

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT



UNITED STATES
OFFICE OF
GOVERNMENT
ETHICS

FISCAL YEAR

2017

MISSION

PROVIDE OVERALL
LEADERSHIP AND
OVERSIGHT OF THE
EXECUTIVE
BRANCH
ETHICS PROGRAM
DESIGNED TO
PREVENT AND
RESOLVE
CONFLICTS OF
INTEREST

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Section I – About OGE

The U.S. Office of Government Ethics (OGE), established by the Ethics in Government Act of 1978, provides overall leadership and oversight of the executive branch ethics program, which is designed to prevent and resolve conflicts of interest. OGE’s mission is part of the very foundation of public service. The first principle in the Fourteen General Principles of Ethical Conduct for Government Officers and Employees is, “Public service is a public trust, requiring employees to place loyalty to the Constitution, the laws and ethical principles above private gain.”

Each day, some part of the ethics program is at work in every agency in the executive branch. The program ensures that Presidential appointees are aware of their ethical obligations and role in creating an ethical culture in their organizations as they begin government service. It ensures that public servants at all levels remain free from conflicts of interest and even the appearance of conflicts of interest, as they carry out the responsibilities the American people have entrusted to them. It ensures that employees who are seeking to leave the government avoid conflicts of interest, and, after they leave, it ensures that they do not exercise undue influence over their former agencies on behalf of others. Above all, it is working to protect the public’s trust in government.

Institutional Integrity in the Executive Branch

The Ethics in Government Act charges OGE with leading the effort to prevent conflicts of interest in the executive branch. OGE undertakes this important prevention mission as part of a framework comprising executive branch agencies and entities whose work focuses on institutional integrity. In addition to government ethics, this framework



Figure 1: Institutional Integrity

includes merit system protections in the civil service; full and open competition in procurement; fiscal controls; transparency programs; investigation of waste, fraud, and abuse; and criminal, civil, and administrative enforcement. Potential violations of legal authorities established under this framework, including government ethics authorities, are primarily investigated by the thousands of Inspectors General staff members across the executive branch. In addition, the Department of Justice has enforcement authority that includes both civil and criminal penalties.

Within this framework, the ethics program works to ensure that public servants impartially carry out the governmental responsibilities entrusted to them, and that they serve as good stewards of public resources. Toward these goals, the mission of the ethics program centers on preventing conflicts of interest and the appearance of conflicts of interest that stem from financial

interests, business or personal relationships, misuse of official position, official time, or public resources, and the receipt of gifts.

Taken together, the systems in place to identify and address conflicts of interest establish a foundation on which to build and sustain an ethical culture in the executive branch.

OGE and Executive Branch Agencies

The executive branch ethics program is a shared responsibility. As the supervising ethics office, OGE sets policy for the entire executive branch ethics program. The head of each agency is statutorily responsible for leading the program in their agency. This includes creating an ethical culture by demonstrating a personal commitment to ethics and providing the necessary resources to implement a strong and effective agency ethics program.



Figure 2: OGE and the Executive Branch

The agency head is also responsible for selecting a Designated Agency Ethics Official (DAEO), the employee with primary responsibility for directing the daily activities of an agency's ethics program and coordinating with OGE. Often, additional professional ethics staff are necessary to effectively carry out important ethics program responsibilities. Each agency's employees, supervisors, human resources officials, and Inspectors General also play a significant role in maintaining the integrity of government programs and operations.

How OGE Provides Leadership and Oversight

To carry out its vital leadership and oversight responsibilities for the executive branch ethics program, OGE:

- promulgates, maintains, and advises on enforceable standards of ethical conduct for the nearly 3 million employees in over 130 executive branch agencies, including the White House;
- oversees a financial disclosure system that reaches more than 26,000 public and more than 380,000 confidential financial disclosure report filers;
- ensures that executive branch agency ethics programs are in compliance with applicable ethics laws and regulations;
- provides education and training to the nearly 5,000 ethics officials executive branch-wide;

- conducts outreach to the general public, the private sector, and non-governmental organizations; and
- provides technical assistance to Congress, state, local and foreign governments, associations, and international organizations.

OGE’s greatest resource is its multidisciplinary staff of attorneys, ethics and financial experts, and other key personnel. OGE is a lean organization, operating at fewer than its 80 authorized full-time equivalents. OGE is led by a Director who is



appointed to a five-year term by the President and confirmed by the Senate.¹ As shown in the organizational chart in Figure 3, in addition to the Office of the Director, OGE is divided into four divisions that work together to carry out OGE’s mission.

Figure 3: OGE Organizational Chart

Long-Term Strategic Goals

When government decisions are made free from conflicts of interest, the public can have greater confidence in the integrity of executive branch programs and operations. The three strategic goals of OGE’s strategic plan for fiscal years 2014 through 2018 – uniformity, continuity, and transparency – reflect the long-term outcomes that OGE strives to achieve in order to prevent and resolve conflicts of interest. See Figure 2. OGE’s budget priorities for fiscal year 2018 supported achievement of these strategic goals.

