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2019 BEST PLACES TO WORK IN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT® RANKINGS SHOW MODEST DROP IN EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Partnership for Public Service and Boston Consulting Group release new data highlighting top performing and most improved federal agencies across government

WASHINGTON – The nonprofit, nonpartisan [Partnership for Public Service](#) and global management consulting firm [Boston Consulting Group](#) today released the [2019 Best Places to Work in the Federal Government®](#) rankings, which show a federal employee engagement score of 61.7 out of 100, a 0.5 point drop compared to 2018.

“Our country is blessed with an extraordinary and highly resilient government workforce. This year’s engagement dropped modestly despite a tumultuous time for our nation’s public servants – a time when about 800,000 of the 2 million federal employees were affected by a lengthy government shutdown, when there were a number of critical leadership vacancies across the government, and as many agencies had to deal with a variety of political headwinds,” said Max Stier, president and CEO of the Partnership for Public Service.

Despite these circumstances, the data shows small improvements in employee attitudes in eight of 10 categories that measure the work experience. Employee views on training and development, and on performance-based awards and advancement, both rose by 0.8 points. Effective leadership, which encompasses employee views of their supervisors, senior leaders, fairness in the workplace and individual empowerment, rose 0.3 points. The categories that declined were pay, down 0.4 points, and support for diversity, which dropped 0.2 points.

“The 2019 data largely represents a continuation of the status quo, highlighting the need for federal leaders to step up efforts to improve the employee work experience,” said Stier. “It also demonstrates that today’s public servants remain highly mission-focused, committed to serving the public and highly resilient.”

As in past years, the federal government continues to lag well behind the private sector when it comes to employee engagement. According to data provided by employee research firm Mercer | Sirota, the 2019 engagement score for private sector employees is 77.0 out of 100, 15.3 points higher than the federal government. Only 11 of the government’s 70 large, midsize and small agencies included in the Best Places to Work rankings scored above the private sector average this year, including NASA, the Federal Trade Commission and the Peace Corps.

Stier said the federal government competes with the private sector for the best talent and must attract highly skilled individuals.

“Every day that our nation’s leaders fail to meet or exceed employee engagement levels seen in the best private sector companies, our government and our nation loses,” Stier said. “Leaders across government must continue to make employee engagement a top priority since a highly-motivated workforce is critical to a well-functioning government.”

The top federal agencies in 2019 include the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, which increased its Best Places to Work score and retained its number one large agency spot for the eighth year in a row, and the Department of Health and Human Services, which increased its score for the fifth consecutive year. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission rose from second place in 2018 to top honors in the midsize category. The U.S. International Trade Commission topped the small agency category, while the Office of the Inspector General at the Tennessee Valley Authority is the top ranked subcomponent for the fourth time since joining the rankings in 2015.

Among the federal organizations that lost significant ground in employee engagement this year were the departments of Agriculture, Transportation and Education; the Social Security Administration, the National Labor Relations Board; the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency, the Corporation for National and Community Service, the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service and the Overseas Private Investment Corporation.

Danny Werfel, former senior federal executive turned managing director and partner of the Boston Consulting Group, said the federal government “enhances the quality of our lives every single day, multiple times a day, and plays a vital role ensuring our national and economic security.”

“Federal leaders must understand employee concerns and develop plans based on their feedback to create a highly motivated workforce and productive work environments,” Werfel said. “Agency leaders must be strategic and intentional in their planning and engage employees in ways that not only lead to positive workplace cultures, but improved service for the public.”

On Jan. 10, 2020, the Partnership and BCG will honor the five top-ranked Best Places to Work agencies in each of the four groupings, as well as the most improved agencies and subcomponents.

Agencies set to receive most improved awards include the Intelligence Community (+3.6 points) in the large agency category; the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (+6.7 points) in the midsize agency category; the Selective Service System (+17.1 points) in the small agency category; and the Foreign Service Institute (+16.4 points) in the subcomponent category.

Among the federal organizations to take top honors are:

TOP FIVE LARGE AGENCIES	
#1	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
#2	Department of Health and Human Services
#3	Intelligence Community
#4	Department of Commerce
#5	Department of Transportation
TOP FIVE MIDSIZE AGENCIES	
#1	Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
#2	Federal Trade Commission
#3	Government Accountability Office
#4	Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation
#5	Securities and Exchange Commission
TOP FIVE SMALL AGENCIES	
#1	U.S. International Trade Commission
#2	Farm Credit Administration
#3	Peace Corps
#4	Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation
#5	National Endowment for the Arts

TOP FIVE SUBCOMPONENTS	
#1	Office of Inspector General at the Tennessee Valley Authority
#2	Office of the General Counsel at the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
#3	Office of Operations at the International Trade Commission
#4	Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau at the Department of the Treasury (tie)
#4	Office of the Executive Director at the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (tie)

For a complete list of this year’s rankings and scores for all the agencies and subcomponents for which we have data, please see attached and visit bestplacestowork.org.

