



COALITION OF FEDERAL OMBUDSMAN

MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Date/Time: October 15, 2014, 1:30pm – 2:45pm

Location: Conference Call Only

Agenda:

2014 Round Table Discussion Results—What should COFO focus on in the coming year?

Highlights:

Chairman Scott Deyo thanked everyone for a successful annual conference and sought input from members on the latest version of the round table discussion topics raised during the event.

Among the top picks of meeting participants were the following:

- Training and Professional Development

Beyond the formal IOA and USOA training sessions, could COFO's internal and external ombudsman collaborate to provide similar professional development opportunities/ Even with the diversity of practice in the federal arena, how can we best network and learn from each other?

Locally available formal training in conflict resolution was also highlighted.

- Measuring/Demonstrating Effectiveness

How do we measure and demonstrate effectiveness of function? It can be challenging when using an informal and confidential approach to conflict resolution, yet stakeholders need a sense of the office's value to the organization and mission.

When statistics are used for internal ombudsman, i.e., the number of visitors, issues, etc., some could presume an inherent pressure to "drum up" business. For external ombudsman, there is frequently a requirement regarding statistical data and reporting requirements.

The IOA Journal published a piece by Mary Rowe of MIT about measuring impact. That edition* also included several other articles on the role of the ombudsman and specifically on effectiveness questions.

- OPM Alternative Dispute Resolution Series

OPM is considering holding training sessions on ADR, a follow on to a mediation series previously conducted in conjunction with Federal Mediation and Conciliation Services and human resources specialists.

- OPM Ombudsman Job Classification/Series

Should we consider approaching/proposing to OPM the establishment of an ombudsman classification and series? This had been a point of discussion previously, with no consensus given the varied ombudsman structures in place and other considerations.

- Unified Model for Ombudsman Offices

An updated, unified model for ombudsman offices could be jointly pursued at the level of COFO, ABA and the IADRWG. Sample PD's would be an important new component to include.

- Mentoring Fellow Ombuds

Do we want to develop a program to pair new federal ombuds with those with more experience? Also, would there be an opportunity to work with conflict resolution schools and promote interest in the profession.

- Outreach

What sort of additional outreach should we conduct?

- Best Practices

What are a defined set of best practices and how should we promote them? Examples include the role of conflict coaching, internal cultural reviews and other assessments, recommended reporting lines, etc. If we were to pursue the ombuds peer review concept, interagency service agreements would need to be considered. Meanwhile how do we best strengthen current support available through phone calls, visits, resources on the website, etc.?

Reference Material: *Round Table Discussion Results, 2014 COFO Annual Conference*

**Journal of the International Ombudsman Association, Volume 3, Number 1, 2010*

Attendees (by phone only):

Emily Albertson, Federal Reserve Board
Cortina Barnes, Department of Defense
Emily Boardman
Kathy Breeden, Department of Transportation
Andrea Brown, Department of State
Meredith Cordisco, Federal Reserve Bureau
Scott Deyo, National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency
Jennifer Gartlan, Federal Maritime Commission
Victoria Gilner, Department of Defense, USAF
Noreen Kinnavy, International Broadcasting Bureau
Marcia Larkins, Federal Drug Administration
Kristina Lauritsen, Federal Drug Administration
Celeste Merrix, Department of Homeland Security
Linda Myers, National Institutes of Health
Liz Phillips, Federal Drug Administration
Pamela Pontillo, Department of Energy
Julie Smith, Department of State
King Stablein, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Jerilynn Walker, National Credit Union Administration
Jean Whyte, National Archives and Records Administration
Guy Weber, National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency

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