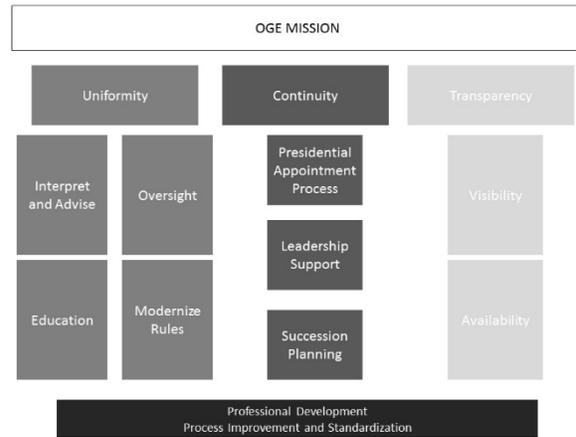


Figure 4: OGE’s Fiscal Year 2014 – 2018 Strategic Goals

In order to develop meaningful strategic goals, OGE sought feedback from internal staff, Congress, executive branch ethics officials, non-governmental organizations, and the public. OGE considered and incorporated feedback received from these groups. The daily work of OGE is driven by the strategic objectives and performance goals established under each of the overall strategic goals set forth below.

1. Advance a strong, uniform executive branch ethics program: OGE interprets and advises on ethics laws, policies, and program management issues; holds executive branch agencies accountable for carrying out effective ethics programs; contributes to the professional

¹ The position of Director of OGE is currently vacant. The General Counsel was appointed by the President to serve as Acting Director.

development of ethics officials; and modernizes and implements the ethics rules and regulations.

2. Contribute to the continuity of senior leadership in the executive branch: OGE assists the President and the Senate in the nomination process for Presidential appointees requiring Senate confirmation; supports succession planning in executive branch ethics programs; and promotes leadership support of the executive branch ethics program overall.

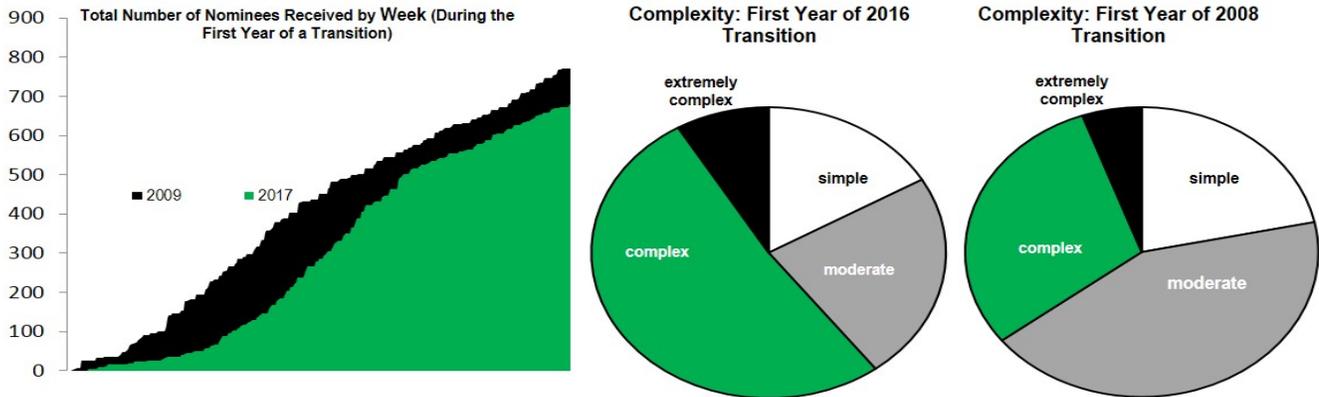
3. Promote transparency of the executive branch ethics program: OGE raises the visibility of the executive branch ethics program and ensures that ethics information is publicly available to increase public confidence in the integrity of government decisionmaking.

Starting on page 5, this document describes OGE's Fiscal Year 2017 Performance Highlights. Page 5 describes OGE's performance in more detail and provides data related to the performance goals OGE used to measure its progress toward achievement of its strategic objectives.

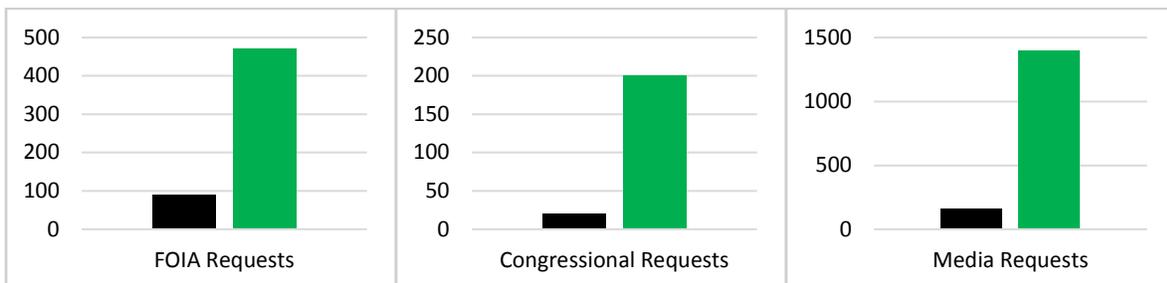
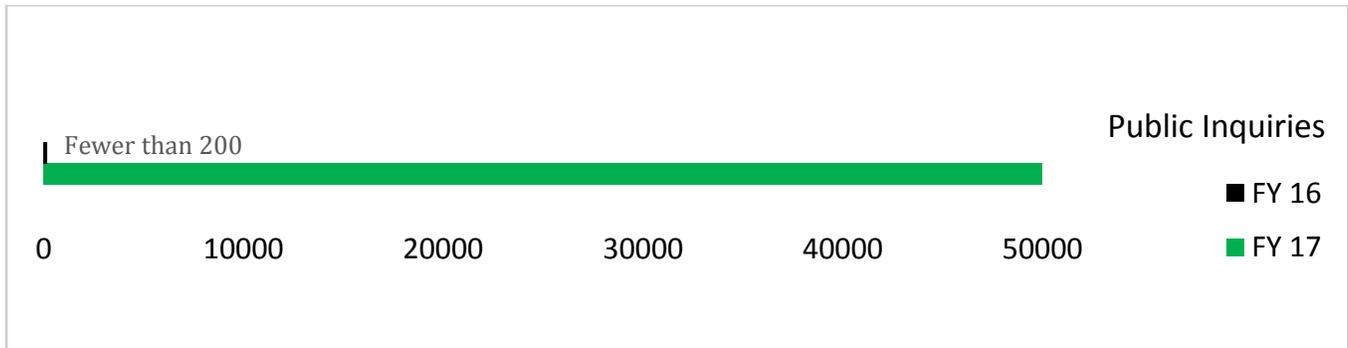
Section II – Fiscal Year 2017 Performance Highlights

