

Best Places to Work

IN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT



WORKPLACE ANALYSIS FOR

Department of Agriculture

Natural Resources Conservation Service

November 2003



PARTNERSHIP FOR PUBLIC SERVICE



INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF
PUBLIC POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

The Partnership for Public Service and the **Institute for the Study of Public Policy Implementation** at American University are both nonprofit, nonpartisan organizations with a commitment to helping foster excellence in the federal government. Both organizations share the conviction that success in recruiting, motivating, and retaining a highly-qualified workforce is a key component of a high performing organization. To that end, the Partnership and the Institute joined forces to sponsor an analysis of the responses to a governmentwide employee survey and to provide these individual workplace analyses as a service to every organization identified in the survey.

The Partnership for Public Service is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to revitalizing our federal civil service through a campaign of educational outreach, research, public-private partnerships and legislative advocacy. The Partnership works closely with both public and private partners to shape a vision of what the federal civil service should strive for in the next decade to meet ever-changing and complex demands. With an emphasis on *inspiring* a new generation to serve and *transforming* the way government works, it acts as a catalyst for change.

The goal of the **Institute for the Study of Public Policy Implementation** is to create nonpartisan forums for stakeholders in the public policy implementation system (members of Congress, political appointees, career government executives, mid-level manager association leaders, union leaders, academics, and the consulting and technology communities) to have a constructive dialogue about solving public policy implementation issues. The Institute's Leadership Forum and the Center for Strategic Training and Development regularly explore root causes for policy implementation breakdowns, identify solutions, and engage in dialogue about the barriers to implementation. In addition, the Institute sponsors conferences on important public policy implementation issues. Finally, ISPPPI has created a non-credit Leadership for Public Policy Implementation development program offered to federal employees who are seeking leadership skills to better implement public policy.

TECHNICAL CONSULTANT

CFI Group is an international consulting firm specializing in helping its clients improve their financial performance through better management of two vital constituent groups: employees and customers. CFI Group has developed a patented methodology that (1) allows for a rigorous measurement and assessment of employee and customer experiences and (2) quantifies the effects of potential improvement initiatives on constituent satisfaction and economic returns. A version of the same methodology is used in the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI), for which CFI Group developed the software that it licenses to the National Quality Research Center at the University of Michigan. This national economic indicator, published quarterly in *The Wall Street Journal*, monitors and benchmarks customer satisfaction across more than 200 companies and U.S. federal agencies.

INTRODUCTION

Success in motivating a highly-skilled workforce is a key component of a high-performing organization. In the private sector, high employee commitment is clearly linked to a higher return on investment to shareholders. For the public sector, the return on investment is to the American people and the stakes involve the very quality of life in our nation and the health, security, and well-being of its citizens.

The goal for every government agency is to provide an environment that encourages employee commitment, engages employees in the larger mission of the organization, and elicits the discretionary energy that dedicated employees will willingly give to the job but which cannot be demanded.

When you want to improve customer service, you listen to the voice of the customer. When you want to improve employee satisfaction, the logical starting point is input from your employees about what matters to them in the workplace.

This workplace analysis - tailored specifically to your organization - was produced by the **Partnership for Public Service** and the **Institute for the Study of Public Policy Implementation** based upon the data gathered by the Office of Personnel Management in its government-wide 2002 Federal Human Capital Survey (FHCS). These individual workplace analyses, along with the recent public release of the **Best Places to Work** agency rankings (see below), are provided as a public service in an effort to help managers and agency leaders prioritize their efforts to improve organizational performance, and employee satisfaction and commitment. Specifically, this analysis contains:

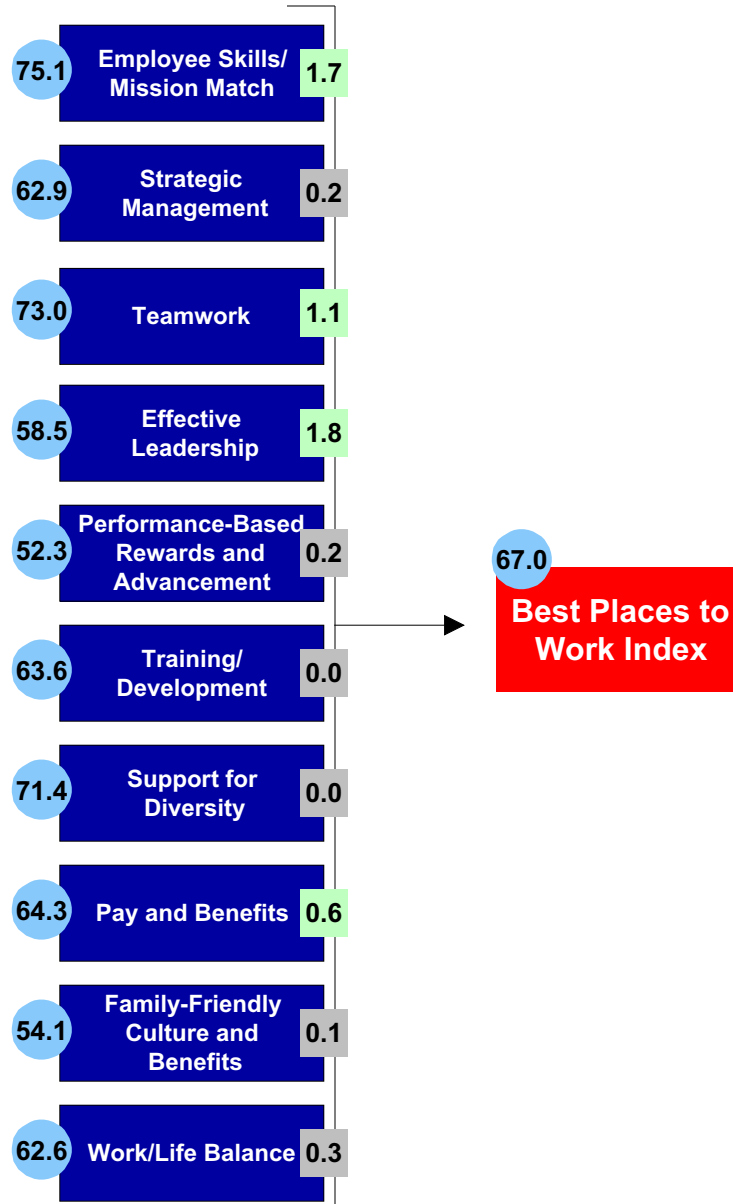
- Recommendations on where you, as a leader, should focus your time and attention to most successfully engage *your* employees. Your individual workplace analysis clearly identifies those categories of employee satisfaction which, if improved, would result in the greatest improvements in overall employee satisfaction and in your organization's **Best Places to Work Index** score.
- A detailed question-by-question comparison of *your* organization's employee satisfaction/commitment ratings with the government as a whole and with your parent agency (if applicable).

In short, this data provides a roadmap to performance!

The Partnership for Public Service and the Institute for the Study of Public Policy Implementation also have used the FHCS data to create a ranking of the **Best Places to Work in the Federal Government**. The results are presented by agency, by subagency (organization components within larger departments or agencies), and by 10 work environment categories ranging from effective leadership to family-friendly culture, as rated by employees. You may access these materials at the **Best Places to Work** web site, www.bestplacestowork.org. Benchmark data comparing selected federal employee satisfaction levels with those in private industry are provided by OPM at www.fhcs.opm.gov.

YOUR AGENCY'S RESULTS

The Best Places to Work Index score for your workplace is displayed below (calculated on a 0 to 100 scale). In addition, the survey responses from your employees have been grouped into categories of employee satisfaction and their relative impacts on the Best Places to Work Index have been quantified.



