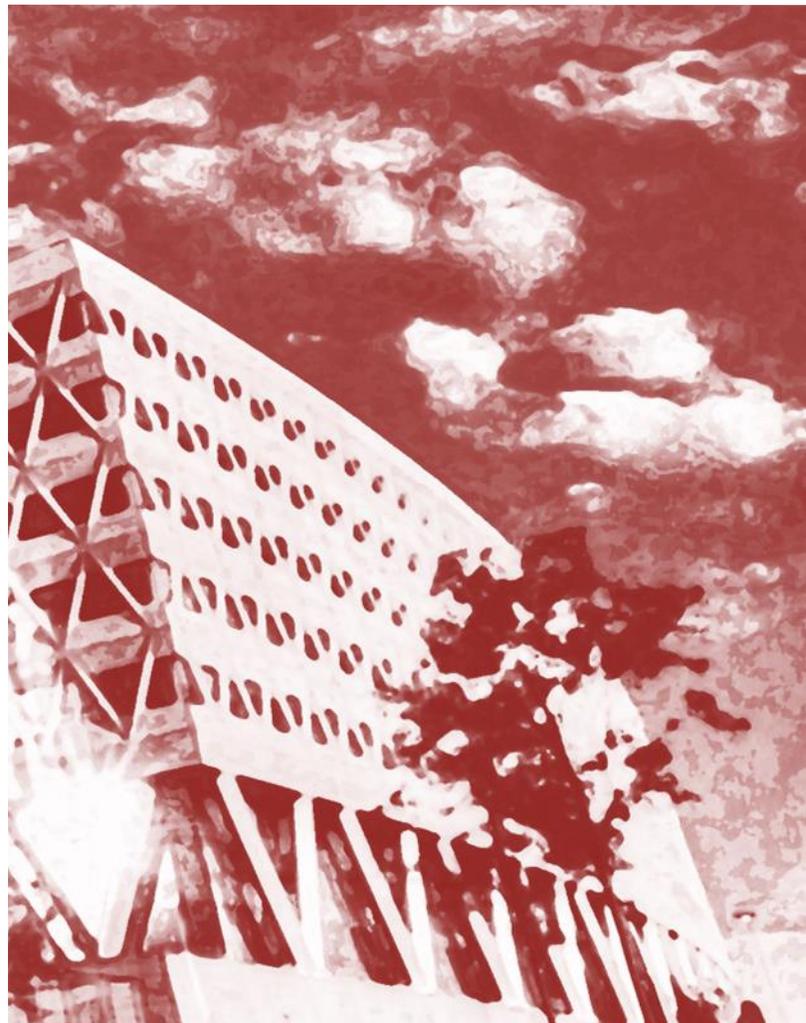
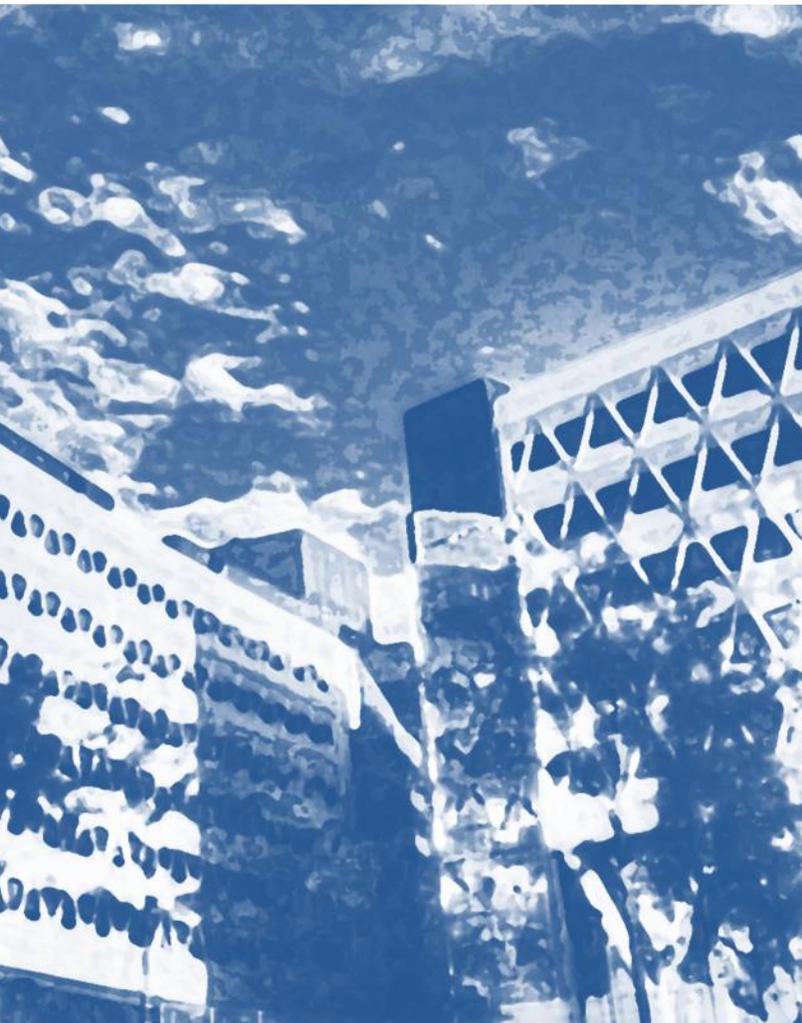




NGA
NATIONAL GEOSPATIAL-INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OMBUDSMAN

Independent
Informal
Neutral
Confidential

ANNUAL REPORT 2015



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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Team NGA,

The health of our agency can be evaluated by our ability to work together to achieve the immense demands on our Agency as we support our customers. We must embrace diverse viewpoints, leverage our differences, and handle conflicts effectively. To that end, I am proud of the many avenues we have to engage, collaborate, express concerns and participate in continuous improvement—especially during these times of change. One of these key avenues is our NGA Ombudsman.

The Ombudsman provides a neutral, confidential, informal and independent forum for all employees to address issues related to the agency's mission, policies and practices. The Ombudsman office reinforces our core values of excellence, accountability, respect, teamwork and honesty—which must be at the heart of all we do.

Please continue to use the Ombudsman (and all other available resources) to raise concerns and share innovative ways to change and sustain improvements to our core operations, business processes and workplace culture. We can only grow and improve through the continued and full input of our entire team.



