

# U.S. Department of Commerce



Actions Taken Based on Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey  
Feedback



April 2024



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# About This Report

This report contains a compilation of examples of actions taken across the bureaus in the Department of Commerce (DOC) based on insights from recent Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) results.



The FEVS is an annual survey designed by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to measure employees' perceptions of whether, and to what extent, conditions characterizing successful organizations are present in federal government agencies. Each year, the bureaus at DOC work to develop action plans based on specific FEVS focus areas, report on the progress of these plans, and identify the impact on their respective bureau.

**Below is an overview with examples from 12 bureaus at DOC.**

## Based on the FEVS Results...

- **50%** of bureaus selected to focus on **meaningful employee performance recognition**.
- **4 out of 12** of bureaus selected to focus on their **management involving employees in decisions that affect their work**.
- Other common shared focus areas amongst bureaus involved **senior leaders generating motivation and commitment** and the **processes related to work approval**.



## Bureaus Acted To...

- ✓ **Create New Resources**
  - ✓ BEA, ITA, MBDA, OS all added new awards for their employees.
  - ✓ BEA and EDA undertook additional hiring efforts.
  - ✓ NIST added a training program with coaching.
  - ✓ BEA and CENSUS added new products and tools for employees.
- ✓ **Seek Further Information**
  - ✓ BIS, CENSUS, ITA, MBDA, NTIA, and OS hosted information sessions with lunch and learns, employee all hands and roundtables.
  - ✓ BEA, BIS, and USPTO all launched focus groups and specialized teams to further explore their focus area.



The FEVS has directly influenced DOC's approach to resource allocation, information dissemination, and performance enhancement. The meaningful actions taken by the bureaus in response to FEVS feedback has led to a more resourceful, informed, and high-performing workforce.

This report further details the specific actions taken and relative impacts on each bureau, demonstrating the transformative effect of the FEVS on DOC.

# Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA)

Based on the FEVS results, BEA selected two key items or areas to focus on: creating reasonable workloads for employees and recognizing differences in employee performance in a meaningful way.



## Create Balanced Workloads

BEA observed that **78%** of their respondents reported agreement when asked if their **workload was reasonable**.

**Actions Taken:** Based on the FEVS results, BEA launched an initiative to review processes and documentation around hiring that led to a bureau-wide hiring effort in 2023, an updated external hiring web page, and a more centralized hiring process. BEA also added more employee positions in areas where they were most needed to accomplish their mission and invested in contractor support to keep recruitment actions moving swiftly. Additionally, BEA enhanced employee telework experiences by providing additional hardware and technical instructions for operating said hardware. Current and future workload sustainability was an area of focus for executives at their strategic offsite in November 2023, emphasizing the importance of documentation, knowledge sharing, and succession planning to alleviate workload concerns.

BEA continues to modernize systems and processes, and address gaps in process documentation by conducting self-assessments to identify areas of risk and by developing strategies based on best practices that address those risks. Managers and supervisors are encouraged to have backup personnel for critical tasks. BEA is also conducting focus group sessions with employees to explore additional means of improving sustainability and related issues, including technology and workplace experience.

**Impact:** BEA continues to take steps to identify unreasonable employee workloads and address them through physical means (IT equipment and upgrades), process improvement, hiring, and reallocation of resources. BEA encourages employees to evaluate their specific work processes and functions for potential efficiencies that could also reduce workload.

## Recognize Differences in Performance

BEA observed that **66%** of their respondents agreed that **in their work unit, differences in performance are recognized in a meaningful way**.

**Actions Taken:** As a bureau under the Commerce Alternative Personnel System (CAPS), BEA is committed to recognizing and rewarding employee performance that makes a positive contribution to bureau and agency missions. BEA leadership members who are also Pay Pool Managers meet at least once annually to review performance management practices and ensure meaningful distinctions in performance are made. BEA also emphasizes two-way performance communication that maximizes opportunities for employees to interact with each other and leadership while educating supervisors and the workforce on the bureau's performance management system and its processes.

In 2023, a new On-The Spot (OTS) award inventory was proposed, based on employee recommendations, and approved. BEA displayed the new items in display cases outside their employee lounge and announced their availability via a blog post and in their employee newsletter, *The Bureau BEAT*. The BEA Award Program intranet page was updated to display images and details on all OTS award items. BEA also published an email to supervisors referencing their FEVS scores on questions related to employee recognition and providing resources and information on awards.