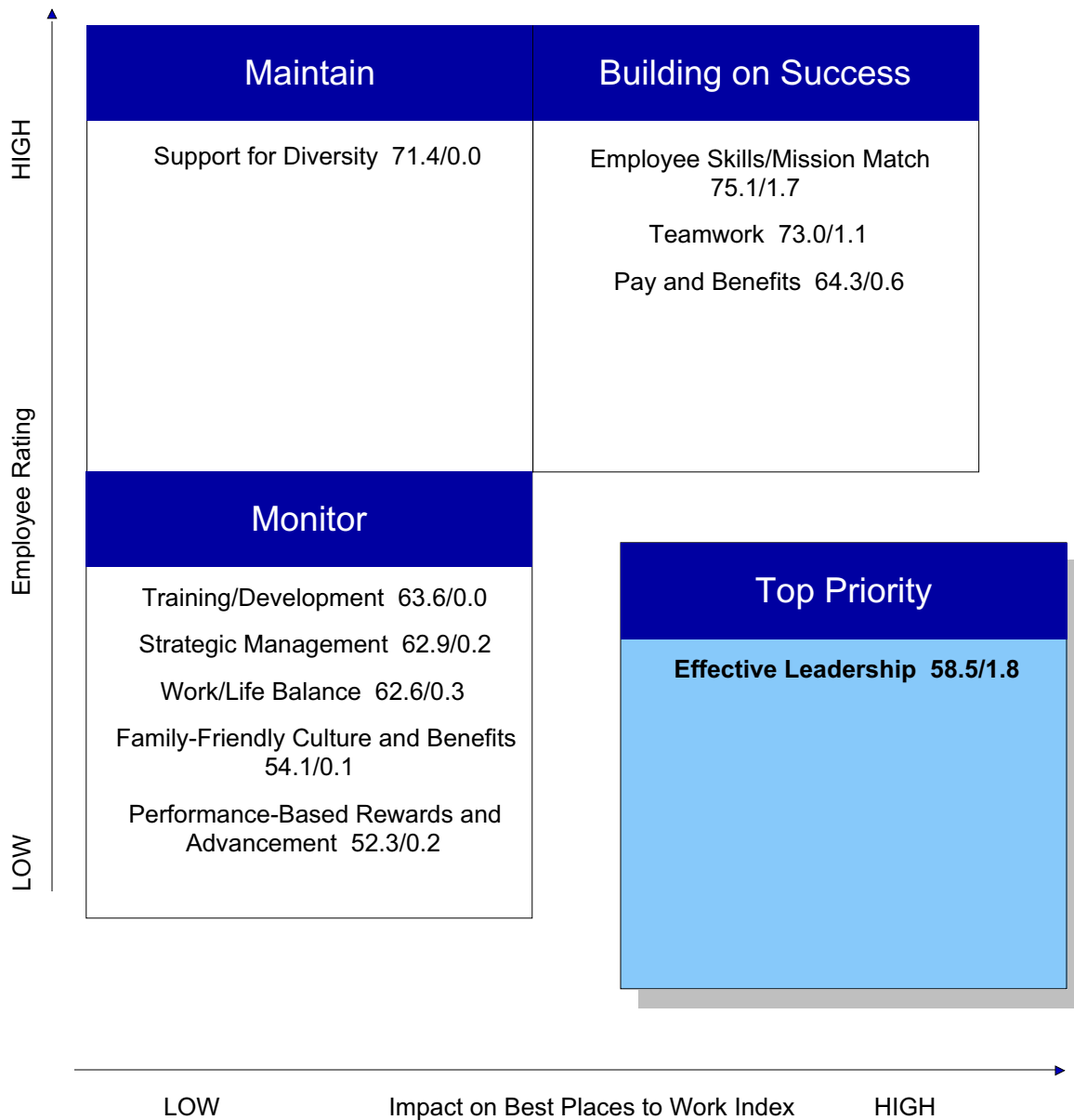
= **Category score:** Combined employee satisfaction score for each category on a scale of 0 to 100. Higher scores represent better performance.

= **Impact factor:** Measures the amount of change in the Best Places to Work Index if this category score is improved five points. If the impact factor for a category score is 0.8, for example, a five-point improvement in this category score would result in an increase of 0.8 in the Best Places to Work Index score.

= **Top impact factor:** Designates those categories which, if improved, would yield the highest returns in terms of increasing the Best Places to Work Index score.

Note: See page 9 for a brief explanation of the CFI Group methodology used to calculate the impact factors and category scores.