Robert Cardillo
Director, National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency



ROLE OVERVIEW

The NGAO office is a resource where independent, impartial conflict resolution practitioners provide an informal and confidential forum to hear and help address individual and systemic organizational concerns. Employees (civilian and military), contractors and external consumers of NGA products, programs and services, may bring the full scope of issues to NGAO, including the mission, organization, policies, programs, practices and systemic issues confronting NGA.

PURPOSE

With a view to enabling mission success, NGAO engages employees and senior leaders from all organizational units to raise perceived improprieties, identify complaint patterns and systemic trends, explore non-adversarial approaches for resolving problems, promote better communication, foster constructive dialogue, increase collaboration, improve transparency, and facilitate equitable outcomes. To help resolve potentially volatile issues, the Director, NGA authorized the Ombudsman to have full access to all personnel and information relating to NGA programs, operations and contracts.

PROGRAM AND PRACTICE STANDARDS

The NGA Ombudsman adheres to professional standards of independence, neutrality, informality and confidentiality. All NGAO team members are credentialed as "Certified Organizational Ombudsman Practitioner®" through the International Ombudsman Association.



Independent. Independence is a fundamental prerequisite for effective ombudsman operations. NGAO is functionally aligned to the Director, NGA, handles cases with full autonomy, and is authorized to address issues at all levels within the agency in a manner free from interference by any NGA employee or official.

Neutral. NGAO strives for impartiality, fairness and objectivity in the treatment of people and consideration of issues, which includes avoiding or appearing to take sides in any dispute, conflict or disagreement. NGAO does not advocate for any individual or group. Neutrality does not preclude NGAO from advocating for changes deemed necessary to improve working environments.

Informal. NGAO provides informal methods for gathering the range of perceptions and helps the parties analyze complex issues, identify trends, and highlight opportunities for organizational improvement. It is important to reiterate that NGAO is not part of any formal grievance, complaint process, or investigative unit and does not produce reports of investigation. Employees do not "file a complaint" with NGAO. In addition, communicating a concern with NGAO does not put the agency "on notice" of an alleged violation.

Confidentiality/Anonymity. The Director, NGA supports and protects broad and mandatory confidentiality of communications between NGAO and agency personnel to the maximum extent permissible by law. There may be rare circumstances where NGAO must breach confidentiality, such as cases involving imminent harm. NGAO holds all communications with those seeking assistance in strict confidence, takes all reasonable steps to safeguard anonymity and confidentiality, and has a duty to resist testifying as a witness in any formal process, even if requested by the individual and given permission to do so.

SHORING UP STANDARDS

INDEPENDENCE AND INFORMALITY

On October 5, 2012, NGA Instruction 5400.1, "NGA Ombudsman," was signed to help ensure the program aligned with the aforementioned ombudsman standards. The program is functionally aligned to the "Office of the Director, NGA." This supports the standard of independence, which requires organizational ombuds to report "to the highest possible level of the organization and operate independently of ordinary line and staff structures." Previously, NGAO received administrative support from the Office of Inspector General (OIG), which intended to allow NGAO to draw from the OIG's statutory independence. However, this arrangement was problematic when considering the standard of informality.

The informality standard states that an organizational ombudsman "should not report to nor be structurally affiliated with any compliance function of the organization." An ombuds' principal reason for existence is to help people resolve workplace conflict and provide early warning of trends and larger systemic issues in an informal, "off-the-record" way. This appeals to a wider population, who would not otherwise come forward.

For these reasons, NGAO recommended the program continue to be functionally aligned to the Director, NGA, but receive administrative support from the Chief of Staff. This recommendation was accepted.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND RECORDS



On March 26, 2015, the Archivist of the United States approved the NGAO records retention schedule #DAA-0537-2014-0001. This schedule divides the types of records into permanent and temporary. Permanent records consist of broad policy and procedures documents, annual reports, and periodic program updates. Temporary records may include non-attribution issue summaries and notes from dispute resolution communications or work products from ombudsman staff. Of note is that temporary records generated during case work may be destroyed upon resolution of the matter.

This record schedule reinforces NGA's responsibility to support and protect broad and mandatory confidentiality of communications, whereby NGAO must hold all communications with those seeking assistance in strict confidence and take all reasonable steps to safeguard both anonymity and confidentiality.

OUTREACH

This year, the NGAO team served as members of the Intelligence Community Ombuds Forum, liaisons with the International Ombudsman Association, and leaders with the Coalition of Federal Ombudsman (COFO). This group provides advisory support to other agencies exploring the possibility of implementing ombudsman programs. NGAO briefed a number of senior agency leaders on the role of ombuds within the federal government, including the Deputy Directors of National Intelligence. COFO also promotes collaboration throughout the federal ombudsman community (comprising of over 100 federal ombuds from 58 agencies) through monthly meetings and an annual conference. Ultimately, these strategic partnerships help the federal ombudsman community achieve the highest professional ombudsman standards, and thereby increase the integrity, consistency and public trust in the ombudsman profession throughout U.S. government agencies. In 2016, we look forward to participating in a study on federal ombuds conducted through the Administrative Conference of the United States. Their recommendations, based on the study's results, will be presented to Congress and the President.

RESEARCH ON ETHICS, BARRIERS TO RAISING CONCERNS, AND HOW OMBUDS HELP

If employees do not raise concerns, then problems cannot be addressed. The Ethics Resource Center's (ERC) 2013 National Business Ethics Survey (NBES)¹ found that of 6,420 employee responses, 41 percent observed misconduct in the workplace. Of those, 63 percent reported their observation. Unfortunately, more than one in five workers who reported misconduct experienced retaliation in return, including verbal abuse by managers and coworkers, exclusion by managers and coworkers, demotion, relocation/reassignment, denial of promotions or raises, and nearly losing one's job. The ERC claimed that the perception of retaliation was enough to alter opinions of the workplace, particularly with regard to perceptions of management, feelings about the company as a whole, employee engagement, and intent to stay.²

When companies value ethical performance and build strong cultures, misconduct is substantially lower. In 2013, one in five workers (20 percent) reported seeing misconduct in companies where cultures are "strong" compared to 88 percent who witnessed wrongdoing in companies with the weakest cultures.³

