

## Academy Study Summary

# The Department of Commerce Office of Inspector General Independent Assessment of Employee Views

## Overview

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The Department of Commerce (Department) Office of the Inspector General (OIG) contracted with the National Academy of Public Administration (the Academy) to conduct an independent assessment of employee views and engagement, as well as assist in creating an action plan for improving the working climate. The Academy study team reviewed and synthesized available data and collected information from OIG personnel through an anonymous survey, interviews, and focus groups to detect patterns and trends as they relate to employee perspectives and involvement. The Academy team then developed recommendations to improve the OIG's internal climate. The following details some of the key focus areas of the assessment:

### Office Culture

Office culture is the medium that defines the informal processes and arrangements by which work is done. It is often specific values such as integrity and respect that lie at the core of strong office culture.

**Key Findings:** Input from some OIG personnel suggests that challenges with office culture and morale have impacted the OIG's effectiveness and engagement.

### Communication

Communication, for the purposes of this engagement, is defined as the exchange of information that people need to perform their jobs. Communication adds to the knowledge base and improves the individual's judgment to apply that knowledge base in a specific context.

**Key Findings:** OIG Stakeholders talked about the importance of increased information sharing, improving informal lines of communication through more collaboration and interaction, the ability to provide input on decisions that affect their work, and greater transparency.

### Investment in Staff

Resources and training are the tools that the agency provides to its staff to be able to do their work well. Individuals need resources to transform their knowledge into work products. Training enhances the individual's knowledge and ability to apply that knowledge in the work setting.

**Key Findings:** Many individuals said that they see room for improvement in investments in training, resources and information technology, staffing, and pathways to advancement.

### Work Practices and Processes

Work practices and processes create the structure in which staff members carry out the purpose of the organization. Standardization of work practices and processes establishes consistency over time and across work groups.

**Key Findings:** Input from the staff suggests that some processes need to be designed and executed in a way that better allows them to conduct the work of the organization effectively and efficiently.

# Recommendations

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Based on the results of stakeholder engagement, input of an Expert Advisory Group (EAG) made of Academy Fellows, and best practice research, the Study Team developed ten recommendations for the Department's OIG to address study findings:

- ✦ Foster optimal working relations among senior leaders and staff to ensure civility.
- ✦ Work toward enhanced responsibility and transparency among leadership to communicate commitment, build trust, and establish ownership.
- ✦ Communicate priorities and direction for the organization to foster a shared understanding of its work and allow staff members to understand how they contribute to the mission.
- ✦ Reinforce organizational priorities and direction by recognizing staff contributions that align with them.
- ✦ Establish clear and consistent lines of communication from the Inspector General to the staff.
- ✦ Provide meaningful opportunities for managers and staff members to offer input on decisions that affect their work.
- ✦ Invest in the staff to support effectiveness and productivity.
- ✦ Continue to promote consistency and fairness by standardizing the implementation of policies and procedures as well as communicating the factors that contribute to decision-making.
- ✦ Increase standardization and continue to streamline the report planning, writing, and review processes.
- ✦ Create a framework for change, using the following steps: secure the commitment of senior leaders to drive transformation, create an action plan, create and share with staff an implementation plan, communicate frequently and directly with all OIG personnel, form one or more implementation teams, identify and execute high-impact changes early in the process, develop procedures for change, and measure progress.

**Expert Advisory Group of Academy Fellows:**  
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