

**DRAFT
STRATEGIC PLAN
(FY 2017-2022)**



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Introduction

Over the past five years, the U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC) has vigorously enforced its mandate to protect federal employees, applicants, and former employees from various unlawful employment practices, including retaliation for whistleblowing, and to hold the government accountable by providing a safe and secure channel for whistleblower disclosures. OSC has worked to restore confidence in OSC within the federal community and among stakeholders. The success stories and statistics paint a clear picture: the positive outcomes and impact that OSC has obtained far outstrip the agency's performance in past periods.

As the federal workforce's confidence in OSC's ability to obtain corrective action has grown, the demand for OSC's services has hit record levels. Since 2010, the agency's workload has risen 58 percent with significant increases across all program areas, especially prohibited personnel practice complaints. Accordingly, OSC has had to be strategic in addressing the burgeoning workload. OSC has met these challenges, achieving a record number of favorable results. For example, in direct response to a dramatic surge in cases involving risks to the health and safety of patients at medical facilities in the Department of Veterans Affairs, OSC initiated a holistic approach that resulted in quicker and better resolutions. These cases have shed light on and helped correct systemic challenges at medical facilities across the country. They have also provided much-needed corrective action for victims of whistleblower retaliation. Moreover, OSC has augmented government accountability by securing disciplinary action against scores of officials at various agencies for violations of civil service laws.

In addition, OSC has boosted efforts to increase education and outreach to the federal community with the goal of preventing and deterring violations of civil service laws in the first instance. Most significantly, OSC recently reinvigorated the 2302(c) Certification Program, which agencies may use to provide statutorily-mandated training on whistleblower rights and remedies to their employees. OSC also has started to publish reports of its investigatory findings (in redacted format) when doing so may serve an educational purpose. For example, in 2014, the agency published a report on a case of first impression, finding that an agency violated civil service laws when it unlawfully discriminated against a transgender employee. Equally important, OSC has improved communication with all of its federal stakeholders through its revamped website and enhanced use of social media.

Finally, OSC has worked with partners in Congress to modernize the laws it enforces, allowing OSC to be more effective in its role as a watchdog and guardian of employee rights. For example, in 2012, Congress passed the Whistleblower Protection Enhancement Act (WPEA), which overturned several legal precedents that had narrowed protections for federal whistleblowers, provided whistleblower protections to employees who were not previously covered, and restored OSC's ability to seek disciplinary actions against agency officials who retaliate against whistleblowers. That same year, Congress passed the Hatch Act Modernization Act (HAMA), which modified the law to provide a range of possible disciplinary actions for federal employees, permitted state and local government employees to run for partisan political office unless the employee's salary is entirely funded by the federal government, and changed the status of DC government employees from federal employees to state and local government employees.

While OSC's recent achievements are significant, broad challenges remain and new ones have developed. Building on the successes already obtained over the last five years, OSC stands ready to meet these challenges directly.

About OSC

Background

OSC is an independent federal investigative and prosecutorial agency. Its basic enforcement authorities come from four federal statutes: the Civil Service Reform Act (CSRA), the Whistleblower Protection Act (WPA), the Hatch Act, and the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA).

OSC's roots lie in the reform efforts of Gilded Age America. In 1883, Congress passed the Pendleton Act, creating the Civil Service Commission, which was intended to help ensure a stable, highly qualified federal workforce free from partisan political pressure. Nearly a century later, in the wake of the Watergate scandal and well-publicized allegations of retaliation by agencies against employees who had blown the whistle on wasteful defense spending and revelations of partisan political coercion in the federal government, Congress enacted sweeping reform of the civil service system in the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978. This law replaced the Civil Service Commission with the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB), with OSC serving as the investigative and prosecutorial arm of the MSPB for the next decade.

In 1989, Congress enacted the WPA, making OSC an independent agency within the federal executive branch. The WPA also strengthened protections against retaliation for employees who disclose government wrongdoing and enhanced OSC's ability to enforce those protections. Ensuing legislation such as the WPEA and HAMA—both passed in 2012—has significantly affected the agency's enforcement responsibilities.

Mission and Responsibilities

OSC's mission is to safeguard employee rights and hold the government accountable. To achieve this mission and promote good government in the federal executive branch, OSC's obligations are, broadly speaking: (1) to uphold the merit system by protecting federal employees, applicants, and former employees from prohibited personnel practices, curbing prohibited political activities in the workplace, and preserving the civilian jobs of federal employees who are reservists and National Guardsmen; and (2) to provide a safe channel for federal employees, applicants, and former employees to disclose wrongdoing at their agencies. These two responsibilities work in tandem to maintain the integrity and fairness of the federal workplace and to make the government more accountable.

