues to prioritize career development opportunities that support the strategic and operational business needs of the agency while developing



the personal and professional goals of the bureau's workforce. As a component of the Statistical Data and Modernization (SDM) Project, the Census Bureau has developed an expansive Data Science Training Program that provides tailored data science training that aligns with key Census Bureau competencies. In 2021, the Data Science Training Program was expanded to include three new on-demand training tracks to improve the data literacy of supervisory and non-on-supervisory employees.

In addition to the SDM Project, the Census Competency Working Group has improved the Survey Life Cycle and Mission Enabling (SLC-MES) competency dictionary to better summarize the work performed within the bureau. The working group has also aided in the creation of individual competency assessments for Census Bureau staff. The competency assessments provide managers with a method to assess the proficiency level of staff in the targeted competencies and measure the proficiency gaps for both the organization and staff so that strategies can be identified to close those gaps.

To support future FEVS efforts, the Census Bureau has created a working group comprised of staff from each directorate within the bureau. The goal of the working group is to provide updates on upcoming FEVS efforts, promote upcoming FEVS efforts to increase survey response rates, and serve as a collaborative space to review FEVS results and develop action plans.

### **Economic Development Administration (EDA)**

EDA's leadership and management are committed to cultivating a culture of openness and transparency through active conversations and gathering and acting on employee feedback. The FEVS is one among a number of tools that EDA uses to gather employee feedback to continuously improve EDA's organizational health and foster a work environment that spurs high levels of engagement and productivity. Building on the results of the 2020 FEVS and other employee feedback initiatives, EDA Leadership implemented several important initiatives and changes. To address workload concerns due to increased supplemental funding, EDA is hiring new staff to support EDA's expanded programs and funding. EDA has also revamped its New Employee Experience onboarding program (NEX) and is strengthening its training and development program. Also, as a longer-term effort to optimize its staffing based on workload, EDA has launched a workforce strategy initiative.

EDA also launched several strategic initiatives that tap into employee insight and experience to alleviate pain points and build critical infrastructure. These include an initiative to strengthen internal communication and collaboration that resulted in the launch in October 2021 of EDA's new intranet and

collaboration hub; an initiative to improve the grants management process and modernize the grants management systems; an initiative to define a vision and roadmap for strengthening the use of data and analytics to inform EDA work; and an initiative to align around strengthening mission delivery and impact. EDA also launched its Leadership Development Program to build essential competencies through a variety of learning opportunities both through live online modules and self-paced individual learnings. The goal is to maximize leaders' growth while also ensuring EDA has optimized its workforce to deliver excellence and streamlined its resourcing needs.

EDA has also aligned its bronze awards to better synch and track with the Department's awards process. By tying EDA's annual bronze awards timeframe, staff better understand the process by which gold, silver and bronze awards are made and provide timely recognition for work accomplished. One other



recognition tool that EDA utilized last year was its monthly EDA Spotlight Award. This monthly award recognizes monthly outstanding achievements from across the enterprise to individuals or small groups. Awardee's accomplishments are read aloud during the monthly meeting, provided a \$10 Starbucks gift card and then mentioned in EDA's Hot Topics weekly newsletter. Last, to ensure an apparatus exist for any potentially conceived enterprise-wide risks of the above initiatives and or any other EDA tenants, EDA relaunched its Risk Review Board and Steering

Committee to identify, prioritize, monitor, communicate and mitigate known risks.

### **International Trade Administration (ITA)**

ITA is continuing to develop its knowledge management (KM) capabilities and empowering employees to share their experiences and insights more effectively. As part of ITA's KM efforts, ITA is launching a Succession Planning program to help ITA anticipate and prepare for current and future personnel and talent needs. ITA is working to integrate planning for future staffing needs into its culture and providing employees with new opportunities to grow professionally, enabling ITA to retain specialized and institutional knowledge. A staff that is ready and able to navigate transition and complexity will contribute to DOC's strategic objective of increasing employee engagement through improved talent management processes.

ITA has established the Diversity & Inclusion Advisory Council (DIAC) to foster a work environment with deliberate focus on acceptance, education, and inclusion. The DIAC works to ensure that all ITA employees are afforded equal access to internal programs and services. It is composed of five subcommittees focusing on topics of diversity in recruitment, promotion and retention, communications and outreach, and programs and training. Through its efforts, the council reaffirms ITA's commitment to diversity and inclusion and integrating these values into its organizational culture, workforce, and programming.

ITA is continuing its commitment to the EVS by developing the first EVS dashboard that transforms the ability to share data in real time. It serves to save time in data analysis and enhance transparency. It allows immediate access to survey results and analysis. This dashboard is available to all ITA employees with the goal of increasing conversations around results and actions taken to address them.

### **National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST)**

NIST values the employee feedback received through the FEVS and is taking active steps to improve analysis of results. To improve NIST's ability to analyze FEVS data and develop actions plans, the FEVS-

Analysis and Results Tool (ART) designed by the NIH was piloted in a few Operating Units (OU) to gain experience with the tool and obtain feedback from customers. NIST also recorded a presentation on how to use the FEVS-ART and interpret the data for use by other OUs. NIST has received highly positive feedback from the OUs and plan to implement again at NIST in FY21.