OGE had an extraordinary year in terms of its role in the Presidential transition, and the cyclical change of leadership a transition entails. In addition, due to increased interest in the agency and its mission, OGE took steps to be more transparent and to make information more publicly available more quickly.

Continuity: Transition-Related Workload

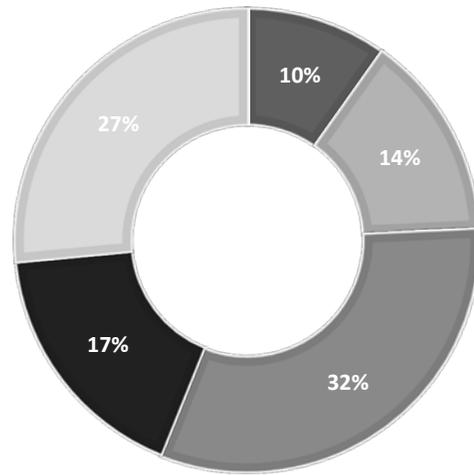


Transparency: Responding to Significant Public Interest



Despite an increased workload and limited resources, OGE continued to meet and exceed its multi-year performance targets in the following critical mission areas:

Accountability: Agency Ethics Program Reviews



OGE met its target of completing a full cycle of more than 130 agency ethics program reviews.

■ 2013 ■ 2014 ■ 2015 ■ 2016 ■ 2017

Uniformity: Ongoing Work to Advance a Strong Program

Guidance: 24 legal and program advisories issued.

Training: Over 14,000 views of OGE training products.

Expert Support: More than 1,800 requests for assistance answered.

Annual Financial Disclosure: Nearly 2,000 public financial disclosures reports reviewed.

Section III – Fiscal Year 2017 Performance Report

OGE strives to ensure the integrity of government programs and operations and to increase public confidence in the impartiality of government decisionmaking. This important mission is translated into OGE’s strategic goals and objectives. OGE’s success in achieving these goals and objectives is measured by its progress on established performance goals.

This section highlights OGE’s major accomplishments and progress toward achieving its strategic objectives in fiscal year 2017, as measured by its performance goals.²

Strategic Goal 1: Advance a strong, uniform executive branch ethics program

OGE has identified four strategic objectives to achieve its strategic goal of advancing a strong, uniform executive branch ethics program. These objectives are: (1.1) interpreting and advising on ethics laws, policies, and program management; (1.2) holding executive branch agencies accountable for carrying out an effective ethics program; (1.3) contributing to the professional development of ethics officials; and (1.4) modernizing and implementing the ethics rules and regulations.

Strategic Objective 1.1: Interpret and advise on ethics laws, policies, and program management

A uniform legal framework ensures that all executive branch employees are held to the same standards. By interpreting and advising on the ethics laws, regulations, and policies, OGE assists agency ethics officials in providing consistent and accurate counseling to their employees in order to prevent or remedy conflicts of interest.

Assisted and supported agency ethics officials

OGE provides necessary support to agency ethics officials so they can provide uniform and effective ethics guidance to nearly 3 million federal employees in the executive branch who, in turn, serve the American people. OGE provides timely, expert advice on applying ethics laws and regulations, and disseminates up-to-date ethics information ethics practitioners need to do their jobs effectively. OGE’s Desk Officers assist agencies in resolving difficult ethics issues requiring expertise that only the supervising ethics office can provide. In fiscal year 2017, OGE Desk Officers and attorneys responded to approximately 1,800 requests for assistance from agencies. Seven percent of those requests were related to President Trump’s Executive Order on Ethics Commitments by Executive Branch Appointees. Desk Officers also proactively engaged with agency ethics offices through in-person meetings to provide expertise and support, and to raise

² The performance goals are based on statistical data from a variety of sources, including post-training evaluations, an annual agency ethics program questionnaire, Google Analytics, and an annual survey of ethics officials to assess satisfaction with OGE’s services and products.

awareness of the range and availability of OGE’s services. On several occasions, OGE Desk Officers met with new ethics officials to provide an overview of the requirements of the ethics program and to introduce them to the services provided by OGE.

