

# THE BEST PLACES TO WORK IN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT®

2018 RANKINGS



**PARTNERSHIP  
FOR PUBLIC SERVICE**



**BOSTON  
CONSULTING  
GROUP**

America deserves a federal government that is highly effective—one that is efficient, innovative and responsive to the needs of its citizens. Government works best when it has an engaged workforce, good leaders and the processes, structures and information to make smart decisions. The Partnership for Public Service accomplishes its mission by identifying opportunities to make government work better, offering solutions to fix government where it is broken and collaborating with people inside and outside government to bring about change.

The ***Best Places to Work in the Federal Government®*** rankings, part of our effort to improve the federal workforce and the management of the government, offer the most comprehensive assessment of how federal public servants view their jobs and workplaces. The rankings provide employee perspectives on leadership, pay, innovation, work-life balance and a range of other issues.

The rankings and accompanying data also give federal leaders a way to measure employee engagement of the federal workforce as a whole as well as at individual departments, agencies, and their subcomponents. This serves to alert federal leaders to signs of trouble and provides a roadmap to better manage our government's most important asset—its employees. The best private sector organizations understand that increased employee engagement leads to better performance and outcomes, and federal leaders need to follow suit by placing greater emphasis on strengthening the workforce and the workplace culture.

Please go to **[bestplacestowork.org](https://bestplacestowork.org)** for detailed data showing where agencies stand and for resources that can help turn the *Best Places to Work* rankings into a plan for change.

# A LOOK ACROSS THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

The 2018 *Best Places to Work* rankings represent the tale of two governments: one with agencies that have committed leaders who foster high and improving levels of employee engagement, and the other in which a lack of leadership has led to static or declining employee engagement. The divergent paths of these two governments give the White House, Congress and federal agency leaders a roadmap to what works, what doesn't and how to improve employee engagement and agency performance.

Since 2003, when we published the first rankings, we have learned that good leaders not only focus on policy, but place an emphasis on creating workplace conditions that foster improved government effectiveness and performance.

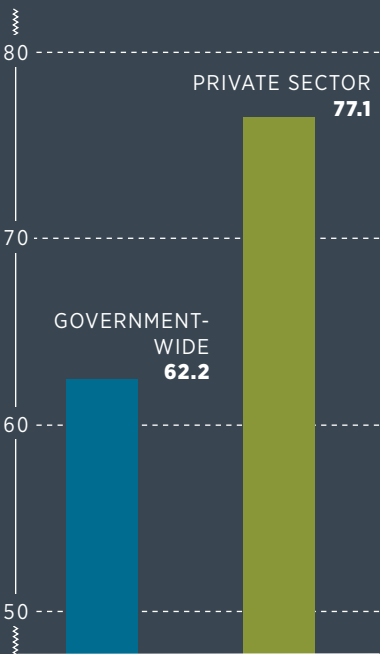
According to the 2018 *Best Places to Work* data, employee engagement declined at 59.1 percent of the federal organizations included in the rankings, while only 39.6 percent registered increases and 1.3 percent stayed the same. This represents a stark contrast to the previous three years when more than 70 percent of federal organizations experienced

### How do we calculate the engagement score?

The *Best Places to Work* engagement score is calculated using a proprietary weighted formula that looks at responses to three questions in the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey conducted by the Office of Personnel Management.

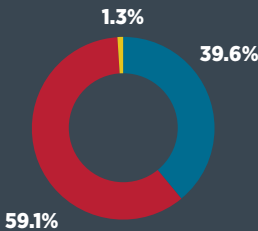
- I recommend my organization as a good place to work. (Q. 40)
- Considering everything, how satisfied are you with your job? (Q. 69)
- Considering everything, how satisfied are you with your organization? (Q. 71)

## A CLOSER LOOK AT EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN 2018



The 2018 government-wide engagement score is 62.2 points out of 100 compared to the private sector average of 77.1 out of 100, a 14.9-point difference.

Only 39.6% of agencies improved their *Best Places to Work* engagement score in 2018 while 59.1% declined and 1.3% stayed the same.



gains in how employees viewed their jobs and workplace related issues.

At the same time, an analysis of the data shows a sharp drop 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.

On effective leadership, which encompasses the views of employees on their supervisors, senior leaders, fairness in the workplace and individual empowerment, only 46.4 percent of federal organizations showed improvement in 2018 compared with 75.8 percent in 2017.