Charles Howard⁴ noted that ombuds fill gaps unmet by compliance, whistleblowing, and hotline options by serving as a resource for employees and others to seek guidance and help raise issues within the organization. An Ombuds office is a place to seek guidance confidentially, where someone can ask questions or explore reporting or conflict resolution options without running the risk that by doing so, they are initiating the investigatory machinery or coming to the attention of their bosses or their colleagues. Therefore, organizations are well served by having multiple avenues to foster a culture of ethical attitudes and conduct.⁵

Rowe and Williams asserted that ombuds help address the serious gaps identified in the NBES. Because ombuds can pick up little bits of information, unobtrusively, from many sources, they can help to identify new issues. Ombuds can thus provide early alerts to managers. Organizational surveys regularly show that without an ombuds program, significant numbers of managers and employees would not have raised their concerns at all, or at least not early. Ombuds programs help issues get addressed internally, reducing potentially adversarial relationships between leadership and employees and avoiding costly lawsuits. Ombuds often receive calls from employees and managers who do not know where else to go in the organization. They see and hear from people all over the organization, so they can and do receive the widest range of issues of any conflict manager. The entire gamut of employees, trainees, managers and seniors reach out to them. They may be contacted for complex, multi-ethnic, cross-gender, multi-generational, multi-issue and multi-cohort problems that reach across organizational and policy boundaries.⁶

Ombuds provide a zero-barrier office – a safe, accessible place for anyone to discuss options for any kind of workplace problem. As such, they often pick up serious concerns from constituents who otherwise might not come forward with a problem. They frequently hear about issues for which there is not (yet) a policy or procedure, while also helping constituents learn about policies and procedures for which the constituents were unaware. The unique role focuses ombuds in many directions:

- They work to identify and provide early warning about new and potentially disruptive problems. They also track patterns of concerns.
- They work with all line and staff managers for continuous improvement of organizational systems.
- They help to reduce financial and human costs by helping to resolve conflicts.
- They assist in protecting the reputations of the employer, and its managers and employees, by helping to build trust and foster an ethical, values-driven work environment.⁷

An ombuds can help constituents understand where a potential concern or wrongdoing might be coming from and how to alleviate it quickly on his or her own. Ombuds can discuss relevant policies, help others prepare for difficult conversations, or help complainants behave in more responsible and effective ways. For example, an OO may be able to review the events leading up to the problem in a way that illuminates a wider and deeper set of root causes. Complainants could also be helped in a respectful way to take responsibility for part of the problem and to plan steps that will prevent similar problems in the future.⁸

One of the important roles of ombuds is to help people make sense of what is happening to them, by them and around them. They are often able to offer generic options for handling matters in ways that would not identify the person who brought the concern. For example, if a staff member reported a safety or financial violation, the ombudsman might be able to supply enough information for the relevant compliance office to do an apparently routine, unannounced "spot check," inspection or audit. If the information was incorrect, nothing is lost. If the information was correct, then the generic option can protect the privacy of the person who took responsible action and enable the organization to take appropriate action. Similarly, the ombuds might ask a senior manager to discuss an issue at a routine staff meeting. The issue might be about time and attendance, misuse of equipment, or harassment. In this way, the ombudsman can help the manager address an issue rather than the people involved.⁹

Ombuds can help save time and resources. They often address problems within one or two business days. They are constantly teaching people "just in time," one-on-one, the conflict management skills they need. Ombuds also serve an invisible triage role, defusing some issues immediately, and helping constituents see all sides to a question, including their own need to be accountable. At the other end of the spectrum, ombuds can help get an immediate response to serious questions requiring urgent action. This last point can be particularly important where an organization is concerned about safety, security, malfeasance and unethical behavior.¹⁰

Hostetler and Bowron¹¹ assert that lawyers in particular should advocate for the use of the organizational ombudsman because they: (1) enhance legal and regulatory compliance; (2) help build an ethical culture; (3) contribute to organizational effectiveness; (4) reduce risks and controls costs; and (5) promote corporate social responsibility.

United Nations Ombudsman John Barkat described the organizational ombudsman as an effective catalyst for change and pointed to three vital functions of an organizational ombudsman: problem identification and assistance, organizational critical self-analysis, and promotion of conflict competence. By the common practice of identifying systemic root-cause factors, the ombudsman office can use its unique position to not only draw attention to these issues, but to ensure that they are carried to appropriate decision making bodies for consideration and action. In this process, the ombudsman can shepherd the issues through the organization while providing useful feedback to the organization so it can consider possible remedies and reforms.¹²

This section was adapted from Deyo, Scott and Jessar, Kevin. "Applying the Ombuds Role to Your Organization." Prepared for the American Bar Association, Labor and Employment Law 9th Annual Conference. November 7, 2015.

¹ Ethics Resource Center, *National Business Ethics Survey (NBES) of the U.S. Workforce* (2014). An electronic copy of this document may be requested by visiting <http://www.ethics.org/nbes/download-reports/2013nbes/>.

² Ethics Resource Center, *Retaliation: The Cost to Your Company and Its Employees* (2010). Retrieved from <http://ethics.org/files/u5/Retaliation.pdf>.

³ See note 1.

⁴ Charles L. Howard, *The Organizational Ombudsman: Origins, Roles, and Operations – A Legal Guide* (American Bar Association, 2010).

⁵ Ethics Resource Center, *Blowing the Whistle on Workplace Misconduct* (December 2010). Available online at <http://www.ethics.org/whistleblower>.

⁶⁻¹⁰ Mary Rowe and Randy Williams, "Organizational Ombudsman," in *Cutting Edge Advances in Resolving Workplace Disputes* (International Institute for Conflict Prevention & Resolution, 2014).

¹¹ James S. Hostetler and Clara Bowron, *Sound Advice for Every Client: Five Reasons Lawyers Should Advocate for the Organizational Ombudsman*, http://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/events/dispute_resolution/Newsletter%20articles/Hostetler_Bowron.authcheckdam.pdf.

¹² John Barkat, *Blueprint for Success: Designing a Proactive Organizational Ombudsman Program* (IOA Journal Volume 8, Issue 1, 2015). Retrieved from http://www.ombudsassociation.org/IOA_Main/media/SiteFiles/docs/IOA-15-V8-1-Barkat.pdf.