**Impact:** BEA supervisors continue to make meaningful distinctions in performance in both the formal performance management process and when considering other forms of award and recognition. Supervisors utilize a variety of recognition tools to reward strong performance, and the distribution of awards for top performers has become more consistent across the bureau.

# Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS)

Based on the FEVS results, BIS selected two key items or areas to focus on: sharing information across the organization and promoting communication amongst different work units about the organization.



## Share Information

*BIS observed that **51%** of their respondents reported agreement when asked if **information is openly shared in their organization.***

**Actions Taken:** BIS has gathered data through a FEVS focus group to better understand interaction and communication between program offices and improve the current state of operations and communication of BIS management's plans. The focus group seeks to facilitate a distribution of centralized information.

In addition, BIS has implemented an initiative for a BIS-wide All Hands as well as a Division All Hands in the program offices to help improve the level of communications from leadership about upcoming actions/changes, accomplishments, and to answer questions from employees.

**Impact:** Employees will be better informed on what is going on within their own program office, their supporting program offices, and the efforts of BIS, with the long-term goal of increasing transparency and expanding communication. Due to this increased communication, BIS employees are likely to be more engaged in the BIS mission, engage in more collaboration across BIS, see an increase in the productivity of the workforce and improve employee morale.

## Communicate Organizational Plans

*BIS observed that **53%** of their respondents agree that **managers promote communication among different work units.***

**Actions Taken:** Through information gathered by a BIS FEVS focus group, BIS seeks to support cross-communication within divisions as well as shared data and information across program offices. These efforts will include an emphasis on regular information sharing sessions with Brown Bags/Lunch and Learns, cross-communication with the BIS Newsletter, and coordinated efforts across the program offices to provide employees with the resources needed to support the BIS mission.

**Impact:** This cross-coordination effort seeks to allow individuals to share knowledge and resources on areas of expertise (who they are and what they do). This knowledge sharing also seeks to allow BIS employees to improve their day-to-day productivity, increasing the employee knowledge of the BIS, increase the timeframe to respond to customer inquiries while ensuring BIS employees stay abreast of changing policies and regulations that impact the BIS mission overall.

# Census Bureau (CENSUS)

Based on the FEVS results, Census selected two key items or areas to focus on: involving employees in decisions that affect their work and committing resources to develop new ideas in the organization.



## Enhance Workplace Innovation

Census observed that **52%** of their respondents reported agreement when asked if **their work unit commits resources to develop new ideas.**

**Actions Taken:** In an effort to fuel innovation and build on employee feedback from recent FEVS results, the Census Bureau has taken significant steps to transform operations with the addition of statistical data products. The goal with these products is to empower teams with the ability to respond more effectively to the rapidly evolving needs of the nation. The Business Ecosystem Acceleration Teams (BEAT) are centered around a simple yet powerful idea: tackling specific challenges or problems with small, cross-functional teams for a defined period. This approach provides a tangible way for employees to contribute to sharing ideas for the transformation efforts and shift from abstract concepts to concrete actions.

To support future FEVS efforts, the Census Bureau leveraged the participation of the FEVS Working Group which is comprised of decision-making 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.

**Impact:** BEAT teams will give Census Bureau employees the opportunity to participate on high impact projects with lasting impacts on Census Bureau's mission. These teams will increase employee engagement, improve skill development, enhanced cross-functional collaboration, identification of hidden talent, and improved problem-solving. Each of these impacts will lead to increased innovation, improved employee retention, stronger employer brand, increased efficiency and productivity.

## Improve Employee Efficacy

Census observed that **44%** of their respondents agreed that **management involves employees in decisions that affect their work.**

**Actions Taken:** The Census Bureau has encouraged the development of General Workforce Advisory Boards (GWAB) across the agency. These boards serve as a general workforce voice and gather feedback, ideas, and recommendations within each directorate which are then shared directly to the Senior Leadership Team.

The GWAB in the Economic Directorate has ongoing roundtables and activities where members of the general workforce can participate roundtable discussions to learn about agency efforts while hearing directly from the leadership.

