

**U.S. OFFICE OF SPECIAL COUNSEL  
STRATEGIC PLAN  
(FY 1997-2002)**

**MISSION**

The U.S. Office of Special Counsel's (OSC's) role is to protect federal employees and applicants, especially whistleblowers, from prohibited employment practices; to promote compliance by government employees with the law on political activity; and to facilitate disclosures of wrongdoing in the federal government.

The OSC carries out this mission by:

- investigating possible prohibited employment practices, especially reprisal for whistleblowing, and pursuing appropriate remedies for apparent violations;
- providing advisory opinions and enforcing the law on allowable and unallowable political activity;
- operating an independent and secure channel for disclosure and resolution of wrongdoing in federal agencies; and
- promoting greater understanding of the rights and responsibilities of government employees.

In carrying out this mission, OSC's goals are:

- to ensure that actionable matters within its jurisdiction are identified and appropriate individual and systemic remedies are pursued in a timely and effective manner;
- to promote broader access to information about legal authorities governing employee rights and responsibilities; and
- to administer its resources in such a way as to further the accomplishment of the agency's mission.

**GOAL ONE: To ensure that actionable matters within its jurisdiction are identified and appropriate individual and systemic remedies are pursued in a timely and effective manner.**

#### **OBJECTIVES**

1. Provide timely service.
2. Provide quality service.
3. Obtain corrective, disciplinary<sup>1</sup> and other favorable actions whenever warranted by the facts.
4. Conduct litigation before the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) in a highly professional and effective manner.
5. Refer whistleblower disclosures to agencies whenever warranted by the facts and evidence.

#### **STRATEGIES**

1. Evaluate operational processes to identify potential methods for reducing processing time while maintaining quality.
2. Maintain, or improve as necessary, staff proficiency in analytical, investigative, negotiation, litigation, and others skills needed to perform statutory responsibilities.
3. Apply technology to make OSC services more accessible, timely, useful, and easy to use.

#### **PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

- Length of time to conduct investigations.
- Length of time to make prosecution decisions.
- Length of time to review disclosure matters.

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<sup>1</sup> Including matters referred to OSC for possible disciplinary action by the Merit Systems Protection Board pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 1221(f)(3), and by the EEOC pursuant to its memorandum of understanding with the OSC (ref: 29 C.F.R. § 1614.503(f)).

## **PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (*CONT'D*)**

- Favorable actions achieved without resort to litigation in matters where the facts support the taking of corrective and/or disciplinary action.
- Results obtained in litigation before the MSPB (*e.g.*, clarification or amplification of protections under federal personnel law, benefits to the requestor, appropriate discipline for violations).
- Compliance with relevant standards (*e.g.*, procedural and evidence codes, internal OSC guidelines).
- Customer feedback.

## **EXTERNAL FACTORS AFFECTING GOAL ACCOMPLISHMENT**

- Appropriations and FTE ceilings.
- Level and nature of case intake.
- Quantity and quality of evidence available in matters under investigation.
- Agencies' cooperation with OSC inquiry/timetables.
- MSPB action in OSC matters.

**GOAL TWO: To promote broader access to information about legal authorities governing employee rights and responsibilities under laws enforced by OSC.**

**OBJECTIVES**

1. Communicate OSC findings and advisory opinions in a clear and timely manner.
2. Expand access to OSC and information about employee rights and responsibilities through technological and other means.
3. Enhance linkages to informational efforts of other agencies.

**STRATEGIES**

1. Evaluate extent to which and means by which agencies have carried out statutory informational program requirement (to inform federal employees about rights and remedies under title 5, chapters 12 and 23), identify best practices, and target OSC informational efforts.
2. Consult with other agencies responsible for investigation and/or adjudication of employee grievances to identify potential means by which to make informational outreach efforts more effective.
3. Apply technology to make information about the OSC and its services more accessible, timely, useful and easy to use.

**PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

- Feedback from other agencies, Congress, media, and others.
- Length of time to issue advisory opinions.
- Utilization of OSC Home Page, e-mail and toll-free services.
- Number of speaking and other outreach efforts by OSC employees.
- Number of requests for OSC publications.
- Customer feedback.

## **EXTERNAL FACTORS AFFECTING GOAL ACCOMPLISHMENT**

- Appropriations and FTE ceiling.
- Receptivity of other agencies to dissemination of information about employee rights and responsibilities.

**GOAL THREE: To administer its resources in such a way as to further the accomplishment of the agency's mission.**

**OBJECTIVES**

1. Hire and develop personnel equipped with skills and abilities that support the accomplishment of OSC mission and goals.
2. Strategically plan for, and effectively acquire, manage and integrate technological resources in support of agency operations.
3. Effectively identify and deploy other resources needed in support of agency operations.
4. Effectively integrate customer perspectives into service planning and delivery functions.

**STRATEGIES**

1. Determine methods for filling positions in the most efficient, effective and timely manner.
2. Consult with other OSC components to assess needs and plan acquisition and deployment of resources, and survey internal clients for feedback.
3. Establish plan for necessary upgrades of technology infrastructure in an orderly manner.
4. Periodically train staff on new technologies being deployed, and provide periodic refreshers on technologies in use.

**PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

- Personnel with a range of relevant skills and abilities.
- Allocation of resources consistent with skills, abilities and workload needs.
- Meeting organizational and individual performance objectives.
- Efficient use of available technology for internal and external communications, case management, planning, evaluation, and research.
- Relationship between administrative and program costs.
- Customer feedback.

**EXTERNAL FACTORS AFFECTING GOAL ACCOMPLISHMENT**

➤ Appropriations and FTE ceiling.

## **PROGRAM EVALUATIONS**

The OSC used ongoing management reviews of program operations, external reviews of agency performance in conjunction with the annual appropriations process, and feedback (in surveys and through other channels) by users of OSC services, in the preparation of its strategic plan. The OSC will continue to use these methods in evaluating program performance and progress towards meeting strategic plan goals and objectives.

## **CONGRESSIONAL/OTHER CONSULTATION**

This strategic plan was developed after exchanges of draft plans with other interested agencies (including the Merit Systems Protection Board and the Office of Personnel Management), and consideration of input from surveys of federal employee users of OSC services. The OSC also sent the draft plan to its congressional oversight committees for review and comment, and agency representatives conferred with staff reviewers. The OSC will continue to consider input from these sources, and others as appropriate, as revisions to the plan may be needed.