STANDARD REPORTING CATEGORIES

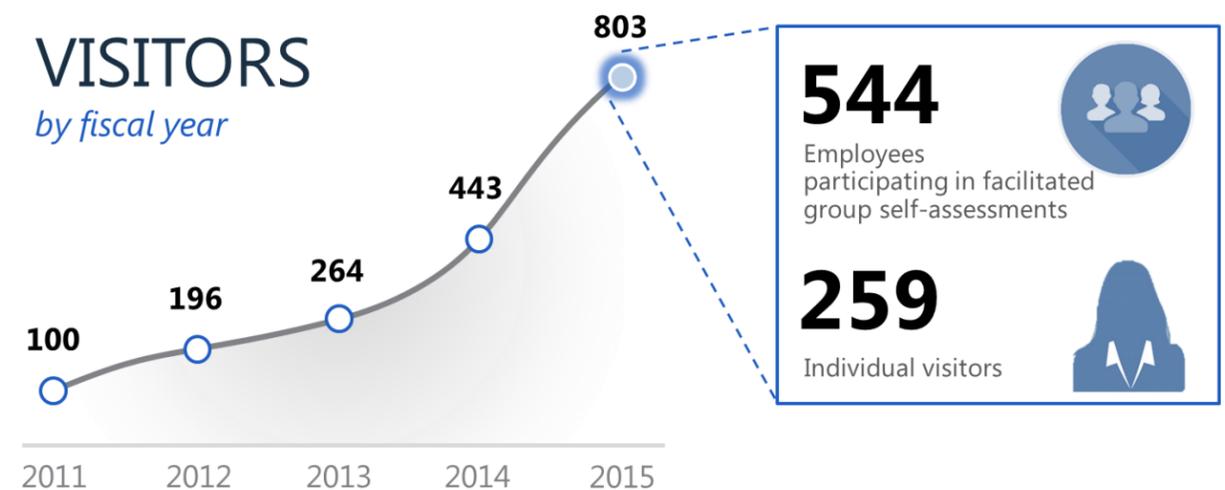
NGAO adopted the following categories, created by the International Ombudsman Association, as a general guide to help classify the kinds of issues, questions and concerns presented.

- 1. Compensation and Benefits, or "Pay."** Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about the equity, appropriateness and competitiveness of employee compensation, benefits and other benefit programs.
- 2. Evaluative Relationships, or "Leader."** Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries arising between people in evaluative relationships (i.e., supervisor-employee, team leader-employee). Additional sub-category examples include priorities, respect, trust, integrity, communication, bullying, diversity-related matters and retaliation.
- 3. Peer and Colleague Relationships, or "Peer."** Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries involving peers or colleagues who do not have a supervisor-employee relationship (e.g., two staff members within the same department). Additional sub-category examples are similar to those for leaders, including respect, communication, bullying, diversity-related matters, and retaliation.
- 4. Career Progression and Development, or "Career."** Questions, concerns or inquiries about administrative processes and decisions regarding entering and leaving a job, duties, (i.e., recruitment, nature and place of assignment, job security, separation). Additional sub-category examples include job application, selection and recruitment processes, involuntary assignment changes, career progression, position elimination, career development, coaching and mentoring.
- 5. Legal, Regulatory, Financial and Compliance, or "Policy."** Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries that may create a legal risk (financial, sanction, etc.) for the organization or its members if not addressed, including issues related to waste, fraud or abuse. Additional sub-category examples include alleged criminal activity, harassment, discrimination, accessibility, privacy and security of information.
- 6. Safety, Health and Physical Environment, or "Safety."** Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about safety, health and infrastructure-related issues. Additional sub-category examples include physical working conditions, ergonomics, security, telework, access to safety equipment, and environmental policies.
- 7. Services/Administrative Issues, or "Admin."** Questions, concerns or inquiries about services/administrative offices. Additional sub-category examples include quality of services, responsiveness, timeliness, administrative decisions, interpretation/application of rules, and behavior of service providers.
- 8. Mission, Strategy and Organizational Concerns, or "Mission."** Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries that relate to the whole or some part of an organization. Additional sub-category examples include strategic and technical management; capacity of management; leadership decisions; use of positional power and authority, quality and effect of leadership communication about mission and strategic issues; change management; and data, methodology and interpretation of results (such as scientific disputes).
- 9. Values, Ethics, and Standards, or "Values."** Questions, concerns, issues, or inquiries about the fairness of organizational values, ethics and/or standards; the application of related policies and/or procedures; or the need for creation or revision of policies, and/or standards.

It is important to note that NGAO helps parties explore the full range of potential resolution options. This includes informal and formal options. Although the goal is to help employees resolve issues early at the lowest possible level, individuals will be referred to the appropriate place where formal notice of an alleged violation can be made. Individuals specifically raising allegations of fraud, waste or abuse will be given the Office of Inspector General's hotline contact information. Similarly, those with concerns about discrimination will be advised to make timely contact with the Office of Diversity Management and Equal Employment Opportunity.

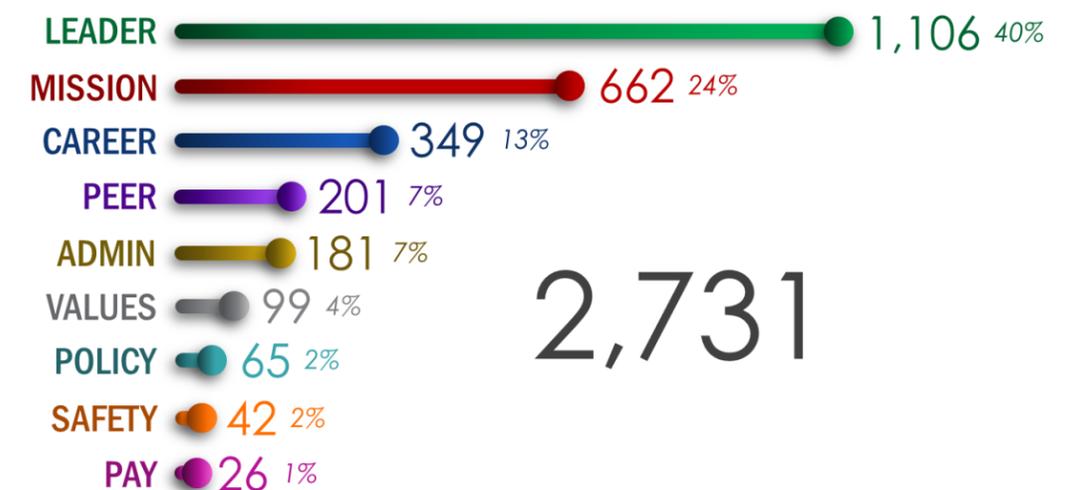
CASE METRICS

For the fourth consecutive year since 2011, NGAO had a substantial increase in visitors. From 2006 to 2010, there was a baseline average of 79 cases per year. From 2011 to 2015, the number of cases increased from 100 to 803. Of the 803, 259 (32 percent) were individual walk-ins and 544 (68 percent) were employees who voluntarily participated in 17 group self-assessments. This process is described in more detail in the next section.