These boards have been successful in engaging employees with senior leadership at roundtables and activities. It is Census Bureau's intent to help facilitate the creation of GWAB's in each directorate to offer a way for employees to interact with management and leadership across the entire Bureau.

**Impact:** Short-term impacts include increased employee engagement, improved communications between employees and leadership, ways to address immediate concerns that demonstrate responsiveness. With the many transformation efforts happening at Census, GWAB's serve as a bridge to help employees with decisions that affect their work.

Long-term impacts include strategic alignment, improved decision making, increased innovation, and sustainable growth by addressing employee concerns and aligning strategies with workforce needs.

# Economic Development Administration (EDA)

Based on the FEVS results, EDA selected two key items or areas to focus on: alleviating perceptions of unreasonable workloads of their employees and addressing the approval process in their organization as it relates to the delivery of work.



## Create Balanced Workloads

EDA observed that **62%** of their respondents reported agreement when asked if their **workload was reasonable**.

**Actions Taken:** Over the last several years, EDA has experienced tremendous change and growth. The bureau has significantly increased the number of grants it issues and has introduced new programs. EDA has taken steps to optimize its staffing resources through new collaboration methods and technology tools. As a result, EDA leadership has put in place several ways to streamline operations and address workload reasonability.

In 2023, EDA initiated an effort to reduce the workload burden for a significant portion of staff members. The leadership team, in partnership with managers and staff, developed recommendations and associated actions for grants management, engineering, and environmental reviews to simplify processes, create consistencies across offices, and provide clear guidance on expectations for core responsibilities.

Additionally, EDA has launched a new grants management system so that it may formally retire old legacy systems and enable better and faster access to grant data and other customer relations management tools.

**Impact:** With these measures, EDA expects to see an increase in collaboration, consistency across office operations, and simplified grants management processes. This will make EDA's staff workload more manageable, by decreasing time intensive administrative work, while maintaining critical customer service practices that EDA is known for across the country.

## Streamline Procedures Affecting Work

EDA observed that **54%** of their respondents agreed that **the approval process in their organization allows timely delivery of their work**.

**Actions Taken:** In response to the FEVS and as a part of the bureau's rapid growth and program portfolio expansion, EDA has attempted to streamline its approval process so staff can focus their time on the work that drives them. EDA recognized the importance of having clear expectations and consistent knowledge on what approval processes are and what is required to gain approval, as these relate to increases in workflow output while alleviating unnecessary bottlenecks.

EDA has thoughtfully reduced the number of reviews and approvals needed for disbursements, invoice reviews, and minor award changes—all to remain consistent with the basic EDA and federal grant making requirements. This will eliminate expectations of additional or extra reviews and approvals. All of which ensures that EDA staff are not spending more time than needed getting approvals from supervisors and directors for grant management actions.

**Impact:** EDA has streamlined the approval processes used in the organization to allow for an enhanced timeline for delivering work. The impact of these changes are consistent operations and more time spent on other high-value client collaboration. This, in turn, will lead to successful obligation of the fiscal year 2024 grant portfolio, a critical component of EDA's mission and success as an organization.

# International Trade Administration (ITA)

Based on the FEVS results, ITA selected two key items or areas to focus on: recognizing differences in employee performance in a meaningful way and involving employees in decisions that affect their work.



## Recognize Differences in Performance

ITA observed that **50%** of their respondents agreed that **in their work unit, differences in performance are recognized in a meaningful way.**

**Actions Taken:** The shift to remote work has made it more difficult to be intentional in recognizing ITA employees. To combat this, in addition to the department's Honor Awards, ITA's recognition program added Memorial and Star awards. The annual Memorial Award recognition was created in honor of ITA colleagues lost during Secretary Brown's trade mission to Bosnia and Croatia in 1996. ITA Star awards are quarterly awards given out to those employees who go above and beyond the call of duty.

ITA Leadership decided to make several modifications to ITA's internal awards program to allow for a more inclusive pool of nominations including making it mandatory for each business unit to submit nominations for deserving employees, reducing the number of times one person can be recognized in an awards cycle, and allowing managers and employees up to four hours of focus time to write nominations.

Additionally, ITA's Under Secretary and Deputy Under Secretary have launched their own "quick kudos" where they will send an email message acknowledging an employee or group of employees for a job well done on a particular project or mission.