**Government-wide Score**

The 2018 federal government-wide *Best Places to Work* employee engagement score is 62.2 points out of 100. In contrast, the private sector employee engagement score is 77.1 out of 100, 14.9 points higher than the government’s, according to data provided by employee research firm Mercer | Sirota. Only 13 of the government’s 73 large, midsize and small agencies included in the *Best Places to Work* rankings scored above the private sector average.

Federal leaders should understand that the government competes with the private sector for the best talent, and they should endeavor to meet or exceed employee engagement levels seen in the best private sector companies.

Overall, the 2018 data shows an urgent need for federal agencies to improve the employee work experience—from training and developing leaders to ensuring employees have a positive work environment and the resources they need to do their jobs. Having a highly motivated and engaged workforce is critical to a well-functioning government and the success of our country.

**GOVERNMENT-WIDE  
SCORES BY CATEGORY**

56.4/100

**EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP**

77.3/100

**EMPLOYEE SKILLS-  
MISSION MATCH**

59.9/100

**PAY**

57.6/100

**STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT**

67.8/100

**TEAMWORK**

63.8/100

**INNOVATION**

61.0/100

**TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT**

61.4/100

**WORK-LIFE BALANCE**

60.1/100

**SUPPORT FOR DIVERSITY**

47.1/100

**PERFORMANCE-BASED  
REWARDS AND ADVANCEMENT**

## AGENCY RANKINGS

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For the seventh consecutive year, NASA increased its *Best Places to Work* score and has retained its standing as the number one large federal agency. The space agency's employee engagement score is 81.2 out of 100, a 0.3-point increase from 2017. The Department of Health and Human Services ranks second among large agencies, increasing its score for the fourth consecutive year to 70.9.

In the midsize category, the Federal Trade Commission took top honors with a score of 84.0 and moved up from fourth place in 2017. It is followed by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission at 83.9 and the Securities and Exchange Commission with a score of 82.1.

The top-ranked small agency for the second year in a row is the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service with a score of 87.2, followed by the U.S. International Trade Commission at 85.7.

The Office of the General Counsel at the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and the Office of the Inspector General at the Tennessee Valley Authority tied for the top honor among agency subcomponents, with scores of 95.0.

### Agencies on the Rise

The most improved large federal organization is the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Joint Staff, Defense Agencies and the Department of Defense Field Activities, which raised its score by 2.1 points to 63.2.

The Federal Trade Commission and the Small Business Administration tied for the most improved midsize agency, each rising 2.6 points. The Federal Election Commission saw the biggest improvement among small agencies with a 9.6 point increase, although it ranks 25th out of 29 small agencies. The Secret Service is the most improved agency subcomponent with an 11 point increase, although it ranks 398th out of 415 subcomponents.

### Agencies Falling Behind

While a number of agencies were successful in creating a more robust and positive work environment, others faced great difficulties.

The Department of Agriculture experienced the biggest decrease in employee engagement among large agencies, dropping 6.9 points to a score of 59.0 and from seventh to 16th place in the rankings. For the second consecutive year, the Department of State experienced a decline in employee engagement, dropping 3.3 points to a score of 60.7 and falling from eighth to 14th place in the rankings.

In the midsize category, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's score declined by 25.2 points to 51.7, resulting in a fall in the rankings from seventh to 26th place. The National Labor Relations Board's score decreased by 12.6 points to 55.3 while the Department of Education dropped 12.4 points and was last in the rankings with a score of 47.3.

In the small agency category, the Federal Labor Relations Authority's score dropped by 31 points to 41.6. The Domestic Nuclear Detection Office at the Department of Homeland Security experienced the biggest decline among subcomponents, falling 46.9 points for a score of 13.7, while DHS, its parent agency, went up 1.1 points.

# LARGE AGENCIES

15,000 OR MORE EMPLOYEES

## EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT SCORES

RANK	AGENCY	SCORE	CHANGE
1	National Aeronautics and Space Administration	81.2	0.3 ↗
2	Department of Health and Human Services	70.9	0.5 ↗
3	Department of Commerce	70.3	1.1 ↗
4	Department of Transportation	67.7	0.1 ↗
5	Intelligence Community	66.3	-0.3 ↘
6	Department of Veterans Affairs	64.2	NA
7	Office of the Secretary of Defense, Joint Staff, Defense Agencies, and Department of Defense Field Activities	63.2	2.1 ↗
7	Department of the Navy	63.2	-0.6 ↘
9	Department of the Interior	62.8	-1.1 ↘
10	Department of Justice	62.6	-1.1 ↘
11	Department of the Army	62.4	0.0
12	Social Security Administration	61.9	-1.1 ↘
13	Department of the Treasury	61.3	-0.3 ↘
14	Department of State	60.7	-3.3 ↘
15	Department of the Air Force	60.4	-0.3 ↘
16	Department of Agriculture	59.0	-6.9 ↘
17	Department of Homeland Security	53.1	1.1 ↗