The data gathered in OGE’s Agency Information Management System (AIMS) increases the ability of OGE Desk Officers to provide useful, direct support to their agencies. In fiscal year 2017, OGE Desk Officers continued to leverage AIMS data to gain insights about agencies’ needs, and to better tailor OGE’s support and services. For example, OGE

Desk Officers used data in AIMS to gauge common topics of agencies’ questions to direct them to relevant OGE training.

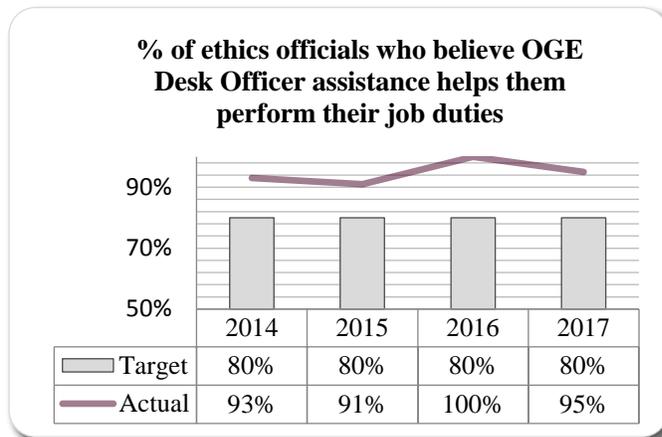


Figure 5: Desk Officer Assistance

Performance Goal: OGE measured the performance of the Desk Officer program by surveying ethics officials who requested assistance during fiscal year 2017. Ninety-five percent of survey respondents indicated that Desk Officers helped them to perform their job duties. Figure 5 shows that OGE exceeded its target on this goal.

Provided agencies with important legal and program guidance

In addition to providing day-to-day assistance through the Desk Officer program, OGE issues legal and program advisories to disseminate critical information to the executive branch ethics community and to promote uniform interpretation of ethics laws, regulations, and policies. Executive branch ethics officials daily rely on advisories as an integral component of the body of interpretive and programmatic guidance maintained by OGE.

In fiscal year 2017, OGE issued 14 legal advisories providing guidance on subject matters of particular relevance during a Presidential transition, on emerging ethics issues, and in response to agency ethics officials on specific questions from employees. For example, OGE issued a legal advisory about the ethical requirements relevant to a federal employee during the inauguration celebration. OGE also issued a legal advisory explaining the extent to which OGE’s legal advisories applicable to the prior administration’s Executive Order on Ethics could be read as being applicable to President Trump’s Executive Order on Ethics.

In addition to legal advisories, OGE issued ten timely and informative program advisories, covering ethics program requirements. For example, OGE issued a program

advisory announcing two new requirements for notices that must be issued to prospective new employees and to new supervisors.

In developing these advisories, OGE continued to draw upon the expertise of agency ethics officials by consulting with key members of the ethics community. OGE solicited views, convened focus groups, and obtained feedback on draft advisories. With this community input, OGE increased its ability to effectively mitigate risks, reduce inconsistencies in the application of ethics laws, and address current issues confronting executive branch ethics officials. Anecdotal feedback from agency ethics officials reflects that OGE's approach of involving them in the development of advisories over the past few years has increased their satisfaction with both the process used and the advisories produced.

Performance Goal: In fiscal year 2017, an OGE survey of the ethics community revealed that 93 percent of respondents felt that advisories helped them perform their job duties.

Engaged ethics officials to share information and shape policy

OGE continued its broader efforts to directly engage with the government ethics community and to timely disseminate information to address existing and emerging ethics issues. To support this effort, OGE used the MAX.gov platform, a governmentwide collaboration, data collection, and information-sharing site, to provide agency ethics officials with advanced notice of upcoming OGE guidance and training events, as well as updates on relevant ethics-related legislative proposals. In addition, OGE used an email listserv and its website to provide timely and relevant information to the ethics community.

In fiscal year 2017, OGE also organized numerous meetings, conference calls, focus groups, and webinars to inform and collaborate with senior executive branch ethics officials on OGE's initiatives. For example, OGE's Director continued the practice of holding live quarterly meetings for senior agency ethics officials, followed by telephone sessions to recap subjects covered during the meetings for those who could not attend in person. At these meetings, which were frequently attended by over 80 senior ethics officials, OGE's senior leaders shared information critical to managing an effective ethics program, encouraged discussion of current ethics issues facing the executive branch, and consulted with agency ethics officials regarding contemplated changes in OGE's policies and regulations. In response to OGE's annual survey of ethics officials, 90 percent of respondents indicated that they felt more informed as a result of attending these quarterly meetings.

In preparation for the Presidential transition, OGE hosted a forum for ethics officials from cabinet-level agencies to facilitate the exchange of ideas with respect to educating departing leaders and other high-level employees on how post-employment-related requirements and restrictions apply to their circumstances.

Performance Goal: Ninety-nine percent of respondents to the annual survey of ethics officials believe OGE timely communicates ethics-related information.

Assisted other key stakeholders

In addition to assisting executive branch ethics officials, OGE responded to requests for assistance from other key stakeholders, including Congress. OGE serves as the legislative liaison on behalf of the entire executive branch ethics program. OGE works to build congressional understanding of the executive branch ethics program and to inform congressional oversight and revisions to ethics laws. Notably, OGE responded to 26 complex inquiries from Members of Congress and provided 172 telephone consultations in response to requests for technical assistance on draft legislation and on a wide variety of executive branch ethics issues. OGE also provided briefings, upon request, to staffers from three Senate Committees. Additionally, OGE provided significant expertise and support to the Government Accountability Office on three of its substantive reviews, including its review of the Presidential Transition.