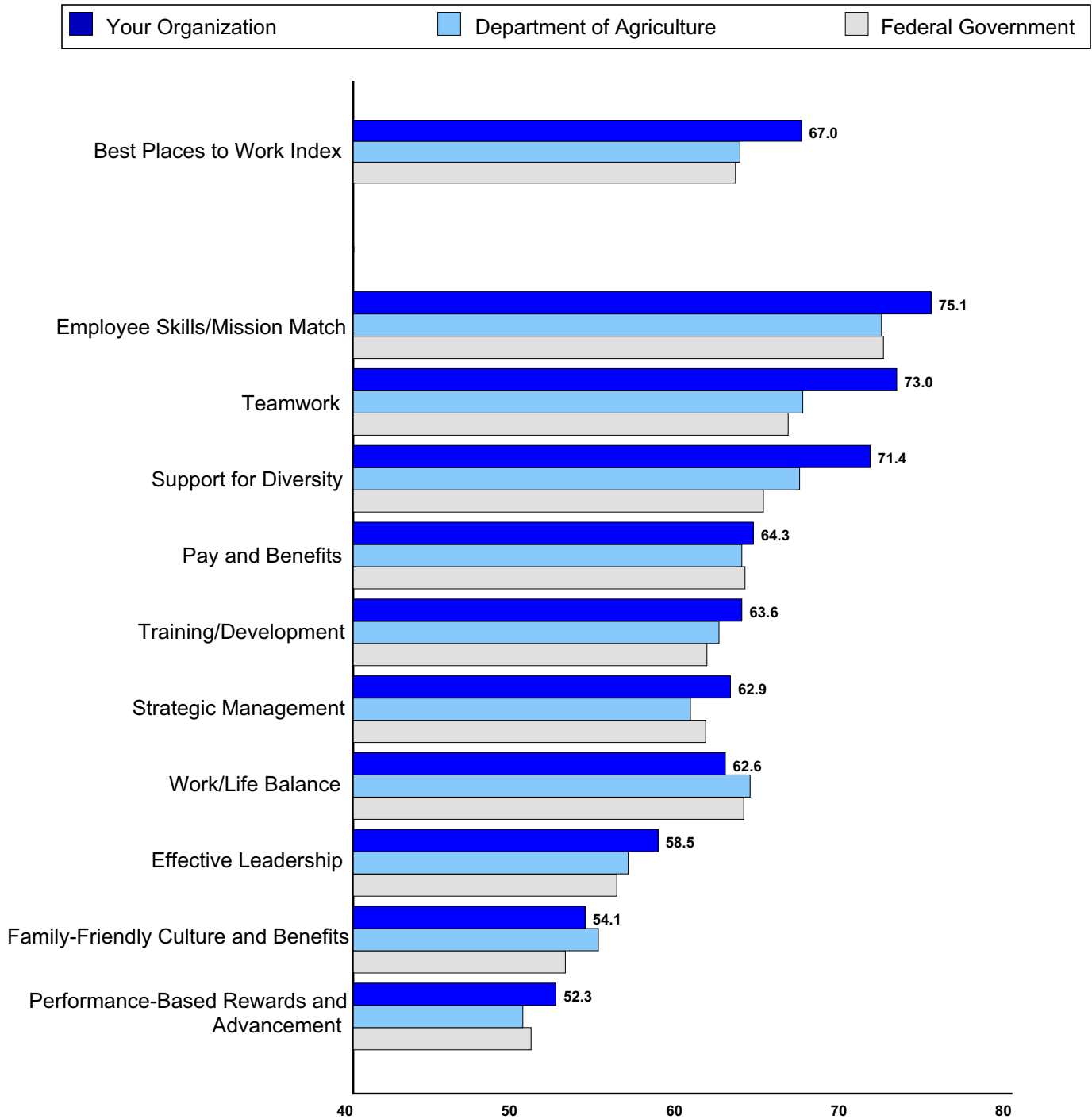
PRIORITY MATRIX



This **Priority Matrix** sorts the categories of employee satisfaction based upon their scores and impact on the overall Best Places to Work Index score. Low-scoring, high-impact categories fall into the lower right quadrant, labeled “Top Priority.” These are the areas that are both most in need of improvement and, if improved, would have the greatest relative impact on overall levels of employee satisfaction as measured by the Best Places to Work Index.