Prohibited Personnel Practices

The federal merit system refers to laws and regulations designed to ensure that personnel decisions, including hiring and discipline, are made based on merit. Prohibited personnel practices (PPPs) are employment-related activities that are banned because they violate the merit system

through some form of employment discrimination, retaliation, improper hiring practices, or failure to adhere to laws, rules, or regulations that directly concern the merit system principles. OSC has the authority to investigate and prosecute violations of the 13 PPPs in the CSRA, as amended.

Whistleblower Disclosures

In addition to protecting whistleblowers from retaliation, the CSRA created OSC as a secure channel for most federal workers to disclose information about violations of laws, gross mismanagement or waste of funds, abuse of authority, and substantial and specific dangers to public health and safety. Through its oversight of government investigations of these whistleblower disclosures, OSC regularly reins in waste, fraud, abuse, illegality, and threats to public health and safety that pose the risk of catastrophic harm to the public and large remedial and liability costs for the government.

Hatch Act

The Hatch Act, passed in 1939, limits certain political activities of federal employees, as well as some state, DC, and local government employees who work in connection with federally-funded programs. The law was intended to protect federal employees from political coercion, to ensure that federal employees are advanced based on merit rather than political affiliation, and to make certain that federal programs are administered in a non-partisan fashion. OSC has the authority to investigate and prosecute violations of, and to issue advisory opinions under, the Hatch Act.

USERRA

USERRA, passed in 1994, protects military service members and veterans from employment discrimination on the basis of their service, and allows them to regain their civilian jobs following a period of uniformed service. OSC has the authority to litigate and otherwise resolve USERRA claims by federal employees referred from the Department of Labor.

Organizational Structure

OSC is headquartered in Washington, DC. It has three field offices located in Dallas, Texas; Detroit, Michigan; and Oakland, California. The agency includes the following components:

- Immediate Office of Special Counsel (IOSC). The Special Counsel and IOSC are responsible for policy-making and overall management of OSC. This responsibility encompasses supervision of the agency's congressional liaison and public affairs activities.
- Complaints Examining Unit (CEU). This unit is the intake point for all complaints alleging PPPs. CEU conducts an initial review of complaints to determine if they are within OSC's jurisdiction and, if so, whether resolution or further investigation is warranted. CEU may refer qualifying matters for mediation, further investigation, or prosecution. Matters that do not qualify for referral are closed.

- Investigation and Prosecution Division (IPD). This division is comprised of the headquarters office and three field offices, and is primarily responsible for investigating and prosecuting PPPs. IPD determines whether the evidence is sufficient to establish that a violation has occurred and, if so, whether the matter warrants corrective action, disciplinary action, or both. If a meritorious case cannot be resolved informally, IPD may bring an enforcement action before the MSPB.
- Hatch Act Unit (HAU). This unit investigates and resolves complaints of unlawful political activity under the Hatch Act, and may seek corrective and disciplinary action informally as well as before the MSPB. HAU also provides advisory opinions under the Hatch Act.
- USERRA Unit. This unit reviews and resolves USERRA complaints by federal employees referred by the Department of Labor. The unit also may represent service members in USERRA appeals before the MSPB.
- Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Unit. This unit supports OSC's other program units by providing mediation and other forms of ADR services to resolve appropriate cases. Where the parties agree to mediation, the unit conducts mediation sessions seeking creative and effective resolutions.
- Disclosure Unit (DU). This unit reviews whistleblower disclosures of government wrongdoing. DU may refer a disclosure to the agency to investigate and report its findings to OSC, or close a case without further action. For referred cases, DU reviews each agency report for sufficiency and reasonableness, and then OSC sends the determination, the agency report, and any comments by the whistleblower to the President and responsible congressional oversight committees.
- Retaliation and Disclosure Unit (RDU). This unit handles hybrid cases in which a single complainant alleges both whistleblower disclosures and retaliation. OSC created RDU to streamline its processes and provide a single point of contact for complainants with multiple claims. RDU performs the full range of action in these cases, including the referral of disclosures to the agency in whistleblower disclosures, and the investigation and prosecution of retaliation claims, where appropriate.
- Diversity, Outreach, and Training Unit. This unit facilitates coordination with and assistance to agencies in meeting the statutory mandate of 5 U.S.C. § 2302(c), which requires that agencies inform their workforces about whistleblower rights and remedies. The unit also provides external education and outreach sessions for the laws that OSC enforces, as well as develops and implements internal Equal Employment Opportunity and other skill-based training programs for OSC's staff.