**Impact:** The intended immediate and long-term impact of reimagining ITA's recognition program is the ability to better recognize ITA employees in a timely manner and through a more inclusive lens. It is ITA's hope that these modifications to the program will improve ITA's workplace culture, employee retention, job satisfaction and morale.

## Improve Employee Efficacy

ITA observed that **48%** of their respondents reported agreement when asked if **management involves employees in decisions that affect their work.**

**Actions Taken:** ITA is developing a series of Brown Bag Lunch and Learn sessions to work with supervisors on a variety of different areas that were highlighted in the 2023 FEVS results. The Brown Bag series will target the following areas: setting clear goals and expectations, creating a safe and supportive work environment, empowering employees to make decisions and involve them from inception to completion, and celebrating and rewarding employees in a timely manner.

ITA has determined that managers need to effectively communicate the purpose, scope, and outcomes of a project or initiative with employees. ITA will also amplify the need to provide clear guidelines, criteria, and deadlines to all managers across the organization. ITA will also gather feedback on barriers to employees getting more involved, including the fear of failure, criticism, and rejection. ITA will plan to address these barriers by creating a safe and supportive environment in which employees will feel more comfortable sharing ideas, opinions, and feedback. ITA managers will also be given tools to address issues and conflicts promptly and constructively.

**Impact:** The immediate and long-term impacts of educating ITA's managers on how best to involve their employees in the decision-making process is increased productivity and the improved quality of the services they deliver. As managers involve their employees, ITA Employee ideas will be recognized as important contributions to the organization and give them the power to influence the outcomes of their work, leading to increased job satisfaction and employee retention.



# Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA)

Based on the FEVS results, MBDA selected two key items or areas to focus on: recognizing differences in performance for employees and senior leaders generating high levels of motivation and commitment in the workplace.



## Recognize Differences in Performance

MBDA observed that **46%** of their respondents agreed that **in their work unit, differences in performance are recognized in a meaningful way.**

**Actions Taken:** MBDA has obtained approval to implement the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) USA Performance Tool as an automated tool for performance plans and appraisals for non-Senior Executive Service and Senior Executive Service employees. MBDA is currently working with OPM on the design of the tool, while ensuring DOC policy compliance. MBDA's goal is to have this new tool implemented in June 2024.

MBDA continues to hold its Annual Employee Awards Ceremony to recognize core values and areas of excellence. MBDA also started issuing Individual Cash Awards to employees to recognize them for superior performance in a meaningful way. Based on the FEVS, MBDA also provided training to their supervisors on best practices for performance plan establishment, mid-year progress review (and optional additional reviews), and performance appraisal to ensure that differences in work performance are being recognized at every level across the organization.

**Impact:** MBDA is focusing on informal training for supervisors around performance management, which will provide performance and employee recognition. MBDA will also provide guidance to supervisors and employees to establish process improvements in their designated roles.

The MBDA Annual Employee Awards Program has demonstrated and continues to instill employee recognition as being an integral part of MBDA's mission. Displaying the core values of leadership, professionalism, integrity, teamwork and work-life-balance are rewarded.

## Improve Employee Motivation

MBDA observed that **40%** of their respondents reported agreement when asked if **senior leaders generate high levels of motivation and commitment in the workforce.**

**Actions Taken:** Based on the FEVS, MBDA has re-established quarterly agency All Hands meetings, and leadership team meetings to increase communications across MBDA. These meetings are an invitation for MBDA employees to interact with and be motivated by senior leaders within the bureau.

There have also been occasional Ad Hoc meetings held to provide communications or changes that may affect Agency processes. For example, in March 2024, an impromptu meeting was held with the MBDA workforce to provide an update on the Texas Federal District Court in the *Nuziard v. MBDA* case. The goal of these types of meetings are to provide the most up-to-date information on changes happening within the bureau and to offer MBDA employees an inside look at the intentions of senior leaders, enhancing their commitment and understanding with increased transparency of relevant events.

**Impact:** MBDA has taken steps to foster an environment of agency transparency on all matters related to MBDA and facilitate increased communications across the agency. Each of these resources and efforts allow MBDA employees the opportunity to engage with senior leaders and provides each employee with interactions that generate higher levels of motivation and commitment to the organization.