HOW DO YOU SCORE IN KEY CATEGORIES?

This graph compares the average responses of your employees to those of employees throughout both your parent organization (if applicable) and the federal government as a whole. The 10 categories that follow the Best Places to Work Index correspond to our model's drivers of employee satisfaction. Full details of the department and overall federal government results are available on the following pages.



CATEGORY AND QUESTION SCORES

Best Places to Work	Your Organization	Department of Agriculture	Government Overall	80th Percentile
Best Places to Work Index	67.0	63.3	63.0	66.7
Satisfaction with job	70.8	67.9	67.3	69.5
How would you rate your organization as an organization to work for compared to other organizations	67.8	62.2	62.5	67.3
Satisfaction with organization at the present time	59.7	58.4	59.3	63.1
I recommend my organization as a good place to work	69.5	64.2	62.5	67.3
Employee Skills/Mission Match	75.1	72.1	72.2	73.8
I know how my work relates to the agency's missions and goals	80.9	78.9	79.8	82.0
My talents are used well in the workplace	64.8	61.3	61.6	64.0
The work I do is important	83.6	82.5	83.2	84.4
My job makes good use of my skills and abilities	66.5	63.4	63.8	66.1
My work gives me a feeling of personal accomplishment	73.5	68.9	68.6	70.8
I like the kind of work I do	82.1	78.2	77.3	78.9
Strategic Management	62.9	60.5	61.4	64.6
In my work unit, human resources management strategies are targeted to achieve my agency's missions and objectives	66.1	63.7	63.3	66.8
Managers review and evaluate the organization's progress toward meeting its goals and objectives	72.4	65.5	66.7	69.6
Information collected on my work unit's performance is used to improve my work unit's performance	60.1	57.9	59.3	62.2
The workforce has the job-relevant knowledge and skills necessary to accomplish organizational goals	64.7	64.4	67.2	70.9
The skill level in my work unit has improved in the past year	63.8	61.2	61.5	64.0
My work unit is able to recruit people with the right skills	47.8	48.7	48.6	55.6

This table contains the category and individual question scores for your organization. With this table you can compare your organization's scores with those from the federal government as a whole and with your parent agency (if applicable). Also listed are the "80th percentile" scores. Out of 189 organizations surveyed by OPM, 80 percent fall below the indicated score for any given question or category. These "80th percentile" scores should serve as benchmarks; if your agency is performing above this level, it is in the top tier.

CATEGORY AND QUESTION SCORES (cont.)

Best Places to Work	Your Organization	Department of Agriculture	Government Overall	80th Percentile
Teamwork	73.0	67.3	66.4	69.2
This is a friendly place to work	76.1	69.2	66.7	71.4
Employees in my work unit share their knowledge with each other	74.1	68.5	69.5	71.1
Managers promote communication among different work units (for example, about projects, goals, needed resources)	64.0	57.2	56.0	59.3
The people I work with cooperate to get the job done	76.8	73.1	73.2	75.5
Effective Leadership	58.5	56.7	56.0	59.5
Supervisors/team leaders in my work unit provide employees with the opportunities to demonstrate their leadership skills	63.0	60.4	59.3	63.0
Supervisors/team leaders in my work unit encourage my development at work	65.4	62.9	61.3	65.5
In my organization, leaders generate high levels of motivation and commitment in the workforce	47.0	46.6	47.2	50.5
Employees have a feeling of personal empowerment and ownership of work processes	50.3	49.4	48.4	53.5
Supervisors/team leaders are receptive to change	55.8	54.9	54.8	57.8
I hold my organization's leaders in high regard	54.5	53.2	52.9	57.3
My organization's leaders maintain high standards of honesty and integrity	58.2	57.1	56.1	61.7
Complaints, disputes or grievances are resolved fairly in my work unit	57.8	53.1	53.4	56.7
Arbitrary action, personal favoritism and coercion for partisan political purposes are not tolerated	60.6	55.7	53.5	58.0
I can disclose a suspected violation of law, rule or regulation without fear of reprisal	60.0	59.0	59.1	62.7
Satisfaction with involvement in decisions that affect work	59.2	59.4	58.5	62.0
Satisfaction with the information received from management on what's going on in the organization	53.7	52.9	53.0	56.5
Discussions with my supervisor/team-leader about my performance are worthwhile	64.6	62.4	61.0	64.5
Overall, how good a job do you feel is being done by your immediate supervisor/team leader	69.4	67.2	65.9	69.9