SCORES BY CATEGORY

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP			
1	National Aeronautics and Space Administration	75.0	0.3 ↗
2	Intelligence Community	63.1	1.0 ↗
3	Department of Health and Human Services	62.3	1.2 ↗
4	Department of Commerce	60.3	0.7 ↗
5	Department of Transportation	59.1	1.2 ↗
EMPLOYEE SKILLS-MISSION MATCH			
1	National Aeronautics and Space Administration	86.0	0.6 ↗
2	Department of Health and Human Services	81.6	0.6 ↗
3	Department of Commerce	79.9	1.1 ↗
4	Intelligence Community	79.8	0.2 ↗
5	Department of the Interior	78.8	0.6 ↗
5	Department of Transportation	78.8	-0.6 ↘
PAY			
1	National Aeronautics and Space Administration	71.4	-0.1 ↘
2	Intelligence Community	66.7	0.8 ↗
3	Department of Commerce	64.3	-0.2 ↘
4	Office of the Secretary of Defense, Joint Staff, Defense Agencies, and Department of Defense Field Activities	63.9	0.7 ↗
5	Department of Health and Human Services	63.5	0.6 ↗
STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT			
1	National Aeronautics and Space Administration	70.5	2.2 ↗
2	Department of Health and Human Services	63.9	2.5 ↗
3	Department of Commerce	62.7	3.1 ↗
4	Department of State	59.9	-0.2 ↘
5	Office of the Secretary of Defense, Joint Staff, Defense Agencies, and Department of Defense Field Activities	59.7	3.9 ↗
INNOVATION			
1	National Aeronautics and Space Administration	81.9	0.4 ↗
2	Intelligence Community	72.7	2.7 ↗
3	Department of Health and Human Services	70.0	0.5 ↗
4	Department of the Air Force	65.8	0.3 ↗
5	Department of the Army	65.7	1.0 ↗
5	Department of the Interior	65.7	0.3 ↗
TEAMWORK			
1	National Aeronautics and Space Administration	81.8	0.8 ↗
2	Intelligence Community	78.4	-0.4 ↘
3	Department of Transportation	71.9	0.8 ↗
4	Department of Health and Human Services	71.7	0.9 ↗
5	Department of the Treasury	71.3	0.6 ↗

# MIDSIZE AGENCIES


1,000-14,999 EMPLOYEES

## EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT SCORES

RANK	AGENCY	SCORE	CHANGE
1	Federal Trade Commission	84.0	2.6 
2	Federal Energy Regulatory Commission	83.9	1.0 
3	Securities and Exchange Commission	82.1	1.2 
4	Government Accountability Office	80.7	-1.8 
5	Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation	80.5	-1.4 
6	Peace Corps	79.8	-0.9 
7	Smithsonian Institution	76.7	-0.2 
8	National Science Foundation	75.5	0.8 
9	Architect of the Capitol	75.3	NA
10	General Services Administration	74.5	0.8 
11	Nuclear Regulatory Commission	72.8	1.5 
12	Department of Energy	68.5	1.9 
13	U.S. Agency for International Development	67.2	-2.3 
13	National Credit Union Administration	67.2	-1.8 
15	Equal Employment Opportunity Commission	65.4	-1.1 
16	Office of Personnel Management	65.2	-0.5 
17	Federal Communications Commission	64.4	1.6 
18	Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency	63.5	0.4 
19	Department of Labor	63.0	-3.2 
20	Small Business Administration	62.0	2.6 
21	Department of Housing and Urban Development	60.1	-2.3 
22	Environmental Protection Agency	57.5	-6.0 
23	National Archives and Records Administration	56.7	-4.8 
24	National Labor Relations Board	55.3	-12.6 
25	U.S. Agency for Global Media	52.5	1.3 
26	Consumer Financial Protection Bureau	51.7	-25.2 
27	Department of Education	47.3	-12.4 