# National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST)



Based on the FEVS results, NIST selected two key items or areas to focus on: addressing the approval process in their organization as it relates to the delivery of work and senior leaders generating high levels of motivation and commitment in the workplace.

## Streamline Procedures Affecting Work

NIST observed that **54%** of their respondents agreed that **the approval process in their organization allows timely delivery of their work.**

**Actions Taken:** The NIST Research Protections Office (RPO) recently took over the Editorial Review Board (ERB) function which serves as the clearance function for all technical and fundamental research communications at NIST. The purpose of the ERB review is to ensure that manuscripts are of high quality and conform to NIST and Department of Commerce policies. The review includes several layers of review that include the management chain, technical reviewers, the ERB sponsor from the Organizational Unit (OU), and the ERB Chair.

As a result of these findings and the FEVS, the RPO has begun to assess the ERB process and investigate ways to find efficiencies while maintaining the integrity of the reviews. NIST will do this by reviewing existing data, meeting with stakeholders at all levels of NIST involved in the review process, and researching what other agencies include in their processes. In addition, a review will be conducted for the current education and training to see if updates are needed. The timeline for assessing the state of the program is approximately 6 months. NIST anticipates making any identified updates in the 6 months after assessment.

**Impact:** NIST review and approval process are becoming more efficient. NIST can define this as the timeline is shorter and/or more predictable. The intended immediate impact is that NIST can provide a baseline assessment of the process and identify areas for improvement. In addition, the updated training materials will provide additional transparency on the review process and the continuous evaluation of it.

## Improve Employee Motivation

NIST observed that **58%** of their respondents reported agreement when asked if **senior leaders generate high levels of motivation and commitment in the workforce.**

**Actions Taken:** The NIST Director promotes “servant leadership” as the best approach in keeping with NIST’s values that prioritize the growth, well-being, and empowerment of employees. This attention to leadership and its impact on employees extends to other levels of the organization as well. NIST classifies its leaders by “readiness level” and employs a leadership development continuum to tailor training and developmental opportunities to the specific needs of the NIST community.

NIST OHRM also has internal coaches which leaders can access. In addition, senior leaders have access to a group of external coaches that have been vetted by OHRM to help staff and supervisors access the learning they need to manage their work and teams, shift mindsets, and practice applying what they have learned in the flow of work.

Finally, executives at NIST are piloting a 12-month training program that begins with a 360-degree assessment and involves monthly seminars to cover topics such as how leaders show up, partnering, decision-making, managing emotions, resilience and agility, and inspiring others. Lessons are supplemented and reinforced through 1-on-1 coaching and peer mentoring.

**Impact:** The new NIST Coaching Program underpins, supplements, and supports all the NIST leadership development programs. With their coach, leaders can discuss real-time challenges in a confidential environment to determine new courses of action with direct implications on motivation and employee commitment.

# National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)



Based on the FEVS results, NOAA selected two key items or areas to focus on: management involving employees in decisions that affect their work and differences in performance being recognized in a meaningful way.

## Improve Employee Efficacy

NOAA observed that **49%** of their respondents reported agreement when asked if **management involves employees in decisions that affect their work.**

**Actions Taken:** In 2023, the National Weather Service (NWS) released the Organizational Health Blueprint. Drawn from the Organizational Health Index (OHI) survey results, the Blueprint's focus areas are transparency & openness, employee wellness & development, knowledge sharing & collaboration, and continuous improvement & harnessing innovations. Each of these focus areas allows NOAA employees a voice in decisions that affect their work.

NOAA has also planned Employee Engagement Events to correspond with in-person events and conferences to be used as an opportunity to educate, support networking and hear directly from employees. With this, NOAA has also created a series referred to as Learning and Listening Sessions - Can We Talk, M&S Webinars, We Will Do Better, etc. The series are geared toward managers and employees to ensure they receive required training, education, and transparency. This provides an opportunity for leadership to hear from employees regarding challenges, concerns, best practices, and questions.

**Impact:** This framework will improve the employee experience and sustain a highly motivated workforce. Aligned with the "Inclusive Decision Making" arena, the Blueprint will aim to help managers address challenges facing individual offices and incorporate employees into the decision-making process. Thus, creating more opportunities for leadership to engage with employees, while building a more agile, encouraging, supportive, safe and trustworthy environment.

