



## PARTNERSHIP FOR PUBLIC SERVICE

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### **FEDERAL EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT CONTINUES TO IMPROVE, RANKINGS SHOW BIGGEST INCREASE IN ITS HISTORY**

*2017 Best Places to Work in the Federal Government data show the federal workforce is highly mission-focused and committed to serving the public*

WASHINGTON – The nonprofit, nonpartisan Partnership for Public Service and Deloitte today released the *2017 Best Places to Work in the Federal Government*® rankings that show a 2.1-point rise in federal employee engagement compared to 2016, for a score of 61.5 out of 100. This represents the highest overall score since 2011 and builds on a 2.5-point improvement during the previous two years.

The three-year increase in employee engagement follows a concerted effort by agencies across government to improve how employees view their leaders and their jobs. Building on this momentum will require a strong commitment from the Trump administration to continue improving the employee experience – from training and developing leaders to ensuring employees have a positive work environment and the resources they need.

“The gains in federal employee engagement are promising and indicate that an intentional focus on the management of the workforce can make a difference,” said Max Stier, Partnership president and CEO. “A highly-motivated and engaged workforce is critical to a well-functioning government and the success of our country.”

Large agencies that excelled in 2017 include the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and the Department of Health and Human Services, while top midsize agencies are the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, the Government Accountability Office and the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation.

Of the 200 agencies organizations included in the rankings today, 74 percent of federal agencies saw their overall employee engagement scores increase in 2017, but the Department of State, the intelligence community, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Justice, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Office of Management and Budget were among the agencies that saw their scores drop.

Rankings and scores for all agencies and subcomponents for which we have data are attached and also available at [bestplacestowork.org](http://bestplacestowork.org).

While there has been progress, the federal government still lags behind the private sector when it comes to employee engagement. According to data provided by employee research firm Mercer | Sirota, the

2017 employee engagement score for private sector employees is 77.8 out of 100, 16.3 points higher than the federal government. Only eight federal agencies scored above the private sector average this year.

“When comparing the government to the private sector, we must see greater progress,” said Stier. “Federal leaders should understand that the government competes with the private sector for the best talent, and the government should endeavor to meet or exceed employee engagement levels seen in the best private sector companies.”

The 2017 *Best Places to Work* rankings are based largely on data from the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey that was conducted by the Office of Personnel Management this past spring. While providing a government-wide overview and important information on the major agencies, OPM initially chose to withhold data on 186 small agencies and subcomponents compared to 2016 after a review of its privacy policies. OPM reversed its decision and provided the missing data on December 5. As a result of this decision, the Partnership will revise the rankings for small agencies and subcomponents in early 2018.

“OPM’s decision to now provide more complete government-wide data will make it easier for agencies to compare themselves to their federal counterparts, and help Congress and the Trump administration engage in comprehensive oversight of federal workforce management,” said Stier.

**Key Best Places to Work findings:**

- The 2017 government-wide data show increases (as they did in 2016 and 2015) in employee engagement in all 10 workplace categories that the Partnership and Deloitte measure. Categories include effective leadership, teamwork, work–life balance, strategic management, support for diversity and pay. The biggest improvement came in support for diversity.
- For the sixth year in a row, NASA increased its *Best Places to Work* score (2.3 points) and has retained its standing as the number one large agency.
- For the first time in the *Best Places to Work* rankings, the Department of Transportation placed in the top five large agencies, proving that it takes focus on management and time to strengthen employee engagement.
- The most improved large agency is the Department of Homeland Security, which raised its score by 6.2 points to 52.0 out of 100. This was the largest increase for DHS since 2009. However, the agency still ranks last out of the 18 large agencies.
- The Department of State experienced its largest single-year decrease (2.8 points) since the beginning of the rankings in 2003, with a big drop (9.2 points) in how employees view their senior leaders. This is the first time State has not been included in the top five large agencies since 2011.
- The most improved subcomponent in today’s rankings was Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The score of the DHS subcomponent increased by 11.5 points, up from 45.2 in 2016 to 56.7 in 2017.
- OMB and the EPA’s Office of Air and Radiation saw notable decreases in their *Best Places to Work* score for small agencies and subcomponents, respectively, in 2017 – their scores both dropped by 7.3 points.
- The Partnership and Deloitte found that the federal government has a highly mission-focused workforce, but needs stronger leadership. This is troubling because the *Best Places to Work* data show that effective leadership remains the key driver of employee engagement as it has been every year since the rankings were launched in 2003, followed by the match between agency mission and employee skills, and satisfaction with pay.

The 2017 *Best Places to Work* rankings, produced by the Partnership and Deloitte, include 200 federal agencies and their subcomponents: 18 large federal agencies, 25 midsize agencies, 7 small agencies and

150 subcomponents. 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).

In January 2018, the Partnership and Deloitte will honor the top-ranked and most improved large and midsize agencies in the *Best Places to Work* rankings. They will also present awards to small agencies and subcomponents that have made significant and consistent improvement in their *Best Places to Work* index scores over consecutive years.

The *Best Places to Work in the Federal Government*® rankings offer the most comprehensive assessment of how federal public servants view their jobs and workplaces, providing insights into worker engagement on issues ranging from leadership and pay to innovation and work–life balance. Employee engagement refers to the satisfaction and commitment of the workforce and the willingness of employees to put forth discretionary effort to achieve results.

The *Best Places to Work* rankings are based on data from the Office of Personnel Management’s annual Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, which was administered May through June 2017 to permanent executive branch employees. Additional employee survey data from 10 agencies, including the intelligence community, are included in the results. This is the 12th edition of the *Best Places to Work* rankings, which began in 2003.

During the past 16 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.

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