This table contains the category and individual question scores for your organization. With this table you can compare your organization's scores with those from the federal government as a whole and with your parent agency (if applicable). Also listed are the "80th percentile" scores. Out of 189 organizations surveyed by OPM, 80 percent fall below the indicated score for any given question or category. These "80th percentile" scores should serve as benchmarks; if your agency is performing above this level, it is in the top tier.

CATEGORY AND QUESTION SCORES (cont.)

Best Places to Work	Your Organization	Department of Agriculture	Government Overall	80th Percentile
Performance-Based Rewards and Advancement	52.3	50.3	50.8	55.7
Awards in my work unit depend on how well employees perform their jobs	52.9	50.6	52.2	57.6
High-performing employees in my work unit are recognized or rewarded on a timely basis	51.0	48.5	49.4	56.5
Employees are rewarded for providing high quality products and services to customers	54.0	50.9	51.5	58.2
Creativity and innovation are rewarded	50.8	48.3	49.3	55.6
My performance appraisal is a fair reflection of my performance	63.6	62.3	64.0	69.3
Our organization's awards program provides me with an incentive to do my best	42.6	42.3	43.8	49.2
Satisfaction with recognition received for doing a good job	53.6	53.8	54.3	59.4
Selections for promotions in my work unit are based on merit	48.8	47.1	46.2	52.2
Satisfaction with opportunity to get a better job in organization	53.4	49.3	46.7	50.4
Training/Development	63.6	62.2	61.5	65.0
My training needs are assessed	62.2	57.7	56.0	59.5
I receive the training I need to perform my job	61.4	62.2	61.5	66.4
I have enough information to do my job well	67.0	67.2	67.9	70.5
Satisfaction with the training received for present job	60.3	60.0	58.8	63.6
I am given a real opportunity to improve my skills in my organization	65.8	62.5	61.2	65.5
Support for Diversity	71.4	67.1	64.9	67.6
Supervisors/team-leaders in my work unit are committed to a workforce representative of all segments of society	70.0	66.0	63.8	67.0
Policies and programs promote diversity in the workplace (for example, recruiting minorities and women, training in awareness of diverse issues, mentoring)	74.6	68.7	65.5	68.9
Managers/supervisors/team leaders work well with employees of different backgrounds	70.1	66.7	65.5	68.4

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CATEGORY AND QUESTION SCORES (cont.)

Best Places to Work	Your Organization	Department of Agriculture	Government Overall	80th Percentile
Pay and Benefits	64.3	63.6	63.8	68.8
How do you rate the amount of pay you get on your job	61.5	61.9	63.7	69.9
How do you rate your total benefits program	70.9	68.6	67.9	74.4
Satisfaction with your pay	61.1	62.1	63.5	68.5
Satisfaction with retirement benefits	67.0	66.4	65.4	70.1
Satisfaction with health insurance benefits	58.0	55.9	55.5	61.2
Family-Friendly Culture and Benefits	54.1	54.9	52.9	55.9
Satisfaction with telework/telecommuting	51.4	51.7	49.2	53.6
Satisfaction with alternative work schedules	76.4	73.4	63.1	73.7
Satisfaction with child care subsidies	49.0	48.6	48.4	50.1
Satisfaction with employee assistance programs	56.5	57.1	55.0	57.8
Satisfaction with health and wellness programs	49.7	55.4	54.6	60.0
Satisfaction with support groups	51.0	51.8	51.5	53.4
Satisfaction with elder care programs	51.0	51.0	50.1	51.6
Work/Life Balance	62.6	64.1	63.7	68.2
My workload is reasonable	55.8	58.5	61.1	65.3
I have sufficient resources (for example, people, materials, budget, etc.) to get my job done	44.9	51.4	51.8	58.6
My supervisor supports my need to balance work and family issues	80.1	77.1	73.9	78.2

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METHODOLOGY

HOW WAS THE BEST PLACES TO WORK INDEX CREATED?