Using the standard reporting categories, the 803 participants shared 2,731 issues. The appendix contains thorough data tables that include the number of subcategory issues shared.

ISSUES (FY15)



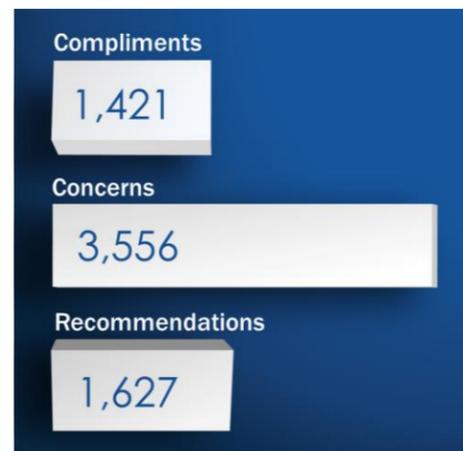
FACILITATED SELF-ASSESSMENTS

Self-assessments facilitated in FY15 **17**

544 Participants

Average participants per work group **32**

6,604 Comments shared



In an effort to be more proactive than reactive, NGAO offered a process that helped check the pulse of specific work units. It allowed employees to anonymously share strengths, successes, areas of concern, weaknesses and opportunities for positive organizational change in an open and honest manner, and was completely voluntary and flexible. By taking a broad approach, employees guided the direction of interviews.

Employees were personally interviewed by NGAO, who asked three general questions to open up honest and straightforward dialogue:

- 1) What is working well? Why?
- 2) What isn't working well? Why?
- 3) What improvements would you make?

NGAO notated the comments and grouped them into the broad categories cited in the previous section. This helped the work unit focus its improvement efforts, which typically involved mission areas, leadership styles and effectiveness, policies, processes, fairness, teamwork, decision-making processes and communications.

In terms of process, NGAO provided feedback to the work unit's leadership, followed by an out-brief to the workforce. NGAO also provided upward feedback to the chain of command of the organization. This created a circle of accountability whereby no issues were minimized or filtered.

In FY15, we facilitated 17 self-assessments, which was up from 7 last year. There were 544 employees who participated, with an average of 32 employees per work unit, ranging from 10 to 71. The average participation rate was 40 percent, ranging from 15 to 72 percent.

The 544 employees who participated in group self-assessments shared 6,604 comments. The three questions produced 1,421 compliments, 3,556 concerns, and most notably, 1,627 recommendations.

Of the compliments, there were 616 (43 percent) leadership behaviors cited as being effective, 338 (24 percent) examples of successful mission accomplishment, and 263 (19 percent) accolades for teammates and collaboration.

There were 3,556 comments related to challenges faced, including 1,650 (46 percent) about leaders, 817 (23 percent) about mission, and 465 (13 percent) about career.

	Compliments		Concerns		Recommendations	
Mission	338	24%	817	23%	429	26%
Leader	616	43%	1650	46%	623	38%
Career	138	10%	465	13%	176	11%
Admin	55	4%	329	9%	291	18%
Colleagues	263	19%	225	6%	86	5%
Safety	0	0%	8	0%	3	0%
Values	4	0%	31	1%	4	0%
Pay	4	0%	4	0%	2	0%
Policy	3	0%	27	1%	13	1%
TOTAL	1421	100%	3556	100%	1627	100%

Recommendations generated from the facilitated self-assessments included 623 (38 percent) suggestions for improving specific leadership behaviors and styles, 429 (26 percent) proposed solutions to address mission-related problems, and 291 (18 percent) ideas to improve administrative policies, processes and procedures.

The 1,627 recommendations raised through this group process helped NGA leaders focus their strategic efforts and led to improvements in the following areas:

- Communication at all levels
- Service delivery
- Resources
- Strategies
- Leadership styles
- Human resources
- Scientific integrity
- Data quality
- Governance structures
- Administrative decisions
- Appeal processes
- Contingency operations
- Research and development
- Privacy
- Equity
- Security
- Program oversight
- Intelligence judgments
- Fiscal responsibility
- Ethics
- Compliance
- Bullying
- Diversity
- Other core mission imperatives

The next section will provide some narrative examples of cases handled this year.

NARRATIVES

EVALUATIVE RELATIONSHIPS

A supervisor decided to move an employee to a newly created position that would match the employee's talents to the mission and allow for professional growth. Initial discussions revealed a perception that this move was because of dissatisfaction with the employee's work. The supervisor requested that NGAO facilitate a discussion. This resulted in an insightful conversation about concerns and expectations, which helped meet everyone's shared interests in meeting the employee's career goals and ensured the new program succeeded.

A contractor sought assistance after experiencing unprofessional and disrespectful behavior from a government leader. NGAO made upper leadership aware of the concerns, who took immediate action to investigate the concerns. The contractor moved to a new assignment at another agency before NGA completed its review and follow-up actions.

NGAO received a visit from a supervisor to discuss options for dealing with an ongoing workplace dispute. The supervisor recognized the problem was having a broad impact on the rest of the office and wanted to find a way to improve the atmosphere. Through conflict coaching, NGAO helped the supervisor create a communications plan with the team. The supervisor later reported that the meeting was helpful and alleviated tension in the office.

An employee felt retaliation after returning from military reserve duty. Specifically, the employee conveyed not receiving similar opportunities of other employees and a lower than usual performance evaluation. The employee felt that fulfilling reservist obligations should not be seen in a negative light or result in an adverse consequence. NGAO provided conflict coaching to help the employee raise the issue directly with management. After the employee raised the matter, the employee was confident that agency officials would give this matter due attention.