## Recognize Differences in Performance

NOAA observed that only **47%** of their respondents agreed that **in their work unit, differences in performance are recognized in a meaningful way.**

**Actions Taken:** Based on the FEVS, NOAA began marketing the Awards and Recognition Program to better recognize their employees and offices in a timely and meaningful way that aligns with current initiatives such as the NOAA Strategic Plan, while also reflecting the behaviors NOAA comes to expect as part of the value system.

These programs emphasize employee value, making sure that employees feel seen, included, are engaged, and know they matter and provide needed employee recognition. Part of these efforts include the addition of a wall of fame for employee wins. Digitally, KudoBoards! and Values-Led Awards recognizes employees whose work has aligned with the organization's/office's values. Finally, social announcements are used to share staff successes on external social media, highlighting achievements.

NOAA encourages the use of chat messages, emails, and handwritten notes for recognition - a quick and often informal message for smaller victories can be an easy yet impactful way to recognize performance. NOAA also encourages the DOC Kudo Program - which creates a space for peers to quickly recognize and show appreciation for the good work of their colleagues.

**Impact:** NOAA has worked to re-define what merit recognition is and how these types of recognition are used in their organization by setting expectations for desired behaviors and ensuring that their employees have the resources they need to recognize and be recognized.

# National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA)



Based on the FEVS results, NTIA selected two key items or areas to focus on: highlighting that the work of employees contributes to the common good and that employees in work units meet the needs of their customers.

## Highlight Work Outcomes

NTIA observed that **96%** of their respondents reported agreement when asked if **it is important to them that their work contribute to the common good.**

**Actions Taken:** In 2023, NTIA's Administrator & Assistant Secretary (OAS) of Commerce published monthly blogs highlighting exciting things happening across the agency. NTIA also utilized agency-wide email notices and townhalls to communicate agency news, updates and FEVS results. Town halls increased leadership participation and allowed interaction with employees during Q&A segments.

NTIA organizations also incorporated its organizational goals into the performance plans of all employees. They also communicated Strategic Objectives developed by OAS at All Hands meetings. NTIA 2023/2024 goals and strategic plans have spanned a variety of topics including policy by building a better Internet and stronger communications networks and public safety by supporting first responders and upgrading 9-1-1.

To achieve these agency goals, NTIA has released the 2023 FirstNet Authority Roadmap, which outlines the priorities focused on ensuring the network remains dependable, connecting responders, and enhancing the network so to operationalize advanced technologies.

**Impact:** NTIA employees are now better informed about the agency mission, strategic plans and the achievements and have access to real time updates via Broadcasts and blog publications. With these resources, NTIA employees now have awareness of the impact of their work such as the awarding of grants from the Middle Mile program, and Broadband Infrastructure Program (BIP) and more. These serve as an important reminder to NTIA employees that their work contributes to the common good.

## Support Customer Needs/ Streamline Procedures affecting work

NTIA observed that **92%** of their respondents agreed that **employees in their work unit meet the needs of their customers.** FirstNet observed that **56%** of their respondents agreed that **the approval process in their organization allows timely delivery of their work.**

**Actions Taken:** In 2023, NTIA met the needs of both by organizing a digital ministerial roundtable with eight emerging economies, which provided Secretary Raimondo and her European Union counterpart the opportunity to listen to their connectivity needs and propose tangible next steps.

Furthermore, with an impact of \$80 billion on 5G wireless spectrum licenses, NTIA/ITS collaborated with a multi-stakeholder group including over 100 representatives, eight other federal agencies, three cellular carriers, three airlines, and four aircraft and radio altimeters manufacturers. NTIA also completed the initial buildout of the FirstNet Authority Network.

Lastly, NTIA co-hosted the first Public Safety Innovation Summit, while also conducting more than 1,500 public safety engagements nationwide and engaging over 49,000 public safety stakeholders to discuss FirstNet and how public safety's network can better serve their needs.

FirstNet will also review current approval processes at the agency-level to determine where approval authorities are and whether those can be delegated to lower levels to reduce the amount of time it takes for a decision.

**Impact:** NTIA continues to highlight their customer needs with the National Spectrum Strategy, identifying spectrum to study for innovative new uses and technologies that will better serve customers. FirstNet will have more efficient processes to reduce the time it takes for decision making.