OGE also represented the executive branch ethics community by providing ethics expertise on 47 requests for comments on legislative materials and 23 requests for comments on Executive Orders and Presidential Memoranda circulated by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). OGE achieved a 100 percent success rate for timely responding to all of the requests it received.

For additional information on the numerous requests OGE receives from outside entities see page 29.

Strategic Objective 1.2: Hold executive branch agencies accountable for carrying out an effective ethics program

In performing its oversight function, OGE ensures that executive branch agencies are held accountable for carrying out effective ethics programs. Through its program review, data collection, and financial disclosure review activities, OGE evaluates the processes and systems in place at the agency level to ensure consistent and successful ethics program management.

Reviewed agency ethics programs for compliance

Through agency ethics program reviews — plenary, inspection, and follow-up reviews — OGE ensures consistent and sustainable agency ethics program compliance with established executive branch ethics laws, regulations and policies, and provides recommendations for meaningful program improvement. All three types of reviews are designed to identify and remediate systemic risks in agency ethics programs. They include an examination of agency ethics program materials, such as financial disclosure reports, documentation of ethics advice provided to employees, training records, and ethics agreement compliance tracking.

Plenary reviews entail a comprehensive analysis of an agency's implementation of all key ethics program requirements. Reviews also examine the procedures used to achieve compliance with a focus on both outcomes and processes. Inspections entail a targeted examination of key elements of an agency's ethics program, focusing on outcomes. Because

Program Review Reports (Plenary and Inspections) Published in Fiscal Year 2017

Defense Commissary Agency
Morris K. Udall and Stewart L. Udall Foundation
Marine Mammal Commission
Federal Mediation and Conciliation
Department of State
Department of Health and Human Services
Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction
Department of Energy
Environmental Protection Agency
Ability One Commission
International Joint Commission
Farm Credit Administration and Farm Credit System Insurance Corporation
Department of Army, Headquarters
Food and Drug Administration
Institute of Museum and Library Services
Merit Systems Protection Board
Export-Import Bank of the United States
Department of Transportation, Office of the Secretary
Presidio Trust
Armed Forces Retirement Home
National Security Agency
Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board
Peace Corps
Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
Department of Air Force
Social Security Administration
Railroad Retirement Board
Small Business Administration
Department of Justice
Agency for International Development
National Archives and Records Administration
Administrative Conference of the United States
National Mediation Board
Department of the Navy
Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission
Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board
Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board
Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission
Inter-American Foundation

inspections focus on select program elements, OGE is able to expand the reach of its resources to evaluate an increased number of agencies in a given year. If an inspection generates data suggesting potential systemic risks, OGE determines whether a more expansive plenary review or other appropriate action is necessary to identify and mitigate the causes of those systemic risks. The expanded capacity provided by the inspection process increases OGE's onsite presence at federal agencies and, consequently, increases OGE's capacity to detect systemic risks before problems arise. Follow-up reviews evaluate an agency's progress in implementing recommendations generated by an inspection or plenary review. Evaluating agency ethics programs and following up on agency implementation of review recommendations helps to hold agency leadership accountable for administering compliant ethics programs.

Notably, in fiscal year 2017, OGE met its goal of completing a cycle of agency ethics program reviews between January 2014 and January 2018. Toward this goal, in fiscal year 2017, OGE conducted 48

program reviews and published a total of 40 program review reports. OGE also conducted 12 follow-up reviews and published 12 related reports.

In fiscal year 2017, OGE developed and launched an internal application, the Program Review and Oversight Management system. The application provides the Program Review Branch with an efficient tool for both strategic planning and monitoring progress towards meeting goals. The application’s user-friendly interface allows staff to quickly record key data and to easily retrieve data in a format supervisors can use to effectively manage resources and track workflow.

Issued recommendations to improve compliance

When an ethics program review identifies a deficiency, the resulting report includes a corresponding recommendation directing the agency to take actions necessary to correct the deficiency. In fiscal year 2017, OGE issued 120 recommendations through program reviews. OGE’s recommendations for program improvement have significant impact. For example, OGE’s review of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) discovered a determination needed to be made about the employment status of state health officials who assist the federal government in protecting American citizens’ health and welfare. As a result of OGE’s recommendation, FDA will be able to make sure the conflict of interest statutes and regulations are properly applied to the approximately 3,700 commissioned state health officials. This, in turn, will help ensure that these officials are acting in the public’s best interest when making important decisions impacting public health.

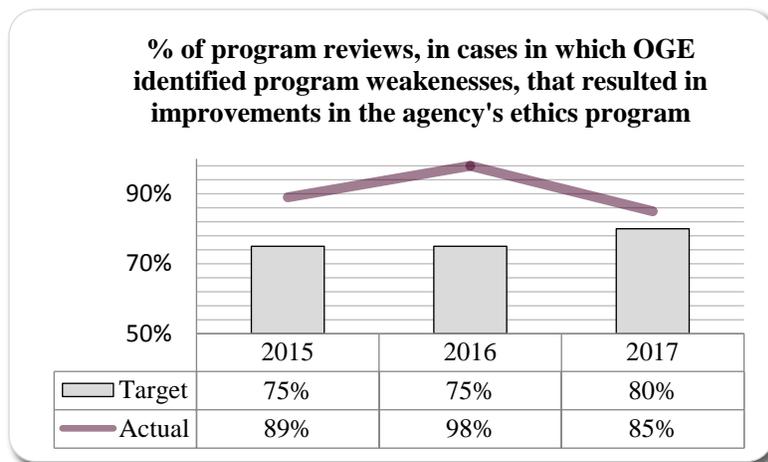


Figure 6: Program Review Recommendations

Performance Goal:

In cases in which OGE identified a program weakness during a program review, OGE exceeded its target for the percentage of program reviews that resulted in improvements in the agency’s ethics program.