## SCORES BY CATEGORY

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP			
1	Federal Trade Commission	75.0	1.0 
2	Federal Energy Regulatory Commission	74.6	0.9 
3	Securities and Exchange Commission	68.6	1.7 
4	Peace Corps	68.1	-0.9 
5	Nuclear Regulatory Commission	67.9	1.8 
EMPLOYEE SKILLS-MISSION MATCH			
1	Federal Trade Commission	87.8	0.6 
2	Securities and Exchange Commission	84.3	1.2 
3	Federal Energy Regulatory Commission	83.5	0.3 
4	Peace Corps	82.9	0.0
5	Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation	82.8	0.0
PAY			
1	Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation	79.1	-0.7 
2	Securities and Exchange Commission	76.2	0.0
3	Federal Energy Regulatory Commission	71.4	2.2 
4	Nuclear Regulatory Commission	71.3	0.8 
5	General Services Administration	70.1	-0.3 
STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT			
1	Federal Trade Commission	76.1	2.1 
2	Federal Energy Regulatory Commission	74.4	0.8 
3	Peace Corps	73.5	1.0 
4	Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation	69.8	-0.8 
5	Architect of the Capitol	69.2	NA
INNOVATION			
1	Federal Trade Commission	79.8	2.9 
2	Peace Corps	75.0	0.4 
3	National Science Foundation	72.8	0.4 
4	Securities and Exchange Commission	71.9	1.7 
5	Federal Energy Regulatory Commission	71.8	2.3 
TEAMWORK			
1	Federal Energy Regulatory Commission	83.2	1.1 
2	Federal Trade Commission	83.1	-0.7 
3	Peace Corps	79.3	-0.4 
4	General Services Administration	78.6	0.8 
5	Nuclear Regulatory Commission	78.5	2.1 

View the complete rankings by category at [bestplacetowork.org](https://bestplacetowork.org).















# SMALL AGENCIES

100-999 EMPLOYEES

## EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT SCORES

RANK	AGENCY	SCORE	CHANGE
1	Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service	87.2	0.3 
2	U.S. International Trade Commission	85.7	4.8 
3	Congressional Budget Office	85.3	NA
4	Farm Credit Administration	81.1	0.6 
5	Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation	78.3	4.8 
6	National Transportation Safety Board	77.8	0.3 
7	Office of Management and Budget	75.0	-0.4 
8	National Endowment for the Humanities	74.9	3.5 
9	Federal Maritime Commission	74.4	6.9 
10	Overseas Private Investment Corporation	73.6	-6.2 
11	National Endowment for the Arts	72.6	-7.9 
12	Millennium Challenge Corporation	69.1	-4.7 
13	Corporation for National and Community Service	66.3	-6.6 
14	Office of Special Counsel	66.1	-7.4 
14	National Gallery of Art	66.1	3.2 
14	Consumer Product Safety Commission	66.1	-5.8 
17	Federal Housing Finance Agency	65.6	1.1 
18	Merit Systems Protection Board	64.2	-4.3 
19	Surface Transportation Board	64.0	-2.3 
20	International Boundary and Water Commission	63.2	2.8 
21	Railroad Retirement Board	63.1	-6.2 
22	Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board	61.9	6.9 
23	Commodity Futures Trading Commission	58.3	-0.3 
24	Office of the U.S. Trade Representative	57.8	-3.1 
25	Federal Election Commission	49.4	9.6 
26	Selective Service System	44.2	-0.1 
27	Federal Labor Relations Authority	41.6	-31.0 
28	Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board	38.7	0.1 
29	Export-Import Bank of the United States	36.8	-18.1 

# SCORES BY CATEGORY

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP			
1	Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service	80.4	1.6 
2	U.S. International Trade Commission	73.6	3.6 
3	Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation	69.6	5.0 
4	Farm Credit Administration	69.4	0.9 
5	National Transportation Safety Board	65.8	2.5 
PAY			
1	Farm Credit Administration	78.5	-1.6 
2	Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service	77.2	-2.2 
3	National Transportation Safety Board	76.2	2.5 
4	Federal Labor Relations Authority	74.2	4.1 
5	Federal Maritime Commission	73.0	8.2 
STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT			
1	U.S. International Trade Commission	80.6	5.5 
2	Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service	78.3	2.1 
3	Office of Management and Budget	75.6	2.2 
4	Federal Maritime Commission	75.5	5.6 
5	Farm Credit Administration	73.4	1.9 
INNOVATION			
1	Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service	85.1	-0.5 
2	U.S. International Trade Commission	77.1	3.7 
3	Office of Management and Budget	76.7	-1.3 
4	Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation	75.7	5.6 
5	Millennium Challenge Corporation	73.6	0.3 
TEAMWORK			
1	Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service	86.6	3.5 
2	Office of Management and Budget	84.7	0.9 
3	U.S. International Trade Commission	84.2	2.7 
4	Farm Credit Administration	80.4	0.6 
5	Office of Special Counsel	78.2	-4.8 