# Office of the Secretary (OS)

Based on the FEVS results, OS subunits broadly selected key items or areas to focus on: recognizing differences in performance and topics around leadership and information sharing with employees and involving employees in decisions that affect their work.



## Recognize Differences in Performance

OIS and OFM observed that their respondents reported varied agreement (57% and 46% respectively) when asked **in their work unit, differences in performance are recognized in a meaningful way**. OCR observed that 68% of their respondents reported agreement when asked **if excellent work is similarly recognized for all employees**.

**Actions Taken:** Based on the FEVS, The Office of Intelligence and Security (OIS) has developed an onboarding program to provide an in-person training to new OIS employees on a variety of topics to include performance plans/evaluations. OIS hosts ongoing trainings for internal staff covering a variety of operations and has also incorporated sessions on the Commerce Alternative Personnel System (CAPS) process for writing Performance self-assessments. During an upcoming OIS Leadership Offsite, a session will be dedicated to improving performance plan requirements by focusing on objective measures at the minimally, moderately, and highly successful level to show levels of performance across employees in a meaningful way. The Office of Financial Management (OFM) plans to have a Point of Contact from the Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) speak at a June meeting to discuss the CAPS system and its role in performance recognition for employees.

The Office of Civil Rights (OCR) also plans to recognize a specific employee each quarter for their work contributions in the "Employee Spotlight from the Director," which will include a time off award.

**Impact:** Across work units, OS employees are being recognized for their performance. Trainings and conversations, at every level, continually equip OS leaders to meaningfully recognize performance while providing employees with the opportunity to also showcase their work.

## Improve Employee Efficacy / Leaders Lead Index

OIS work units observed that 53% of their respondents reported agreement that **management involves employees in decisions that affect their work**. OAM work units observed that 97% of their respondents reported positive **perceptions of leadership integrity and behaviors (Leaders Lead Index)**.

**Actions Taken:** The Office of Intelligence and Security (OIS) leadership has continually implemented new opportunities for staff to share their opinions and feedback on organizational decisions, strategic planning and other initiatives. Through listening sessions and open office hours, OIS staff have been given the chance to influence strategic decisions.

OIS Leadership at all levels has provided subject matter experts and program personnel with working-level knowledge of operations with the opportunity to brief leadership directly on programmatic decisions through regular open office hours and other ad-hoc briefings. Similarly, these personnel have been involved in the development of budget and/or resource proposals.

The Office of Acquisition Management (OAM) plans to continue the practice of conducting quarterly All-Hands/Employee Engagement Sessions that provide employees with a forum to express their views on improving efficiency and effectiveness in OAM day-to-day activities and have led to increased employee engagement, empowerment, employee involvement in the organization.

**Impact:** OS leadership, across work units, continually motivates employees and involves them in decisions that affect their work. Listening sessions, staff meetings, all hands, strategic planning sessions, resources proposals and more allow employees the opportunity to engage with leaders and propose ideas that influence decision making and their work at OS.

# Office of the Inspector General (OIG)

Based on the FEVS results, OIG selected two key items or areas to focus on: recognizing differences in work performance in a meaningful way and looking for new ways to improve how work is being performed in the organization.



## Recognize Differences in Performance

OIG observed that **66%** of their respondents reported agreement when asked if **in their work unit, differences in performance are recognized in a meaningful way.**

**Actions Taken:** In 2023, OIG took steps to recognize differences in the performance of their employees by developing a successful talent management strategy that recognizes employees for excellence and holding poor performers accountable.

OIG Leadership also took efforts to facilitate an environment conducive to accountability by continuing to empower managers with personnel decisions and acting as an advisor in support of those decisions. The OIG Human Resources Management Division (HRMD) implemented a new fully automated Performance Management System that is linked to other Human Resources (HR) systems, providing continuous data across the employee life-cycle process that ends with the upload of the data into an Electronic Official Personnel Folder. As far as incentives and recognition is concerned, OIG implemented a new Annual Inspector General Awards policy as well as recognizing employees during the biweekly "All Hands" meetings.

**Impact:** OIG Supervisors have made effective use of the monitoring tools within the performance management process. Many were able to identify deficient performance during the appraisal period while others effectively addressed unacceptable performance. Current data from internal pulse survey results show that OIG employees appreciate the new strategies. The overall sentiment is that good performance is recognized in several ways (non-monetary, monetary, time-off, biweekly team presentations to showcase work, etc.) and that current policies are effective.