Collected and analyzed program data from executive branch agencies

OGE collects ethics program data from each of the more than 130 executive branch agencies through its Annual Agency Program Questionnaire (Annual Questionnaire). This data collection assures that each agency does a year-end assessment of its ethics program. Agency responses to the Annual Questionnaire give OGE a snapshot view of each agency’s ethics program. Further, the compiled data provides OGE with an annual overview of the entire executive branch ethics program. In fiscal year 2017, OGE administered the Annual Questionnaire using an electronic application developed by OGE specifically for collecting Annual Questionnaire data. Use of this application has improved OGE’s ability to analyze information collected and has made the data collection process more efficient. Notably, one

hundred percent of agencies complied with the requirement to submit their ethics program data.

In fiscal year 2017, OGE continued to share key highlights from its Annual Questionnaire with ethics officials and the public. Having access to this data allowed ethics officials to compare aspects of their programs with those of other agencies, including how best to allocate ethics program resources. OGE made the Annual Questionnaire data available to the public on its official website. This program data helps the public gain a better understanding of the scope and impact of the executive branch ethics program.

Beyond the Annual Questionnaire and other required data submissions, OGE periodically requests ethics program data from agencies to address current issues that require oversight. For example in fiscal year 2017, OGE issued a directive (PA-17-02) requiring agencies to submit information and records related to certain waivers and authorizations issued to a specified class of appointees during the period from May 1, 2016 through April 30, 2017. Using the requested documents, OGE conducted a special review designed to: (1) evaluate agency procedures for issuing waivers of certain ethics restrictions and authorizations to participate in otherwise prohibited activities under a variety of authorities, and (2) assess agency compliance with these authorities. OGE completed the review and published the report on its website.

Also in fiscal year 2017, OGE collected data from each agency regarding special Government employees (SGEs) not serving on federal boards. The data was collected in connection with a recommendation issued by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) in GAO-16-548 – Opportunities Exist to Improve Data on Selected Group of Special Government Employees. In its report, GAO found (and OGE concurred) that it is important to strengthen the reliability of agency data on SGEs not serving on federal boards. OGE analyzed the data and published a summary report on its website, using it as a reminder of the steps taken by OGE to strengthen the relationship between human resources and agency ethics officials.

Monitored agency leaders' compliance with their ethics agreements

OGE identifies and resolves potential conflicts of interest on the part of PAS nominees by establishing written ethics agreements with them prior to confirmation. OGE then monitors PAS ethics agreement compliance through the collection and review of documentation provided by agency ethics officials. In fiscal year 2017, OGE made the reporting and monitoring process simple, more uniform, and more

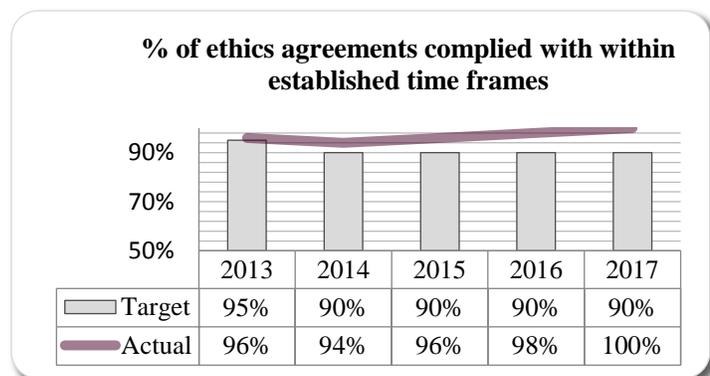


Figure 7: Ethics Agreement Compliance

transparent. Appointees now complete a form that spells out the undertakings they are agreeing to in order to address potential conflicts of interest and certify when the agreed-upon actions have been taken. The certification is then posted along with the appointee's financial disclosure form. By posting the certification, OGE has created transparency with regard to the actions that the executive branch's most senior leaders are taking to resolve potential conflicts of interest. One notable change to the process is that the form requires the appointee to attest to their compliance rather than the ethics official doing so.

Performance Goal: In fiscal year 2017, 53 PAS appointees were required to document timely compliance with their ethics agreements. Agency ethics officials reported that 100 percent of these appointees complied with their ethics agreements within the required time frame.

Reviewed the public financial disclosure reports of top officials

OGE also helps ensure that senior officials remain free from conflicts of interest by timely reviewing the annual, termination, and periodic transaction financial disclosure reports of PAS officials, as well as new entrant and other public financial disclosure reports filed by Designated Agency Ethics Officials (DAEOs) and certain White House officials. In fiscal year 2017, OGE reviewed nearly 2,000 public financial disclosure reports (new entrant, annual, termination, and periodic transaction reports). In fiscal year 2017, the average number of days between the receipt of a report and OGE closing the report (certified or filed uncertified) was 19 days, an improvement of 7.5 days over the prior fiscal year and the most efficient performance in the past five fiscal years.