The information contained in this report is based on the 2002 Federal Human Capital Survey (FHCS)¹ conducted by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM). The Federal Human Capital Survey, completed in the summer of 2002, gave federal employees the chance to rate their job experience. It was distributed to a stratified random sample of over 200,000 executive branch employees making it the largest survey of federal employees ever undertaken. The survey achieved a response rate of over 51 percent, with over 100,000 self-selected employees from 24 federal cabinet-level and independent agencies (including four Department of Defense organizations)² responding. The agencies surveyed represented 93 percent of the Executive Branch workforce. Of the 24 agencies covered by the survey, 21 had response rates of over 50 percent, with five at 65 percent or better. (To learn more about the survey, please check the “What is the FHCS” section of the OPM site).

The Partnership for Public Service and the Institute for the Study of Public Policy Implementation have used the FHCS data to create an index of the **Best Places to Work in the Federal Government**. The results are presented by agency, by subagency (organizational components within a larger department or agency), and by 10 work environment categories ranging from effective leadership to family-friendly culture, as rated by the employees.³

THE BENEFIT OF THE BEST PLACES TO WORK INDEX METHODOLOGY

The statistical model on which this report is based was created by the international consulting firm CFI Group and is estimated in two stages. Using a form of factor analysis, the results of OPM’s 2002 Federal Human Capital Survey (i.e., the respondent’s answers to the survey questions) were combined mathematically to create a composite score for (a) each of the work environment categories (Effective Leadership, Teamwork, Work/Life Balance, etc.) which we refer to as the “Best in Class” rankings and (b) the Best Places to Work Index (BPWI). For example, the BPWI is calculated as a mathematical combination of employee responses to the four questions from the OPM survey that are the best indicators of overall job satisfaction.⁴ Likewise, each of the work environment categories is calculated as a combination of the relevant OPM survey questions.⁵

¹ The complete survey can be found at <http://www.fhcs.opm.gov>.

² Departments of the Air Force, Army, Marine Corps, and Navy.

³ The 10 work environment categories are: employee skills/mission match, strategic management, teamwork, effective leadership, performance-based rewards and advancement, training and development, support for diversity, pay and benefits, family-friendly culture and benefits, and work/life balance.

⁴ The four survey questions used to estimate the BPWI are: “How would you rate your organization as an organization to work for compared to other organizations?”; “Considering everything, how satisfied are you with your job?”; “Considering everything, how would you rate your overall satisfaction in your organization at the present time?”; and “I recommend my organization as a good place to work.”

⁵ The survey questions that correspond to each category are listed in the tables on the preceding four pages.

METHODOLOGY (cont.)

In stage two, we conduct a form of multiple regression analysis of the BPWI on all of the work environment categories together.⁶ This regression provides estimates of how change in each work environment category impacts change in the BPWI. In other words, the model allows us to use patterns and differences among the 10 “Best in Class” categories to predict patterns in the BPWI.⁷ We can use the results of our model to determine which groups of work environment issues have the greatest impact on employee satisfaction (BPWI). Note that low impacts do not imply that particular work environment categories are not important, or that they are not significant in making the federal government an employer of choice. Instead, a low impact for a particular category means that further improvements in that area will have, at this time, a relatively smaller effect on the overall index score than improvements in categories with higher impacts. We use this analysis to suggest the most effective ways to improve both job satisfaction and the work environment.⁸

Such an analysis is useful both to agency managers seeking to improve their organizations and to job seekers looking for the best fit for their talents.

⁶This model, constructed and implemented by CFI Group, uses a variation of the American Customer Satisfaction Index methodology, which CFI has employed in the private sector since 1994.

⁷Due to data limitations, impacts have only been calculated at the department level. All agencies and subagencies within a department share the same department impacts.

⁸The technique is a form of structural equation modeling that combines regression analysis, path analysis and factor analysis to explore relationships among variables that are not directly measured (e.g., work environment categories and BPWI) from the OPM survey responses.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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