### Office of Inspector General (OIG)

OIG has continued to build on the success of its earlier initiatives and introduced additional modes of transparency, collaboration, and accountability. Working from earlier strategic planning, a by-product



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of engagement with FEVS, OIG has used internal communications to nurture employee engagement. The IG and Deputy IG continue to meet with teams across all of OIG and have introduced regular office hours – an open door session available to any OIG employee, on any topic. With significant employee participation, OIG has recently launched a new Intranet, a much improved productivity tool. Bi-weekly all hands meetings, carried on MS Teams, are an important focal point for all employees. In

addition to routine announcements, the all hands is a forum for internal team presentations, in which colleagues share their good work, and for guest speakers from outside of OIG, in both the Department of Commerce and elsewhere. These external partners provide an alternative perspective on OIG’s mission and all employees benefit from the exchange.

OIG is also taking steps to continuously improve the report writing process – the means by which its primary work product is published – by streamlining the report planning, writing, and review processes. This effort is being done through a working group of employees. Finally, OIG plans over the next year to introduce a system of After Action Reviews (AARs), a critical tool in creating a learning organization. The use of AARs will support OIG as it continues to promote consistency and fairness by standardizing the implementation of policies and procedures and communicating the factors that contribute to decision-making.

### Office of the Secretary (OS)

In response to their analysis and findings for the FEVS related to trust, the *OS Office of Acquisition Management (OAM)* managers participated in a one-day team building workshop facilitated by Franklin Covey, covering the subject of “trust” and how it is a critical component for organizations in managing change and executing strategy. The session focused on five waves of trust, to include: self, relationship, organizational, market, and social. OAM also conducted a deep dive into their FEVS results and gave employees an opportunity to provide input on efforts to increase employee engagement, empowerment, involvement, ownership, and accountability in improving operations in the organization. The deep dive identified an outdated work schedule policy as a point of staff frustration that OAM evaluated and determined was no longer needed.

In 2021, the *OS Office of Civil Rights (OCR)* appointed two employees to review the FEVS survey and results. The appointed team decided to focus on questions which had a 20 % or higher negative response (14 questions total). The questions were then divided into four different categories, Performance, Senior Leadership, Managers & Supervisors and COVID-19/Work from home. The team briefed out the results and proposed an action plan to OCR leadership.



In the *OS Office of Facilities and Environmental Quality (OFEQ)*, a working group was created to discuss optimal solutions for the three main areas of issue, and they have started to implement changes, including revamping All Hands meetings so that they are much more interactive. With the pandemic, OFEQ had the opportunity to have All Hands meetings every two weeks to keep employees engaged. They developed ice breakers that build on personal interests and share information with others that are offered via PDF. Newsletters are also done every other week, where they interview a handful of employees to learn how they're doing during this time.

The *OS Office of Financial Management (OFM)* had three focus areas for FY20 as a result of FEVS feedback: employee recognition, improved communication, and training opportunities. OFM developed a Performance Recognition document outlining requirements and necessary approvals for different categories of employee performance recognition (eg. Shout-Outs, Time-Off Awards, Cash Awards). The OFM work hour policy was updated and pending approval/release. Training is encouraged in OFM by giving employees a \$1,000 training budget annually and by sharing lists of free training opportunities to all employees.

Acknowledging the importance of employee feedback and engagement, the *OS Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM)* continued holding activities/initiatives such as monthly celebrations to recognize birthdays, farewells, and Federal service milestones; monthly Peer Recognition Awards Program recognizing employees nominated by their peers for going above and beyond; "Employee of the Quarter" and "Employee of the Year" awards; and individual development sessions (i.e. Toastmasters presentation) to name a few. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the OHRM EE Team kept employees engaged through weekly virtual events including: Meditation Monday, Tidbit Tuesday, Workout Wednesday, and Happy Hour Friday. Leadership also kept in touch with employees through virtual bi-weekly All Hands Meetings. The EE Team has received a lot of positive feedback from OS OHRM employees and has sent out a survey to collect additional feedback including ideas on how to improve the program, which will be considered as future strategies are developed.



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In line with employee feedback, the *OS Office of Security (OSY)*, completed historical trend analysis of results dating back to 2013 across both employee engagement as well as diversity and inclusion. A Senior Leader Offsite was held in FY19 to discuss historical trends and ways to maintain/improve. Employee Engagement and Diversity and Inclusion goals were added into performance plans for all supervisors beginning in FY19 and the OSY Employee Engagement Committee was tasked with gathering feedback and reporting to management on employee engagement. OSY also updated their Mission/Vision/Goals with the objective to more prominently focus on "One-OSY" and continued quarterly employee feedback sessions and senior management exit interviews with departing employees.

The *OS Office of the General Counsel (OGC)* engaged staff through bi-weekly tag ups; corporate viewing of Ted Talks and other team building videos; and increased use of technology to engage with all employees including senior staff meetings and individual OGC unit meetings.

### **U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO)**

As a result of the FEVS, the USPTO has established an action planning requirement at the Business Unit level, where business unit leadership must develop action plans, including evaluation measures, for targeted FEVS items. USPTO has adopted a “Continuous Listening” communication strategy as part of their overall marketing for both the FEVS and their own internal People Survey and corresponding pulse surveys. As in prior years, USPTO will leverage all communication modes in their marketing efforts, including the use of employee testimonials to reinforce the value of their input.