Annual performance evaluations are typically communicated to employees by November, but in this case an employee said it was not finalized until months later, in mid-April. After discussing a number of direct options, which the employee tried with no success, NGAO recommended that senior leaders follow up to ensure there were no outstanding annual appraisals agency-wide.

A supervisor was concerned about an elusive "hall file" that apparently included being investigated multiple times by the OIG. In collaboration with the OIG, NGAO found that there were in fact many complaints made through the hotline over a number of years. However, most were not investigated because the allegations did not meet the OIG's threshold of fraud, waste or abuse. In this case, the supervisor wanted to know what was alleged in the complaints. In collaboration with the OIG, NGAO provided a sanitized version of the hotline submissions to protect the source. The supervisor was very appreciative, as it helped the supervisor develop a plan to improve upon specific leadership skills and avoid perceptions of impropriety in the future.

An employee was concerned about retaliation for talking with NGAO just before annual appraisals were due. Specifically, the supervisor dressed down the employee and made indirect references about "jumping the chain of command," and again, indirectly linked this behavior to performance. The second line supervisor was alerted to the allegation for situational awareness and to help ensure the employee's appraisal write-up was fair and accurate.

A senior leader requested assistance to help respond appropriately to an employee who raised a number of substantial and contentious issues. NGAO helped the leader craft a response that focused on the employee's interests, unmet needs, and specific names of others in the agency who could help.

Examples of leadership behaviors that were appreciated by employees

- Adjectives: Decisive, thoughtful, available, approachable, open, transparent, frank, professional, personable, flexible, understanding, uniting, inclusive.
- Doesn't play favorites.
- Really cares about you as a person and professional.
- I can be frank, professional and friendly with my boss.
- Strong, direct, upfront, respectful, and appreciative.
- Listens and cares about your opinion; solicits and really considers input before making decisions.
- Supporting flexible work schedules helps a lot of people in many ways.
- Checks in every day to see what is going on and what is needed.
- Takes the time to recognize good work and reward employees.
- I respect my manager, who has real experience doing the work.
- Our office allows us to go after the issue, think creatively, and take risks.
- I appreciate the daily highlights from the morning ops meeting and division reports.
- Helps me to succeed and grow as an analyst.

"Supervisors make or break your experience at NGA; good ones make you stay despite some nonsense; the bad ones make you leave despite wanting to stay to support the incredible mission here."

Examples of leadership behaviors that were **not** appreciated by employees

- Adjectives/Descriptors: aggressive, alienating, angry, arrogant, bully, condescending, defensive, dictator, dishonest, disingenuous, flippant, disparaging, disrespectful, dysfunctional, ineffective, rude, territorial, vindictive.
- Leads by fear and intimidation.
- Cannot speak freely, disagree, challenge, or question upper management; if you do, annual ratings will plummet and you'll be ostracized or excommunicated.
- Cannot be open about risks and vulnerabilities; this is dangerous in our line of business.
- If there is an allegation of some sort, rather than addressing the issue directly and clarifying, our leaders assume it is true and then take action.
- Senior leaders always protect each other; unethical decisions will be supported and chalked up as "taking one for the team."
- Belittling others in open areas; intimidation.
- How can NGA ask someone to lead an area without having any experience at all, much less expertise? This problem is exacerbated when those leaders do not engage or listen to those who are the experts
- Often reminds folks of their authority to do things; just because you can doesn't make it right.
- Managers have a "you'll do what you're told" stance; this is not how you engage or motivate.

#1 recommendation from employees about more effective leadership behaviors

Get up, walk around, meet the staff and talk more. Face-to-face interactions and personal communication make a huge difference. Be seen; say hello just because, not because you need something or something is going wrong. It doesn't even have to be about work; be more social with the rank and file. True productivity will flow if leadership gets to know the workforce and their capabilities. Have lunch with employees who are not your direct reports to get to know them. Don't force it, because people will see you're just checking the box and not genuine. Practice intentional and consequential communication whether you share the same work location or are located miles apart.

NARRATIVES (cont'd)

ORGANIZATION, STRATEGY AND MISSION

Several employees expressed concerns about the placement of a critical program. They were concerned that the program was subordinated too far down in the organizational structure to be effective, and that this created risks and vulnerabilities. With permission from the employees, NGAO provided the information to a senior decision-maker, who could review and make adjustments to the program if necessary.

A work unit dedicated to a critical mission was comprised of a wide variety of professionals with different business processes and expectations. An employee reached out for assistance to help bridge those differences, and shared that tension was worsening and creating barriers to accomplishing the mission seamlessly. NGAO raised the issue to senior leadership, who concurred with the employee's perspective. There was initial agreement from the senior leader that additional assistance was necessary and would be helpful, but did not follow through with NGAO's offer to assist. The matter continued to get worse according to the original employee, who then became frustrated that NGAO was nonresponsive and not helping. Voluntary self-determination is an essential value of NGAO, who does not force unwilling parties to participate. That said, we recommend that leaders timely and proactively seize the strategic advantage that could be gained through independent, impartial conflict resolution expertise.

NGAO received a concern that a work unit was attempting to make an expensive purchase that was outside of NGA's scope. There were related financial, acquisition, and transparency concerns. In this case, NGAO raised the issue with a senior leader with oversight of the matter, which allowed the senior to ask key strategic questions and to ensure the plan aligned with applicable laws and regulations.

General observations and comments from employees about mission

- We have a crucial mission; everyone is committed to supporting the warfighter 100 percent.
- There are clear cut intelligence problems, and we have a common understanding of the priorities.
- We are working collaboratively in the IC and have a good relationship with our mission partners.
- With so much change, it is hard to complete tasks efficiently and be proficient in the tools given.
- We are so far behind with technology that we absolutely must keep up and even get ahead.
- We're building capabilities based on five-year-old requirements with no ability to correct course.
- Concerned that politics is causing us to constantly reinvent ourselves. For example, we're not writing to warfighters in a way they understand anymore. Rather, we're "storytelling" to overseers.
- Too much change too soon. Administrative nonsense, including new initiatives, has caused anxiety, takes up half our time, and are major distractions that take away focus from doing our jobs.
- We have to get away from building something, doing a massive deployment, then going back to fix problems. This is not how it is supposed to be done and results in enormous waste.