- *Office of General Counsel.* This office provides legal advice regarding management, policy, and administrative matters, including the Freedom of Information Act, the Privacy Act, and the ethics programs. The office also defends OSC's interests in litigation filed against the agency.
- *Administrative Services Division.* This division manages OSC's budget and financial operations, and accomplishes the technical, analytical, and administrative needs of the agency. Component units include the Finance Branch, the Human Capital Office, the Administrative Services Office, and the Information Technology Branch.

An organizational chart for OSC may be found in Appendix A.

Strategic Planning Process

Congress requires that Executive Branch agencies develop and post strategic plans on their public websites. The strategic planning process offers a unique opportunity for an agency to reflect on its statutory mission and mandates, reassess prior goals and objectives, and identify new goals and objectives that will enable the agency to fulfill its mission and vision. This process—and the resulting strategic plan—also serves to notify Congress and stakeholders of major factors that may affect the agency’s ability to meet its statutory obligations.

In April 2016, Special Counsel Carolyn N. Lerner launched the strategic planning process for OSC. To be successful, this strategic planning effort sought input from OSC employees as well as key stakeholders from outside the agency. Accordingly, Ms. Lerner assembled a Strategic Planning Team that is diverse and representative of the entire agency to work on this project. She also tasked Associate Special Counsel Louis Lopez with leading the agency’s efforts to develop the new strategic plan. A full list of participants may be found in Appendix B.

This Strategic Planning Team met regularly over six-months to conduct an organizational review of OSC’s programs and services, and then identify new strategic goals, objectives, strategies, and metrics for the strategic plan. OSC also set up a page on its intranet to provide all agency personnel with information and to solicit feedback during the strategic planning process.

In August 2016, OSC posted a draft of the strategic plan on OSC’s external website for public comment. In addition, OSC solicited feedback from various stakeholder groups, including good government and whistleblower protection organizations. The agency also delivered the draft strategic plan to OSC’s oversight and appropriations committees in Congress.

Mission, Vision, Strategic Goals, and Core Values

Mission: *Safeguarding employee rights, holding government accountable.*

Vision: *Fair and effective government inspiring public confidence.*

Strategic Goals:

- 1. Protect and promote the integrity and fairness of the federal workplace.*
- 2. Ensure government accountability.*
- 3. Achieve organizational excellence.*

OSC's Mission states: "Safeguarding Employee Rights, Holding Government Accountable." Strategic Goals 1 and 2, which focus on the agency's substantive program areas, work closely together to achieve a more responsible and merit-based federal government. Strategic Goal 3, which focuses on OSC's efforts to achieve organizational excellence, has the building blocks to make the agency a more agile, better-functioning organization. Collectively, all three Strategic Goals will help OSC to realize its Vision, which is "Fair and Effective Government Inspiring Public Confidence."

Core Values: **Commitment:** *We are dedicated to seeking justice through the enforcement of laws that OSC is charged with prosecuting and to being a safe channel for whistleblowers.*

Excellence: *We foster a model workplace with respect for employees and stakeholders, and provide clear, high-quality, and timely work product in our programs and services.*

Independence: *We conduct our work free from outside influence. We act fairly and without bias to honor the merit system.*

Integrity: *We adhere to the highest legal, professional, and ethical standards to earn and maintain the public's trust.*

Vigilance: *We aim for proactive and constant improvement of both our own processes and of the merit system. We strive to identify innovative and effective ways to address and prevent government wrongdoing.*

Strategic Goals, Objectives, Strategies, and Metrics

Strategic Goal 1 – Protect and promote the integrity and fairness of the federal workplace.

Objective 1: Fairly and promptly investigate and prosecute cases.

Objective 2: Obtain timely and effective relief in cases.

OSC faces an increasing number of cases each year, particularly from federal employees alleging whistleblower retaliation. To effectively remedy wrongs and hold agencies accountable, OSC will apply consistent standards of review and investigative procedure to each matter. Some cases will demand more time and resources than others, and will require a variety of investigative strategies and techniques to resolve. Applying broadly consistent procedures but handling each matter as the facts demand will allow OSC to remain efficient, fair, and effective. OSC will continue to use ADR and other dispute resolution methods to increase case-processing efficiency and better serve its stakeholders.

Strategies:

- Handle cases in a fair and unbiased manner.
- Form working group to improve efficiency of case handling procedures.
- Maximize effective use of ADR and other resolution methods in cases.

Data Points and Metrics:

General

- Formation of working group to improve efficiency of case handling procedures in FY 2017, and reassess regularly.