KEY FACTS AND FINDINGS:

- The 2019 Best Places to Work rankings include the views of employees from 490 federal agencies and subcomponents, the most in the history of the rankings. This includes 17 large federal agencies, 25 midsize agencies, 28 small agencies and 420 subcomponents.
- The data shows that 45.0% of agencies and subcomponents included in the rankings improved their Best Places to Work engagement score in 2019, while 54.6% declined and 0.4% stayed the same. This represents a 5.4% increase compared to 39.6% of all organizations in 2018, but a big difference from 73.8% in 2017 and 72.3% in 2016.
- The **Department of Health and Human Services** has steadily increased its Best Places to Work employee engagement score since 2015, maintaining its second-place ranking among large agencies for a third year in a row. Meanwhile, one of its agencies, the **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration**, dropped 6.4 points for a 2019 score of 27.0 and a ranking of 417 out of 420 subcomponents.
- The **Department of Justice** dropped from 10th to 12th place among 17 large agencies – representing a steady decline of four straight years and a far cry from when the agency was ranked in third place in 2015.
- The **Department of Education** scored 43.7 out of 100 and landed last among the 25 midsize agencies – its lowest level of employee engagement since the rankings were launched in 2003. This year’s slide follows declines of 12.4 points in 2018, 0.1 points in 2017 and 1.5 points in 2016.
- The **Export-Import Bank** improved its employee engagement score by 9.1 points this year after falling 18.1 points in 2018.
- The **Secret Service** improved its Best Places to Work employee engagement score for the third year in a row, going up 8.9 points to 52.9 out of 100. The Secret Service’s employee engagement score has increased by more than 20 points since 2016 when the agency had a score of 32.8 points—the nadir of a 30-point downward trend that began in 2012.
- **Customs and Border Protection’s** engagement score decreased for a second year in a row, falling by 2.1 points. The agency’s only substantial category score decrease was in employee skills-mission match, which decreased by 1.4 points to 67.1 out of 100.
- Three agencies undergoing reorganizations or relocations suffered big drops in their Best Places to Work scores this year. The **Corporation for National and Community Service**, which has been reorganizing its field presence, declined by 27 points for a score of 39.3. Additionally, the **Department of Agriculture’s Economic Research Service** plummeted 30.1 points while its **National Institute of Food and Agriculture** dropped 24.2 points. Both USDA agencies are relocating from the Washington, D.C. area to Kansas City, Mo.
- On individual Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey questions, 66.8% of the respondents said they are given a real opportunity to improve their skills, up 1.5 points, while 61.2% said they feel encouraged to come up with new and better ways of doing things, up 1.0 points. In addition, 89.3% said the work they do is important, the same as in 2018.

The majority of the data used to develop the Best Places to Work rankings was collected by the Office of Personnel Management's annual [Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey](#), which was administered between May and early July 2019 to permanent executive branch employees. Additional employee survey data was collected from 10 agencies, including the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Peace Corps. The rankings also incorporate responses from employees at the nation's intelligence agencies. This is the 14th edition of the Best Places to Work rankings, which began in 2003.

During the past 18 years, the nonpartisan, nonprofit **Partnership for Public Service** has been dedicated to making the federal government more effective for the American people. We work across administrations to help transform the way government operates by increasing collaboration, accountability, efficiency and innovation. Visit ourpublicservice.org to learn more. Follow us on social [@RPublicService](#) and [subscribe](#) today to get the latest federal news, information on upcoming Partnership programs and events, and more.

Boston Consulting Group is a global management consulting firm dedicated to advising clients in the private, public and not-for-profit sectors. Founded in 1963, BCG is a private company with offices in more than 90 cities in 50 countries. We partner with our clients to identify their highest-value opportunities, address their challenges, and transform their enterprises so that they achieve sustainable competitive advantage, build more capable organizations, and secure lasting results. We continue to seek to be agents of positive change—for our clients, our people, and the greater society in the excellence of our work and the opportunities for personal growth that we provide to our employees.

In our work with the federal government, BCG is recognized for bringing commercial insights and best practices to our public sector clients. We are recognized as a Best Place to Work in industry and are proud to co-sponsor the Best Places to Work in the Federal Government rankings.

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