CAREER PROGRESSION AND DEVELOPMENT

Over the last year, NGA rolled out four major programs and initiatives: table of organization, mission talent alignment, career services, and rank-in-person. The first two mission-related initiatives were launched to ensure the agency had the right jobs in the right places and to maximize the flexibilities necessary to meet rapidly changing mission needs. Simultaneously, the latter two career-related programs placed considerable emphasis on building team NGA's depth and breadth of experience. Specifically, these initiatives enabled movement within broad career fields and applied rigor when promoting the best and brightest.

Broadly speaking, Ombuds can be particularly useful during times of significant organizational change and help everyone through the transformation(s). Our goal was to help address areas of confusion and frustration, bridge communication gaps, foster collaboration, increase transparency, and, with a view of early resolution, share micro and macro instances where outcomes did not match the intended goal.

In NGA's case, a number of these new programs and initiatives had interrelated contingencies and overlapping responsibilities. To put it plainly, there was a lot of confusion about how it was all supposed to work, and even those implementing it were trying to figure it all out. To the agency's credit, the program managers, who fully acknowledged the challenges they were facing, proactively engaged NGAO to help maintain a constant cycle of communication as an intermediary between them and the employees affected by the processes, decisions, and actions.

PEER AND COLLEAGUE RELATIONSHIPS

Two employees had been avoiding each other for ten years. Both agreed to have NGAO facilitate a discussion, where a number of misperceptions came to light. At the end of the mediation, the parties had mended their relationship and reconciled. The discussion itself was transformative. In other words, the structure of the mediation session, which was designed to be fair and balanced, gave the parties a framework for addressing, hearing, and resolving problems in the future.

NGAO received copies of a group conversation from the Jabber instant messaging tool. The email string contained graphic sexual references. NGAO forwarded the information to management, who deemed the exchange unprofessional and unacceptable, and took action to prevent it from happening again. Other employees have reached out to NGAO, sharing general concerns that Jabber chat rooms often cross the bounds of propriety.

NGAO facilitated dialogue among a group of employees "outraged" by an online comment seen to be sexist, which helped the parties think through out how they wanted to handle it.

SERVICES/ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

After receiving a proposed one-day suspension, an employee was concerned that the supervisor acted without knowing all of the events and context and without discussing the matter with the employee before handing out the proposed suspension. NGAO discussed a number of options. In this case, the employee submitted a written appeal and planned a verbal discussion with the supervisor.

A new employee was frustrated with the policy of disallowing probationary employees from deploying. NGAO discussed the concern with the military support office and connected the employee with a specific point of contact. This person helped the employee create a checklist to help plan and prepare towards the end of the employee's probationary period.

NARRATIVES (cont'd)

SERVICES/ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES (cont'd)

An employee submitted reportable information to the office of security, but experienced difficulty getting an update after a seemingly long period of time. The employee waived anonymity and asked if NGAO could obtain an update. The security office confirmed that the case had been taking a long time. However, they conveyed that this case was particularly complex, and that the delay was not because they lost attention to the case. They confirmed the case was very much active, that they were trying to resolve it as quickly as possible, and provided a general timeframe that the employee should hear back from them.

Several employees who were being investigated for time and attendance irregularities reached out to NGAO for help understanding their rights and responsibilities within the process. In one case, the employee questioned the process itself. This employee's job necessitated being "out and about," but the documentation allegedly needed in this investigation to prove the employee's whereabouts seemed unduly burdensome, unfair and a misuse of the process. NGAO found an internal guide, intended for those investigating time and attendance cases, that gave employees the opportunity to explain discrepancies. It further stated, "If uncertainty remains about an individual's presence at his or her assigned duty location or other location in an official capacity, the employee usually receives the benefit of the doubt."

A few employees returned to work after being home on extended paid leave during administrative and security investigations. Generally, one goes on such leave because the initial allegations are substantial enough that keeping the employee on site would cause unacceptable risk. Broadly speaking, the employees conveyed concerns to NGAO about the following:

- Possible misuse/abuse of the security process, whereby anyone could submit a maliciously false claim to security that must be investigated and is likely to send the employee home;
- The impact of rumors about why the employee was escorted out, including privacy concerns about what was shared with team members;
- Investigation timeliness, which in a couple cases took over a year; and
- The employee's uncomfortable return when the claims were not substantiated or successfully appealed.

For the majority of the above issues, NGAO provided conflict coaching, explored a variety of informal and formal options for dealing with the concerns, and offered to facilitate a conversation with the employee's new manager to help them develop a strategy for successful reintegration. Regarding the issue of timeliness, NGAO recommended that agency leaders proactively and regularly check the status, disposition, and expected completion date of all pending investigations where employees were home on paid leave.

OTHER

An employee at an NGA support team shared what they perceived to be a controversial agreement between government and contract personnel, and the possibility of waste, fraud and abuse. NGAO discussed the informal and formal options available, and the employee ultimately decided to file an OIG complaint.

An outside researcher was unsuccessful connecting with NGA to ensure awareness about a patent being submitted after conducting NGA-sponsored research. NGAO put the researcher in contact with the right person so that proper notice could be made.

OTHER (cont'd)

A financial officer from another federal agency was unsuccessful seeking information from NGA that was required to close out a financial process. NGAO connected the person to the right point of contact who resolved the request the same day.

A security professional at a military base contacted NGAO about a pending contract under review. Specifically, the contract involved geospatial and thermal imaging of the base. The caller knew of NGA's role as the lead federal agency and functional manager for geospatial intelligence, and wanted to ensure the agency had an opportunity to review the propriety of the proposed contract. NGAO connected the security professional with an appropriate NGA point of contact.

A supervisor sought assistance from NGAO after upper management introduced new production rules that contradicted the process and guidance given by subject matter experts. The divergent rules led to confusion about the work process and the general direction of the group. NGAO engaged in conflict coaching to help the supervisor address the concerns directly. After facilitating a group self-assessment, NGAO provided upper management with a broad range of compliments, concerns, and recommendations from the work group. This led to an interactive process aimed at improving the work process and clarifying the group's mission and strategic goals.