PPP Enforcement

- Number of complaints received.
- Number/percent of whistleblower retaliation complaints received.
- Number/percent of whistleblower retaliation complaints closed within 240 days.
- Average age of complaints at closure.
- Number of complaints filed with MSPB.
- Number of successful prosecutions before MSPB.
- Number of informal stays obtained.
- Number of formal stays obtained.
- Number of complaints mediated.
- Number of complaints mediated resulting in settlement.
- Number of individual corrective actions obtained.
- Number of systemic corrective actions obtained.
- Number of disciplinary actions obtained.
- Percentage of cases in which corrective, systemic, or disciplinary action obtained.

Hatch Act Enforcement

- Number of complaints received.
- Number/percent of complaints closed within 240 days.
- Number of complaints filed with MSPB.
- Number of successful prosecutions before MSPB.
- Number of warning letters issued.
- Number of corrective actions obtained.
- Number of disciplinary actions obtained.

USERRA Enforcement

- Number of referrals received.
 - Number of merit referrals.
 - Number of non-merit referrals.
- Number/percent of referrals closed within 60 days.
- Number of offers of representation before MSPB.
- Number of corrective actions obtained (formally and informally).

Objective 3: Enhance strategic use of enforcement authority.

As a small agency responsible for safeguarding the merit system in a broad sector of the federal community, OSC strives to maximize the impact of its enforcement actions and deter future violations. In addition to seeking corrective and/or disciplinary action for PPPs, Hatch Act, and USERRA complaints, OSC may issue PPP reports and provide technical assistance for policy and legislative changes affecting the laws it enforces. The WPEA also authorized OSC to file amicus curiae briefs in cases involving whistleblower rights and intervene in cases before the MSPB. OSC will use these authorities to advance its mission of safeguarding employee rights by educating the federal community, working for systemic changes, and helping shape and clarify the law.

Strategies:

- As appropriate, publish more PPP reports that serve educational purposes.
- Furnish expert technical assistance to aid governmental bodies with formulating policy and precedent.
- Collaborate and strategize with other agencies to make systemic improvements to the federal workplace.

Data Points and Metrics:

- Number of PPP reports published on website.
- Number of *amicus curiae* briefs and interventions filed.
- Number of inter-agency efforts involving systemic improvements to the federal workplace.

Objective 4: Provide timely and quality Hatch Act advisory opinions and guidance.

OSC is in a unique position to provide Hatch Act advice to federal, DC, state, and local employees and officials, as well as the general public. It is important for OSC to provide consistent, well-reasoned opinions in a timely fashion so that individuals can make appropriate decisions about their political activities. OSC recognizes the importance of revising and updating the Hatch Act regulations and will continue to pursue its efforts to partner with OPM, the agency responsible for promulgating the regulations, to achieve this goal.

Strategies:

- Continue to provide timely and appropriate Hatch Act advice and information.
- Work closely with OPM to revise the Hatch Act regulations.

Data Points and Metrics:

- Number/percent of informal telephonic advisory opinions issued within 3 days of inquiry.
- Number/percent of informal email advisory opinions issued within 5 days of inquiry.
- Number/percent of formal written advisory opinions issued within 60 days of inquiry.
- Revised Hatch Act regulations by FY 2018.

Objective 5: Expand training and outreach efforts nationwide.

OSC is well-suited to safeguard employee rights by educating the federal community and others about PPPs, whistleblower disclosures, the Hatch Act, and USERRA through its training and outreach programs. Since 2002, OSC has had a formal program to ensure compliance with 5 U.S.C. § 2302(c), which requires federal agencies to inform employees about their rights and remedies under the whistleblower protections and related laws. In 2014, the White House mandated that federal agencies become section 2302(c)-certified. OSC also has longstanding training programs on the Hatch Act and USERRA, as well as resources available through its website. While many agencies in the Washington, DC area have received OSC training and certification, OSC will endeavor to expand its efforts nationwide to better reach agencies and components that may have less familiarity with the whistleblower protections and other laws that OSC enforces. OSC will also monitor, evaluate, and reassess the effectiveness of its training and outreach activities.

Strategies:

- Increase awareness of, and provide expert technical assistance to agencies/components on, the section 2302(c) program and other OSC-related training needs.
- Develop procedures to facilitate registration, certification, and recertification rates of agencies/components under the section 2302(c) program.
- Certify and recertify more agencies/components through the section 2302(c) program.
- Create training and outreach plan to reach agencies beyond the Washington, DC area.
- Collaborate with agencies to develop OSC-related web-based and other training, e.g., advanced training quiz, topical videos, etc.
- Improve methods to survey effectiveness of training and outreach activities.