Performance Goal: In fiscal year 2017, OGE completed 95 percent of its reviews of public financial disclosure reports, including new entrant, annual, termination, and periodic transaction reports required to be submitted to OGE within 60 days of receipt.

Responded to agencies' requests to tailor their financial disclosure programs

OGE supports agencies' efforts to tailor their financial disclosure programs to hold employees accountable for compliance with ethics rules and to deploy agencies' resources where they will be most effective. OGE has authority to grant an agency's request to extend the coverage of public financial disclosure requirements to any position upon a finding that the position is of "equal classification" to positions whose incumbents are required to file public financial disclosure reports. OGE also has authority to grant an agency's request to exclude a position from the coverage of public financial disclosure requirements upon a finding that the position is of a confidential nature and has no policymaking role. In fiscal year 2017, OGE evaluated equal classification requests from 3 agencies for 27 positions and evaluated 12 requests for exclusions from coverage of public financial disclosure requirements.

Supported the enforcement communities through advice, training, and collaboration



To ensure that executive branch ethics laws can be effectively enforced, OGE provides advice and training to the various enforcement communities, including the Department of Justice's (DOJ) criminal and civil divisions, Inspectors General, and employee relations professionals. OGE routinely assists Inspectors General and prosecutors in understanding the complexities of the ethics laws and regulations involved in ethics-related investigations. OGE provided an array of training to Inspectors General in fiscal year 2017. For example, OGE instructors provided well-received training to 125 attendees at the Inspector General Criminal Investigation Academy, focusing on investigating ethics-related matters and working with ethics officials. This particular training is an integral part of the Academy's curriculum and complements a web-based training module OGE developed for Inspector General investigators.

In fiscal year 2017, OGE's Director also continued to serve as a standing member of the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE), participating in CIGIE's meetings, presenting at its annual conference, and supporting its Integrity Committee. Also during fiscal year 2017, OGE staff provided direct support to approximately 25 investigators from Inspectors General offices and federal prosecutors who requested assistance with the interpretation and application of federal conflict of interest laws and ethics regulations in connection with live enforcement matters.

Updated procedures for Notification of Conflict of Interest Referral (OGE Form 202)

OGE updated its procedures for referrals to the Department of Justice (DOJ) of possible violations of criminal conflict of interest laws. OGE sought and considered input from CIGIE on this process and proposed changes to the OGE Form 202, which is designed to capture information about a referral. The revised OGE Form 202 will continue to provide OGE with the information it needs to confirm that an employing agency is held accountable for following through in actively considering corrective action in appropriate cases.

Strategic Objective 1.3: Contribute to the professional development of ethics officials

One key to the continuing success of the decentralized executive branch ethics program that OGE leads is the highly trained community of ethics officials who administer the program. For this reason, OGE continues to prioritize work on its strategic objective of contributing to the professional development of ethics officials. This objective is all the more important because of the significant number of ethics officials eligible for retirement. OGE is committed to educating executive branch ethics officials and federal employees on the conflicts of interest laws and ethics regulations. OGE's team of professional staff and attorneys promote continuous learning, increasing the overall skills of the executive branch's corps of professional agency ethics officials. In turn, OGE provides these agency ethics officials knowledge and skills to train the broader federal workforce at their home agencies on ethical responsibilities.

In fiscal year 2017, OGE provided an array of educational opportunities to ensure that ethics officials had access to the expertise and tools needed to do their jobs. Through an ever increasingly efficient use of technology and existing resources, OGE has been able to provide most of these opportunities to agencies free of charge. Not only is the quantity of OGE training noteworthy, so is the quality. As discussed below, the overwhelming majority of registrants for OGE's educational offerings rated their quality very highly.

Despite the need to reduce the number of learning opportunities to accommodate the increased workload associated with the Presidential transition, OGE has maintained a high number of training registrations. Additionally, OGE's training products were viewed by on-demand viewers more than 14,000 times during fiscal year 2017.

Conducted frequent online distance-learning events and in-person training

In fiscal year 2017, OGE delivered a variety of distance learning events. OGE continued to use its YouTube page to broadcast these distance-learning events free of charge to anyone with an internet connection. Training delivered through YouTube increases transparency by permitting public access to the professional development training that OGE offers to ethics officials throughout the U.S. and around the world.

During fiscal year 2017 OGE reduced the frequency of these events to accommodate workload increases arising from the Presidential transition. Learning events offered during fiscal year 2017 dealt with significant regulatory and policy changes as well as seasonally appropriate refreshers on ethics fundamentals such as financial disclosure review. A typical event reaches more than 330 officials during the live broadcast, and is available on-demand for viewing after the event. In 2017, OGE offered 16 virtual events. More than 6,000 ethics officials registered for these events, and 92 percent of respondents to a course evaluation reported that participating in these events made them better able to do their jobs.



In addition to the distance-learning series, OGE developed and delivered three Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) on confidential and public financial disclosure and widely attended gatherings. MOOCs enable large numbers of ethics officials to experience content OGE typically delivers through

half-day live-training workshops. These multi-session presentations bring the feel of in-person classroom training to the online classroom by incorporating lectures, practical exercises, and self-assessments. Over 850 officials participated in the two MOOCs presented in fiscal year 2017, with 88 percent of respondents to a course evaluation reporting that attendance made them better able to do their jobs.