# AGENCY SUBCOMPONENTS

SUBAGENCIES, BUREAUS, DIVISIONS, CENTERS AND OFFICES\*

## EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT SCORES

RANK	AGENCY	SCORE	CHANGE
1	Office of Inspector General (TVA)	95.0	2.9
1	Office of the General Counsel (FERC)	95.0	2.2
3	Bureau of Consumer Protection - All (FTC)	88.7	NA
4	Bureau of Competition - All (FTC)	88.0	NA
5	Office of General Counsel (SEC)	87.9	4.9
6	Office of Financial Management (SEC)	87.8	3.4
7	Region I (NRC)	87.4	NA
8	Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (Treasury)	87.1	2.6
9	National Examination Program (SEC)	86.2	4.3
9	Office of Operations - All (ITC)	86.2	NA
11	Office of Support Operations (SEC)	85.5	-1.3
12	Office of Energy Market Regulation (FERC)	85.1	0.9
13	Kennedy Space Center (NASA)	84.2	4.0
13	Region III (NRC)	84.2	NA
15	Division of Investment Management (SEC)	84.0	0.8
16	Goddard Space Flight Center (NASA)	83.4	-0.1
17	National Enforcement Program (SEC)	82.8	0.2
18	Marshall Space Flight Center (NASA)	82.7	0.8
19	Office of the Executive Director (FERC)	81.9	5.0
20	Johnson Space Center (NASA)	81.5	-0.3
20	Stennis Space Center (NASA)	81.5	-0.4
22	Office of Energy Projects (FERC)	81.2	0.0
23	Office of the Inspector General (DOT)	81.0	-2.8
24	U.S. Army Audit Agency (Army)	80.9	-1.1
25	Office of the Inspector General (DOJ)	80.8	3.1
26	Office of Inspector General (HHS)	80.7	2.5
27	Office of Information Technology (PBGC)	80.6	NA
27	Office of the General Counsel (GSA)	80.6	7.9
29	Directorate for Biological Sciences (NSF)	80.3	-2.0
30	Langley Research Center (NASA)	80.0	-0.4
30	Office of Examinations (FCA)	80.0	NA
30	Glenn Research Center (NASA)	80.0	2.0
33	U.S. Special Operations Command (Army)	79.9	4.4
33	Division of Corporation Finance (SEC)	79.9	-2.3

\*NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES VARIES

View the complete rankings of 415 subcomponents at [bestplacestowork.org](https://www.bestplacestowork.org).

## SCORES BY CATEGORY

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP			
1	Office of the General Counsel (FERC)	86.4	-0.4 ↘
2	Region I (NRC)	82.5	NA
3	Kennedy Space Center (NASA)	79.4	3.0 ↗
3	Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (Treasury)	79.4	3.8 ↗
5	Bureau of Competition - All (FTC)	79.0	NA
EMPLOYEE SKILLS-MISSION MATCH			
1	Office of the General Counsel (FERC)	93.3	4.0 ↗
2	Office of Inspector General (TVA)	91.5	1.9 ↗
3	Bureau of Competition - All (FTC)	90.6	NA
4	Bureau of Consumer Protection - All (FTC)	89.2	NA
5	Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (Treasury)	88.1	1.3 ↗
PAY			
1	Office of Inspector General (TVA)	97.7	5.3 ↗
2	Office of the Inspector General (Interior)	86.2	5.9 ↗
3	Office of General Counsel (SEC)	85.9	3.8 ↗
4	Office of Financial Management (SEC)	85.0	-3.9 ↘
5	Office of Support Operations (SEC)	84.9	-3.8 ↘
STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT			
1	Office of Inspector General (TVA)	89.4	0.8 ↗
2	Office of the General Counsel (FERC)	88.1	4.6 ↗
3	Bureau of Competition - All (FTC)	81.8	NA
4	Office of Support Operations (SEC)	80.9	-1.2 ↘
5	Region I (NRC)	79.5	NA
INNOVATION			
1	Office of Inspector General (TVA)	86.2	-0.4 ↘
2	Office of the General Counsel (FERC)	84.1	8.0 ↗
3	Goddard Space Flight Center (NASA)	83.8	0.4 ↗
4	Johnson Space Center (NASA)	83.6	0.3 ↗
5	Kennedy Space Center (NASA)	82.9	3.1 ↗
TEAMWORK			
1	Office of the General Counsel (FERC)	93.6	2.8 ↗
2	Region I (NRC)	91.2	NA
3	Office of Inspector General (TVA)	89.7	0.6 ↗
4	Bureau of Consumer Protection - All (FTC)	88.4	NA
5	Office of Operations - All (ITC)	85.5	0.6 ↗