Data Points and Metrics:

- Number of agencies/components contacted regarding the section 2302(c) program.
- Number of agencies/components registered for the section 2302(c) program.
- Number of agencies/components certified and recertified for the section 2302(c) program.
- Average time for agencies/components to complete the section 2302(c) certification after registration.
- Number of training and outreach activities, broken down by program area and geographic location.
- Methods to survey effectiveness of training and outreach activities by FY 2017, and reassess regularly.

Objective 6: Effectively and innovatively communicate with stakeholders and the public.

OSC understands the necessity of effectively communicating with stakeholders and the general public about its efforts to safeguard employee rights and hold the government accountable. By appropriately publicizing enforcement outcomes through traditional and non-traditional media, OSC can help to educate the federal workforce about their rights and responsibilities and deter future wrongdoing. OSC will use a wide variety of communication methods to disseminate timely, accurate information and will provide regular opportunities for input, feedback, and collaboration from stakeholders.

Strategies:

- Continue to issue press releases on major activities and key developments.
- Increase use of digital media as appropriate (e.g., website, social media, listserves, infographics, webinars, etc.).
- Enhance coordination with stakeholder groups (e.g., whistleblower and good government organizations, veterans groups, LGBT associations, employee unions, etc.)
- Develop proposal for the establishment of a regularly-held conference on whistleblowing in the federal workplace.

Data Points and Metrics:

- Number of press releases issued.
- Types and frequency of digital media used to share information.
- Number of meetings with stakeholder groups.
- Proposal for the establishment of a regularly-held conference on whistleblowing in the federal workplace by FY 2017, and reassess regularly.

Strategic Goal 2 – Ensure government accountability.

Objective 1: Provide employees with a more effective and efficient safe channel to report government wrongdoing.

OSC promotes government accountability, integrity, and efficiency by providing a safe channel for federal employees to come forward with evidence of waste, fraud, abuse, law-breaking, or threats to public health or safety. With regular increases in the number of whistleblower disclosures each year, OSC must continue to ensure that this safe channel remains confidential, secure, and effective in promoting change and accountability. OSC is currently developing a new and dynamic combined form for reporting government wrongdoing, whistleblower retaliation and other PPPs, and Hatch Act violations. The form is designed to be confidential, secure, and convenient for the user. It can be downloaded and completed privately. It may be submitted electronically and immediately routed and processed. And, the user need not establish an account. OSC will work vigorously to review and assess the whistleblower reporting experience to ensure that, by providing a safe channel for whistleblowers and their disclosures, OSC can better ensure government accountability.

Strategies:

- Fully implement new electronic form.
- Form working group aimed at developing actionable methods to improve whistleblower reporting experiences.

Data Points and Metrics:

- New electronic form by FY 2017, and refine as appropriate.
- Number/percent of PPP complaints misfiled as DU complaints (decrease).
- Number of whistleblower disclosure cases, including those alleging whistleblower disclosures and PPPs.
- Number/percent of whistleblower disclosure cases referred to agencies for investigation.
- Working group for improvement of whistleblower reporting experiences by FY 2017, and reassess regularly.

Objective 2: Ensure agencies provide more timely and appropriate outcomes for referred whistleblower disclosures.

OSC returns substantial sums to the federal government by pressing for corrective action to remedy waste and fraud disclosed by whistleblowers. Through its oversight of agency reports on referred whistleblower disclosures, OSC uncovers individual and systemic violations of federal law and evaluates the reasonableness of corrective actions, encourages cost savings occasioned by the identification and cessation of government waste, and resolves serious health and safety threats. A key objective is to improve the timeliness and outcome of agency reports. OSC will improve communication with agencies concerning their statutorily-mandated reports, including their content and timeliness, as well as seek alternative resolutions of whistleblower disclosures.

Strategies:

- Enhance OSC oversight of, and set interim deadlines in, agencies' investigation plans of referred whistleblower disclosure cases.

- Improve communications with agencies before, during, and after agencies' investigations of referred whistleblower disclosure cases to ensure timely and appropriate outcomes.
- Provide alternate means to achieve resolutions in whistleblower disclosure cases.
- Expand efforts to capture scope of benefits to government resulting from outcomes in whistleblower disclosure cases.
- Monitor all whistleblower disclosures and referrals to agencies to identify trends or systemic challenges that require greater intervention from OSC.

Data Points and Metrics:

- Percentage of referred whistleblower disclosures that are substantiated by the agency.
- Number of favorable outcomes—both corrective and disciplinary actions—achieved through formal and informal resolution of whistleblower disclosure cases.
- Timeliness of OSC's communication to the President and Congress after receiving an agency investigation report and whistleblower's comments.
- Implementation of measurement to capture scope of benefits to government resulting from outcomes in whistleblower disclosure cases, such as significant changes to agency operations to promote safety or security and/or tax dollars saved or recovered, by FY 2017, and reassess regularly.

