



## PARTNERSHIP FOR PUBLIC SERVICE

OURPUBLICSERVICE.ORG

1100 New York Ave NW Suite 200 East Washington DC 20005

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** December 12, 2018

**CONTACT:** [Onamé Thompson](#)

202-775-6898

### **2018 BEST PLACES TO WORK IN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT RANKINGS SHOW A DECLINE IN EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT ACROSS MAJORITY OF FEDERAL AGENCIES**

*New data reveals the federal workforce remains highly mission-focused,  
but hungers for stronger leadership*

**WASHINGTON** – The nonprofit, nonpartisan Partnership for Public Service and global management consulting firm Boston Consulting Group today released the [Best Places to Work in the Federal Government®](#) rankings, which reveal that employee engagement across the majority of federal departments, agencies and subcomponents went down in 2018.

According to the new Best Places to Work data, employee engagement declined at 59.1 percent of federal organizations included in the rankings, while only 39.6 percent registered increases and 1.3 percent stayed the same. This represents a stark contrast to the previous three years when more than 70 percent of federal organizations experienced gains in how employees viewed their jobs and workplace related issues.

“This year’s rankings tell the tale of two governments,” said Max Stier, the president and CEO of the Partnership for Public Service. “One part of our government has agencies with committed leaders who are fostering high and improving levels of employee engagement. The other part of our government is handicapped by a lack of leadership that has led to static or declining employee engagement.”

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 2018 employee engagement score for private sector employees is 77.1 out of 100. This is 14.9 points higher than this year’s government-wide Best Places to Work score of 62.2, which is a 0.6 point decline from the modified 2017 government-wide score. Because the Department of Veterans Affairs did not participate in the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey in 2018, but did participate in 2017, the Partnership removed the VA from the 2017 government-wide data to enable an accurate year-to-year comparison. The Partnership only includes agencies that take the FEVS in the government-wide score.

The report also shows a sharp drop in employee satisfaction in the three strongest drivers of employee engagement — effective leadership, the match between employee skills and agency missions, and pay. In 2018, less than 50 percent of federal agencies and their subcomponents registered increases in these three areas. This compares unfavorably to 2017, 2016 and 2015 when more than 70 percent of the agencies and subcomponents experienced improvements on these issues.

When isolating effective leadership, only 46.4 percent of federal organizations showed improvement in 2018 compared to 75.8 percent in 2017 – a 29.4 percentage point difference.

“This leadership deficit should be of great concern to the White House, Congress and the American public,” Stier said. “It also should serve as a wake-up call for federal leaders across the government whose agencies have low or falling employee engagement scores.”

He continued, “Best-in-class private sector organizations understand that increased employee engagement leads to better performance and outcomes, and federal leaders need to follow suit. Building a highly-motivated and engaged workforce should be a top priority not only for the Trump administration but also the new Congress.”

Federal agencies that soared in 2018 include the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, which retained its number one large agency spot for the seventh year in a row, and the Department of Health and Human Services, which increased its score for the fourth consecutive year. The Federal Trade Commission rose from fourth place in 2017 to top honors in the midsize category while the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service topped the small agency category for the second year in a row. The Office of the General Counsel at the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and Inspector General at the Tennessee Valley Authority tied for top honors in the subcomponent category.

Among the federal organizations experiencing a sizable drop in employee engagement were the departments of Agriculture, State and Education; the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau; the National Labor Relations Board; the Federal Labor Relations Authority; and the Domestic Nuclear Detection Office at the Department of Homeland Security.

Today, 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 Office of the Secretary of Defense, Joint Staff, Defense Agencies and the Department of Defense Field Activities in the large agency category for raising its score by 2.1 points; the FTC and the Small Business Administration, which tied in the midsize agency category (both +2.6); the Federal Election Commission (+9.6) in the small agency category; and the U.S. Secret Service (+11.0) in the subcomponent category.