## ABOUT BEST PLACES TO WORK

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The *Best Places to Work in the Federal Government*® rankings—the most comprehensive and authoritative rating of employee engagement in the federal government—are produced by the Partnership for Public Service and Boston Consulting Group.

For 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 our [publicservice.org](https://publicservice.org) to learn more. Follow us on social @RPublicService and subscribe today to get the latest federal news and information on upcoming Partnership programs and events, and more.

**Boston Consulting Group** (BCG) 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.

### ADDITIONAL BEST PLACES TO WORK 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. There are 17 large agencies, 27 midsize agencies, 29 small agencies and 415 subcomponents included in the rankings.
- ★ 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 place six years ago to third place in 2018 and registering a score of 82.1.
- ★ The Environmental Protection Agency's employee engagement score fell for the second year in a row, dropping 6 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.
- ★ 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 the office 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 points while the Merit Systems Protection Board fell by 4.3 points in their *Best Places to Work* engagement scores.
- ★ The Partnership and BCG found that the federal government has a highly mission-focused workforce, but needs stronger leadership. The *Best Places to Work* data shows that effective leadership remains the key driver of employee engagement as it has been every year since the rankings were launched in 2003, but only 46.4 percent of government agencies and their subcomponents in the rankings experienced an improvement in how employees view their leaders while 53.6 percent either stayed the same or declined.



## METHODOLOGY

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The majority of the data used to develop the *Best Places to Work* rankings was collected by the Office of Personnel Management through its Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey. The survey was administered April through June 2018 to permanent executive branch employees and was completed by 598,003 federal workers, for a response rate of 40.6 percent, a decline of 4.9 points from 2017.

The rankings also include responses from more than 249,000 additional employees at 12 agencies who were surveyed at the same time and had a response rate of more than 50 percent. The Architect of the Capitol, Congressional Budget Office, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, Department of Veterans Affairs, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, Government Accountability Office, Millennium Challenge Corporation, Office of the Inspector General at the Tennessee Valley Authority, Office of the Inspector General at the United States Postal Service, Peace Corps, Smithsonian Institution, and the U.S. Army Audit Agency provided data from their own surveys. In addition, the rankings incorporate responses from employees at the nation's intelligence agencies, which conducted a similar survey but did not report the number of respondents because it is classified.

For the first time since the launch of the *Best Places to Work* rankings in 2003, the Department of Veterans Affairs did not to 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. Please see [bestplacestowork.org](http://bestplacestowork.org) for more information.

Organizations are ranked within one of four groupings: large agency (15,000 or more employees), midsize agency (1,000-14,999 employees), small agency (100-999 employees) and agency subcomponent (subagency, bureau, division, center or office).

The 2018 rankings include 488 federal agencies and their subcomponents: 17 large federal agencies, 27 midsize agencies, 29 small agencies and 415 subcomponents.

The OPM survey data was weighted to represent all federal employees on demographic characteristics such as age, gender, race, supervisory status, agency size and occupation. The survey results have a margin of error of plus or minus 1 percent.

The *Best Places to Work* statistical model, developed with CFI Group in 2003, is based on the same methodology used in CFI Group's American Customer Satisfaction Index. The *Best Places to Work* engagement score is calculated based on the percentage of positive responses to three workplace engagement questions and is weighted according to a proprietary formula developed with Hay Group in 2007.

The workplace environment scores are calculated by averaging the percentage of positive responses to questions in 10 categories, including effective leadership, employee skills-mission match, pay, and work-life balance. Regression analysis is used to determine the categories with the most influence on the *Best Places to Work* engagement score.

*The Partnership for Public Service and Boston Consulting Group extend thanks to the Office of Personnel Management for its administration of the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, upon which the Best Places to Work rankings are based.*



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