Objective 3: Enhance awareness of outcomes of referred whistleblower disclosures.

For OSC's work to have the greatest impact on federal government operations, particularly in cases involving systemic abuses or practices likely to occur across government agencies, it must have a robust and continuous presence within the federal community and before the general public. OSC's public reporting requirements for investigated whistleblower disclosures make it even more imperative that federal employees, taxpayers, and other stakeholders have prompt, accurate, and easy access to information about referred whistleblower disclosures. The implementation of a variety of new technologies offers the agency the opportunity to more effectively disseminate information about the financial and other qualitative benefits to the government from the outcomes of referred whistleblower disclosures, thus ensuring accountability broadly throughout the government.

Strategies:

- Revamp online public file of whistleblower disclosure cases on website.
- Increase dissemination of favorable outcomes in whistleblower disclosure cases via press releases, social media, etc.
- Enhance training and outreach aimed at increasing awareness and deterrence of underlying government wrongdoing.
- Develop plan to enhance the profile of OSC's Public Servant Award.

Data Points and Metrics:

- Revamped online public file of whistleblower disclosure cases on website by FY 2017, and reassess regularly.
- Number of times that favorable outcomes of whistleblower disclosure cases are disseminated via press releases, social media, etc.

- Number of training and outreach events that address whistleblower disclosures.
- Plan to enhance the profile of OSC's Public Servant Award by FY 2017, and reassess regularly.

Strategic Goal 3 – Achieve organizational excellence.

Objective 1: Recruit, develop, and retain a highly talented, engaged, and diverse workforce.

To accomplish its mission with excellence, OSC must use targeted recruitment methods that attract talented employees who believe in the work of the agency. A diverse workforce from various backgrounds will help OSC tackle problems from different perspectives and find optimal solutions. OSC is committed to retaining this skilled and diverse workforce through work-life balance strategies, career and skills development, cross-training, recognition of strong performance, and other initiatives that will keep employees engaged and equip them to achieve the mission.

Strategies:

- Create and maintain a Human Capital Plan that includes effective recruitment strategies for attracting talent from diverse sources and appropriate succession planning.
- Establish an Honors Program for hiring attorneys from law schools or clerkships.
- Improve and standardize new employee initial onboarding processes, as appropriate.
- Create and maintain a staff training plan for all employees that regularly assesses training needs and delivers training programs.
- Implement a voluntary mentorship program.
- Establish an internal cross-training program that uses details, rotations, reassignments, and other tools aimed at ensuring that the agency remains agile and responsive to changing organizational needs, and that staff develop professionally within the agency.
- Continue efforts to increase employee engagement through Employee Engagement Working Group, FEVS participation and analysis, consistent communication, and effective recognition of staff performance.
- Continue emphasis on maintenance of appropriate work/life balance and other related benefits.

Data Points and Metrics:

- Human Capital Plan by FY 2017, and reassess regularly.
- Honors Program by FY 2017, and reassess regularly.
- Improved and standardized onboarding process by FY 2017, and reassess regularly.
- Staff training plan by FY 2017, and reassess regularly.
- Mentorship program by FY 2017, and reassess regularly.
- Internal cross-training program by FY 2017, and reassess regularly to ensure program is accomplishing objectives.
- Ongoing employee engagement efforts, and reassess regularly.
- Ongoing work/life and other related benefits, and reassess regularly.

Objective 2: Improve the use of existing technology and deploy new IT systems to enhance organizational operations.

OSC will be a good steward of tax-payer dollars through the strategic use of information technology systems to help the agency better accomplish its mission. OSC will regularly assess the needs of its stakeholders and employees, and in response will employ cutting-edge information technology solutions to improve efficiency and the stakeholder experience. OSC will deploy mobile access to network programs in compliance with directives that move the government toward a virtual work environment, while ensuring continuity of operations in times of work interruption and providing greater flexibility to employees. OSC will also employ information technology security solutions to safeguard its information systems with the purpose of protecting the privacy of employees and those seeking assistance from OSC.

Strategies:

- Continually assess and address the IT needs of staff and customers.
- Recruit and retain highly-skilled IT experts.
- Identify, procure, and deploy commercial off-the-shelf IT solutions to meet needs.
- Assess effectiveness of IT solutions and respond to stakeholder needs.
- Provide excellent IT customer service.

Data Points and Metrics:

- 100% deployment of mobile access to network program resources by FY 2017, and reassess regularly.
- Transition to electronic case management system by FY 2017, and reassess regularly.
- 100% data encryption by FY 2017, and reassess regularly.
- Ongoing semi-annual assessment of needs.
- Ongoing semi-annual assessment of the effectiveness of IT services.
- Ongoing maintenance of IT staff of 5% of agency work force.