Among the federal organizations to take top honors are:

| <b>TOP FIVE LARGE AGENCIES</b>   |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| <b>#1</b>                        | National Aeronautics and Space Administration |
| <b>#2</b>                        | Department of Health and Human Services       |
| <b>#3</b>                        | Department of Commerce                        |
| <b>#4</b>                        | Department of Transportation                  |
| <b>#5</b>                        | Intelligence Community                        |
| <b>TOP FIVE MIDSIZE AGENCIES</b> |   |
| <b>#1</b>                        | Federal Trade Commission                      |
| <b>#2</b>                        | Federal Energy Regulatory Commission          |
| <b>#3</b>                        | Securities and Exchange Commission            |
| <b>#4</b>                        | Government Accountability Office              |
| <b>#5</b>                        | Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation         |
| <b>TOP FIVE SMALL AGENCIES</b>   |   |
| <b>#1</b>                        | Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service    |
| <b>#2</b>                        | U.S. International Trade Commission           |

|                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| #3                                   | Congressional Budget Office   |
| #4                                   | Farm Credit Administration  |
| #5                                   | Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation  |
| <b>TOP FIVE AGENCY SUBCOMPONENTS</b> |   |
| #1                                   | Office of Inspector General at the Tennessee Valley Authority (tie)             |
| #1                                   | Office of the General Counsel at the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (tie) |
| #3                                   | Bureau of Consumer Protection at the Federal Trade Commission                   |
| #4                                   | Bureau of Competition at the Federal Trade Commission                           |
| #5                                   | Office of General Counsel at the Securities and Exchange Commission             |

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](http://bestplacestowork.org).

**KEY FACTS AND FINDINGS:**

- The 2018 Best Places to Work rankings include the views of employees from 488 federal agencies and subcomponents, the most in the history of the rankings. This includes 17 large federal agencies, 27 midsize agencies, 29 small agencies and 415 subcomponents.
- The Securities and Exchange Commission has improved its Best Places to Work employee engagement score by 26.1 points since 2012, moving up in the midsize agency rankings from 19th six years ago to third place in 2018 and registering a score of 82.1.
- The employee engagement score at the National Transportation Safety Board experienced a positive upward trend, increasing its score by 0.3 points to 77.8 and steadily moving up for the past five years.
- The Environmental Protection Agency’s employee engagement score fell for the second year in a row, dropping 6.0 points to 57.5 in 2018. Employees gave the agency’s senior leaders low marks with a score of 38.1 out of 100, a decline of 7.1 points compared to 2017.
- Dropping 3.3 points to a rating of 60.7 is the Department of State, which fell from 8th place in 2017 to 14th place in 2018.
- Among those that declined significantly in the midsize agency category was the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, which fell 25.2 points for an employee engagement score of 51.7. CFPB is ranked 26th out of 27 midsize agencies and fell 15.2 points on its effective leadership score.
- Two agencies dealing with trade took divergent paths in 2018. The U.S. International Trade Commission ranked second among small agencies, increasing its score by 4.8 points to 85.7. In contrast, the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative’s score dropped 3.1 points to 57.8 and its ranking fell to 24th place among small agencies.
- Two agencies that deal with the rights of federal employees experienced a decline in employee engagement. The Federal Labor Relations Authority dropped 31.0 points while the Merit Systems Protection Board fell by 4.3 points in their Best Places to Work engagement scores.

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 April through June 2018 to permanent executive branch employees. Additional employee survey data from 13 agencies, including the Department of Veterans Affairs and intelligence community, are included in the results. This is the 13th edition of the Best Places to Work rankings, which began in 2003.

For the first time since the launch of the Best Places to Work rankings in 2003, the Department of Veterans Affairs did not participate in the 2018 FEVS and instead decided to administer its own internal survey. Since the VA's survey included the three questions needed to calculate an agency's Best Places to Work employee engagement score, the department is included in our rankings. However, like other agencies that conduct their own surveys, we have not included the VA's data in the calculation of the 2018 government-wide score.

During the past 17 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](http://ourpublicservice.org) to learn more. Follow us on social [@RPublicService](https://twitter.com/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 and the world's leading advisor on business strategy. We partner with clients from the private, public, and not-for-profit sectors in all regions to identify their highest-value opportunities, address their most critical challenges, and transform their enterprises. Our customized approach combines deep insight into the dynamics of companies and markets with close collaboration at all levels of the client organization. This ensures that our clients achieve sustainable competitive advantage, build more capable organizations, and secure lasting results. Founded in 1963, BCG is a private company with offices in more than 90 cities in 50 countries.

###