An employee contacted NGAO after an inappropriate, offensive, and discriminatory video was shown in the workplace. The employee did not feel that the situation had been properly addressed and wanted to know what options were available. NGAO discussed several options, including pros and cons of each option, and shared contact information for equal employment opportunity personnel. The employee expressed some concern about potential backlash for raising this matter, being labeled as a "complainer," and how addressing it could potentially disrupt what had been a great team and make things incredibly uncomfortable. After several conversations, the employee chose to address the matter directly with the first-line supervisor, who was completely unaware of the situation. The employee felt confident that the supervisor would give this matter due attention and take appropriate action.

An employee contacted NGAO after receiving contradictory information concerning possible agency responses and the agency's expectations for employees if there was a period of civil unrest in the community stemming from the events in Ferguson. The employee was provided the correct information and leadership was made aware of the mixed messages and took action to ensure that the correct information was available.

A contractor became concerned when they learned that a government employee shared their concern that the contractor might be a security risk with management. The contractor had been advised not to engage with the government employee, and when the contractor disengaged with the government employee, the government employee felt disrespected. After discussing the concern and providing conflict coaching to the contractor, the contractor was able to engage with their COR and Personnel Security to resolve the concern.

An employee sought assistance to return from Administrative Leave to active duty pending the outcome of a personnel security investigation. The employee felt that the perceived threat had been inflated by management as a form of retaliation. NGAO discussed proactive steps the employee could take to expedite their return. The employee did return to work, reported their concerns with the possible retaliation, and after a brief period, left the agency.

APPENDIX – Data Table of Issue Categories

	FY11	FY12	FY13	FY14	FY15	Change
Mission, Strategy, & Organizational Concerns	83	139	360	471	662	191
Leadership and Management	15	6	49	102	163	61
Data/Methodology/Interpretation of Results	11	9	2	7	23	16
Mission/Strategic & Technical Mgmt	12	46	87	122	208	86
Priority Setting /Funding	11	17	32	34	72	38
Communication (Corporate)	7	13	58	62	75	13
Change Management	1	14	28	31	47	16
Restructuring and Relocation	9	7	44	39	27	-12
Organizational Climate	5	7	28	36	21	-15
Use of Positional Power/Authority	4	9	22	19	17	-2
Division/Field-Specific	8	11	10	19	9	-10
Leadership	131	160	420	910	1106	196
Supervisory Effectiveness	17	13	53	158	264	106
Respect/Treatment	19	21	48	130	125	-5
Communication (Supervisory)	18	17	73	178	188	10
Equitable Treatment	10	13	36	78	90	12
Assignments/Schedules	6	7	43	68	67	-1
Feedback	10	13	15	46	84	38
Trust/Integrity	8	17	28	51	72	21
Bullying	4	6	19	41	31	-10
DCIPS-Related (Objectives, Feedback)	16	17	39	59	83	24
Climate	9	2	13	32	17	-15
Priorities/Values/Beliefs	1	1	9	8	9	1
Discipline	4	4	9	15	8	-7
Reputation	5	11	11	15	7	-8
Diversity-Related	0	8	12	15	34	19
Insubordination	0	1	5	1	0	-1
Retaliation	3	7	7	15	26	11
Consultation	1	2	0	0	1	1
Physical Violence	0	0	0	0	0	0
Career Progression & Development	17	47	140	238	349	111
Career Development/Coaching/Mentoring	2	10	48	58	83	25
Job Application/Selection and Recruitment Processes	5	21	45	54	94	40
Career Progression	5	9	30	40	119	79
Rotation and Duration of Assignment	1	1	2	33	19	-14
Job Classification and Description	1	3	10	7	9	2
Re-employment of Former or Retired Staff	2	0	0	0	0	0
Involuntary Transfer/Change of Assignment	0	2	2	32	10	-22
Termination/Non-Renewal	1	0	1	1	1	0
Position Security/Ambiguity	0	1	2	10	8	-2
Resignation	0	0	0	1	0	-1
Position Elimination	0	0	0	2	6	4

	FY11	FY12	FY13	FY14	FY15	Change
Administrative & Customer Service Issues	14	37	67	121	181	60
Quality of Services (technology, accuracy of advice)	3	12	22	19	45	26
Responsiveness/Timeliness	2	1	8	24	28	4
Admin Decisions, Interpretation/Application of Rules	9	21	36	67	99	32
Behavior of Service Provider(s)	0	3	1	11	9	-2
Colleague Relationships	32	68	52	127	201	74
Respect/Treatment	13	11	12	33	54	21
Reputation	6	35	6	10	7	-3
Communication (Colleague)	0	5	14	40	52	12
Trust/Integrity	10	5	6	11	16	5
Bullying	1	3	2	11	7	-4
Priorities/Values/Beliefs	2	1	1	6	52	46
Diversity-Related	0	8	9	12	11	-1
Retaliation	0	0	1	2	2	0
Physical Violence	0	0	1	2	0	-2
Safety, Health, & Physical Environment	17	10	21	29	42	13
Security	5	0	4	8	19	11
Physical Working Conditions	2	4	6	3	8	5
Cleanliness	2	3	0	1	1	0
Safety	2	0	7	2	3	1
Ergonomics	0	0	0	0	0	0
Work Related Stress and Work-Life Balance	4	0	2	14	9	-5
Safety Equipment	0	0	2	0	2	2
Environmental Policies	2	3	0	1	0	-1
Values, Ethics, & Standards	21	63	61	78	99	21
Professional Conduct/Integrity	17	48	29	40	55	15
Values and Culture	2	4	11	9	19	10
Standards of Conduct	2	11	17	15	16	1
Policies and Procedures (Other)	0	0	4	14	9	-5
Pay & Benefits	1	4	14	22	26	4
Compensation	0	1	5	14	17	3
Benefits	1	2	6	5	8	3
Retirement, Pension	0	0	2	1	1	0
Payroll	0	1	1	2	0	-2
Policy, Legal, Regulatory, & Financial Compliance	10	13	43	48	65	17
Disability/Reasonable Accommodation	5	3	3	8	8	0
Privacy and Security of Information	3	1	7	12	9	-3
Business and Financial Practices	1	7	21	12	36	24
Accessibility	0	0	0	0	0	0
Harassment	0	1	7	5	4	-1
Discrimination	0	1	5	11	6	-5
Criminal Activity	1	0	0	0	0	0
Intellectual Property Rights	0	0	0	0	1	1
Property Damage	0	0	0	0	1	1



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