## Enhance Workplace Innovation

OIG observed that **80%** of their respondents agreed that **their work unit consistently looks for new ways to improve how they do their work.**

**Actions Taken:** This year, OIG finished implementing the OIG-wide After-Action Review (AAR) process to support a culture of continuous performance improvement and adaptive learning by systematically reviewing team successes and challenges related to how work is performed. This AAR program is designed to review major cases, audits, and projects in the various OIG offices, so that they can increase their ability to learn from the work they do. DOC OIG's AAR program is one of two among the OIG Community (Interior OIG is the other one).

OIG chose a group from among many applicants and held a well received 3-day contractor-led training during the implementation phase. OIG employees attended half-day Virtual Facilitation and Meetings Workshops. OIG also selected an AAR Process Manager to coordinate requests for facilitators and track information about the program. These managers can continually pass along any suggestions for how to improve the work that is being performed, once the input is received in the AAR, thus establishing a continuous feedback pipeline for improvements.

**Impact:** The implementation of AARs at OIG has fostered open communication while creating better processes, procedures, and outcomes. By establishing input from stakeholders with AARs, OIG has created an inclusive organization that works in a culture of continuous improvement by creating better processes and procedures to help correct errors while establishing best practices.

# Patent and Trademark Organization (USPTO)

Based on the FEVS results, USPTO selected two key items or areas to focus on: Improving managers' communication of organizational goals and general satisfaction with the organization.



## Improve Leadership Communication

USPTO observed that **73%** of their respondents agreed that **managers communicate the goals of the organization.**

**Actions Taken:** In relation to the FEVS, the 2022-2026 USPTO Strategic Plan was finalized and published. The final draft of the agency's human capital framework, the 2024-2028 USPTO People Plan, was drafted and it is in the final stages of leadership approval. Throughout the year, following a bi-monthly cadence, the USPTO Office of Human Resources (OHR) continues to hold meetings of the Human Capital Council to review progress against objectives listed in the People Plan. These plans are continually socialized with USPTO employees and made available for their viewing.

The FEVS plays a big role in meeting the goals of the USPTO. The Director of USPTO held several Town Halls in which she emphasized the 2023 FEVS results. She promoted the survey and encouraged participation by allowing employees to use part of the meeting's time to participate in it. As soon as results were available, OHR disseminated them to all levels of leadership and encouraged managers to share the results with their staff in a timely manner. OHR also provided access to their internal talent management strategists to help managers interpret results and conduct focus groups.

**Impact:** USPTO Leadership continues to communicate goals through a variety of methods including; All Hands meetings, Town Halls, written communication, the intranet, and providing key planning documents such as the USPTO Strategic Plan and People Plan. The publication and dissemination of the strategic plans make it clear to employees what the USPTO goals are and are shared as a resource for managers to be able to communicate and converse with their employees.

## Improve Organizational Satisfaction

USPTO observed that **69%** of their respondents have positive sentiment from **satisfaction with their organization.**

**Actions Taken:** In response to the FEVS, USPTO established an agency-wide Employee Experience (EX) Committee that has representation from all business units within the organization from management, non-supervisory employees, patent examiners, and non-patent examiner employees. The EX Committee has recently developed an onboarding survey program to improve the first year that employees onboard with the agency. The agency is also exploring the creation and documentation of the agency's first Employment Value Proposition (EVP), which will provide a statement of the values, rewards, recognition, support and organization culture for USPTO, enabling employees to do their best work and achieve their highest potential.

USPTO has continuously monitored its Exit Survey data to determine employees' reasons for leaving and shares this data with leadership. These surveys allow for USPTO to critically examine dissatisfaction amongst employees who are leaving the organization. The agency has improved organizational culture and connectedness in a hybrid environment and increased virtual activities. USPTO also continues to hold an annual in-person Community Day which has large participation from employees and representation from the Voluntary Employee Organizations.

**Impact:** USPTO's actions will help to improve morale and organizational satisfaction as the EX Committee is actively studying the pain points throughout the employee lifecycle to include satisfaction at the agency and addressing these areas to engage and retain employees.