Objective 3: Monitor, evaluate, and improve efficiency and effectiveness of programs and processes.

While OSC is a small agency, it takes complaints from throughout the federal government; it handles cases from all over the country; and its authority to act derives from several different federal statutes. OSC will undertake a comprehensive and transparent evaluation of the most efficient approach for safeguarding employee rights and holding the government accountable. The evaluation will identify best practices and areas of improvement. This will be part of a vigilant process of continual evaluation of OSC's existing program areas and new programs to ensure the most effective delivery of services. To accomplish these goals, OSC will give federal employees and other stakeholders a greater opportunity to provide input into shaping its work.

Strategies:

- Identify best practices from RDU and integrate into existing whistleblower disclosure and PPP case processes and systems, as appropriate.

- Create and implement an institutional approach to evaluate programs and processes, including special projects and initiatives, to identify best practices and areas of improvement.
- Implement an enhanced method for determining customer satisfaction with programs and processes, and evaluate data to improve their efficiency and effectiveness.

Data Points and Metrics:

- Evaluation of best practices from RDU and integration into existing processes and systems by FY 2017, and reassess regularly.
- Completion of first evaluation to identify best practices and areas of improvement by FY 2017, and proceed with additional programs and processes annually thereafter.
- Enhanced method for determining customer satisfaction with programs and processes by FY 2018, and reassess regularly.
- Evaluation and use of customer satisfaction data to improve efficiency and effectiveness of programs and processes by FY 2018, and reassess regularly.

Factors Affecting Achievement of Strategic Plan

While OSC is committed to achieving its mission and vision, there are internal and external factors that will likely affect the agency's ability to achieve all of the goals and objectives in this strategic plan. The primary issues of concern revolve around persistent budget uncertainty, a steadily increasing workload, and significant technological challenges. For a small-sized, resource-constrained agency with a substantial mandate to safeguard employee rights and hold government accountable, these factors can present serious challenges to fulfilling OSC's important statutory obligations.

Historically, OSC has had limited funding to effectively execute its mission and support functions. The agency has had to make difficult choices to ensure that it balances its investigative and prosecution responsibilities with the training and outreach efforts critical to deterring whistleblower retaliation and other unlawful practices. In FY 2015, OSC's caseload hit an all-time high, surpassing 6,000 new matters for the first time in agency history. The dramatic rise was driven by restored confidence in OSC's ability to safeguard the merit system. OSC's continuing success in achieving favorable results through mediation and negotiation, particularly in high-priority matters, also contributed to the increased number of complaints filed. With an expected surge in Hatch Act complaints driven by the 2016 presidential election, OSC anticipates continued growth in its caseload. Budget uncertainty remains a significant challenge to OSC's ability to carry out its myriad responsibilities.

In response to these funding challenges and rising caseloads, OSC must carefully prioritize and allocate resources to remain efficient, fair, and effective in maintaining the high levels of success it has achieved in recent years. Accordingly, the agency is putting into place long-term plans to improve the efficiency of case handling procedures; is being proactive, seeking early resolution of cases through stepped up ADR and settlement efforts; is implementing innovative approaches to achieve efficiencies in cases involving both retaliation complaints and whistleblower disclosures; and is improving cross-training of staff. A better funded and more efficient OSC will result in greater cost-saving and more effective accountability throughout government.

Additionally, OSC has had limited ability to invest in, but increased need for, long-term improvements in technology. OSC will be called upon to ensure that the technological environment in which it conducts its work is modern and secure. By proactively assessing the information security needs and the technological requirements of employees and stakeholders, OSC plans to improve efficiency, security, and the customer experience. Continuous assessment of information technology requisites against available resources will help ensure that OSC achieves organizational excellence despite these challenges.

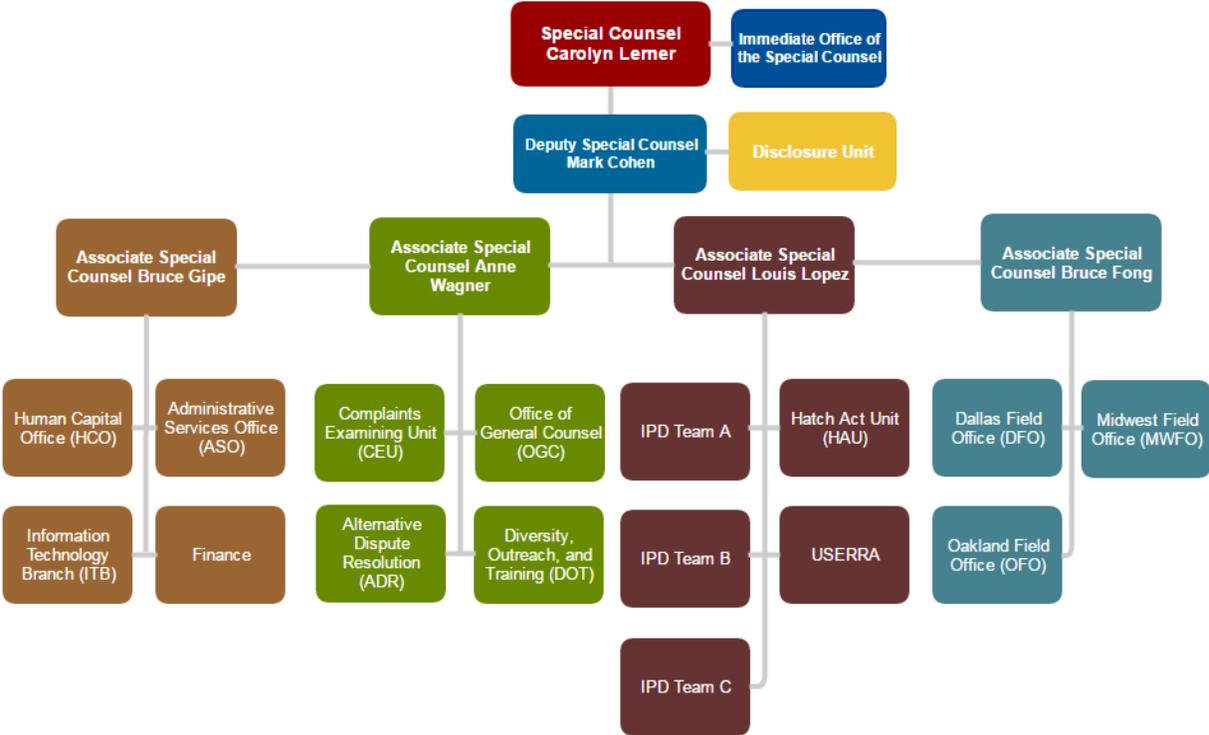
While OSC's establishment as an independent government oversight agency insulates it from political influences on its work, transitions in administration and leadership throughout the federal government will necessarily impact OSC's ability to safeguard employee rights and hold the government accountable. Changes in the composition of the MSPB and at the highest levels of the agencies over which OSC has jurisdiction will require that OSC remain agile and focused on honoring the merit system fairly and without bias. These challenges will require that OSC continue to prioritize education and outreach, and to highlight cases with significant educational value or that

promote accountability. Through these efforts, OSC can improve the culture within the federal government and remain a steady accountability and transparency presence that can withstand administration and leadership changes.

OSC's strategic plan contemplates confronting all of these challenges directly over the next few years to ensure its success. And when OSC succeeds, good government and the general public are the real winners.

Appendix A

OSC Organizational Chart



Appendix B

Strategic Planning Team

Chair

Louis Lopez, *Associate Special Counsel, Investigation and Prosecution Division, Headquarters*

Members

Eric Bachman, *Deputy Special Counsel for Litigation and Legal Affairs, Immediate Office of the Special Counsel*

Patrick Boulay, *Chief, USERRA Unit*

Ginny Castle, *Program Assistant, Oakland Field Office*

Bruce Fong, *Associate Special Counsel, Investigation and Prosecution Division, Field Offices*

Greg Giaccio, *Senior Examiner, Complaints Examining Unit*

Bruce Gipe, *Chief Operating Officer, Administrative Services Division*

Sheryl Golkow, *Attorney, Dallas Field Office*

Karen Gorman, *Chief, Retaliation and Disclosure Unit*

Jane Juliano, *Chief, Alternative Dispute Resolution Unit*

Page Kennedy, *Senior Legal Counsel, Immediate Office of the Special Counsel*

Jennifer Li, *Chief Information Officer, Information Technology Branch*

Ana Galindo-Marrone, *Chief, Hatch Act Unit*

Catherine McMullen, *Chief, Disclosure Unit*

Clarissa Pinheiro, *Chief, Investigation and Prosecution Division, Headquarters*

Nick Schwellenbach, *Senior Communications Specialist, Immediate Office of the Special Counsel*

Martha Sheth, *Team Leader, Complaints Examining Unit*

Chris Tall, *Chief, Detroit Field Office*

Rachel Venier, *Chief, Investigation and Prosecution Division, Headquarters*

Anne Wagner, *Associate Special Counsel, General Law Division*

Ron Williams, *Investigator, Disclosure Unit*