During fiscal year 2017, OGE was able to accommodate high-return requests from agencies to provide speakers for distance learning and in-person training events. For

example, OGE was able to accommodate requests from the Office of Personnel Management, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Social Security Administration.

Performance Goal: In fiscal year 2017, OGE increased and further refined its educational offerings, and those offerings continued to be well received by ethics officials. As a result of participating in courses offered by OGE, 96 percent of participants reported that they better understood the subject matter presented, and 92 percent reported that they believed they could more effectively perform their job functions.

Provided comprehensive training and support around confidential financial disclosure

The confidential financial disclosure system plays a critical role in maintaining an impartial federal government. With approximately 380,000 filers in the executive branch, it is also an aspect of the ethics program that requires significant resources. Accordingly, OGE took time leading up to and during the filing season to support the ethics officials in the field who are on the front-line of the disclosure program. OGE conducted a distance learning course targeted to supervisors, who work with ethics official to identify which employees should file a confidential report. OGE also offered a Massively Open Online Course (MOOC) to reviewers of the confidential forms. This course built on previous MOOCs by adding new, hands-on, practical exercises. OGE sent out a listserv to ethics officials reminding them of the resources on OGE’s website, including a recently updated reference manual for agency reviewers. Prior to sending this listserv, OGE systematically reviewed those web pages to ensure the information was current and user-friendly. Further, through Tweets and a Director’s Note on the website, OGE educated the general public about the importance of financial disclosure in supporting the integrity of government decisionmaking.

Created New Employee Orientation Ethics Booklets

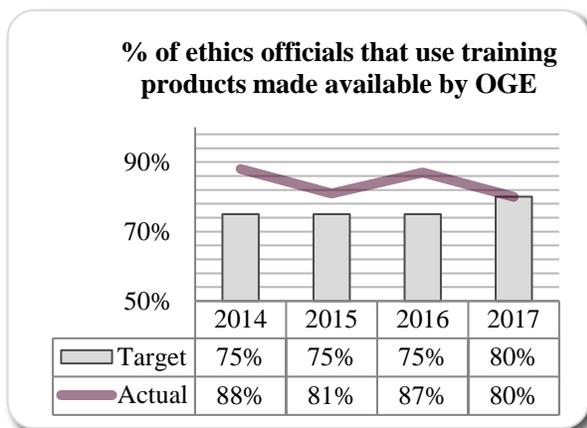


Figure 8: Ethics Training Products

To introduce and explain the materials to the ethics community, OGE conducted a broadcast through its distance learning program. After the broadcast, OGE

OGE continued to support agency ethics officials in the delivery of high quality new employee ethics orientation in fiscal year 2017. Notably, OGE developed a collection of ethics booklets that agency ethics officials can tailor to meet the needs of their agencies’ mission and employees. In total OGE released four booklets: *Ethical Service, Fourteen General Principles, Standards of Ethical Conduct, and Conflict of Interest Laws*. In addition, OGE developed a library of ethics scenarios and an Instructor Guide for use in conducting new employee

continued to help ethics officials use these educational tools by holding 6 instructor development workshops, which brought together more than 98 ethics officials from across the government to learn from one another and to practice using the OGE-developed materials and effective training techniques.

OGE makes these and other materials available to agency ethics officials at no cost through its online IEG “store,” using the MAX.gov platform. Offerings include practical job aids and reference guides, among other products, to assist agency ethics officials in the day-to-day operations of their programs. The IEG store is also a place where members of the ethics community can share similar products that they have created, including materials to assist with annual employee ethics training. The IEG store is an efficient way for agency ethics officials to obtain the educational materials that are most pertinent to their particular needs. In addition to the products available in the IEG Store, OGE makes available all of the video and audio recordings of its distance-learning events, as well as the informational slide decks, job aids, and reference materials created to support those events. OGE frequently encourages ethics officials to use these on-demand courses and materials to train their own staffs and agency employees.

Performance Goal: Eighty percent of surveyed ethics officials responded that they used a training product made available by OGE.

Strategic Objective 1.4: Modernize and implement the ethics regulations

Ethics regulations serve as the building blocks of the executive branch ethics program. OGE reviews and revises the ethics rules and regulations to ensure their continued effectiveness and applicability to situations faced by employees in a 21st century government. In fiscal year 2017, OGE undertook a relatively high volume of regulatory work to update its executive branch-wide ethics regulations and agency-specific supplemental ethics regulations.

Published final rule changing the ethics regulation regarding gifts from outside sources (5 C.F.R. Part 2635, subpart B)

In fiscal year 2017, OGE published a final rule, which took effect on January 1, 2017, comprehensively revising its regulations addressing the limitations on the ability of executive branch employees from receiving gifts from sources outside the government. These regulatory changes seek to increase the public’s confidence in government decisionmaking by establishing a principled approach to making determinations on gifts offered to federal employees. Of note, the regulation requires employees to consider appearance before accepting a gift and to consider whether attendance at widely attended gatherings provide disproportionate access to those who sponsor such events. See page 16 for a description of the training provided to ethics officials on the new rules.

Published final rule changing the ethics regulation governing executive agency ethics program responsibilities (5 C.F.R. Part 2638)

In fiscal year 2017, OGE published a final rule revising the requirements for administering the executive branch ethics program. The revised rule, which took effect on January 1, 2017, was first issued in 1981 and had remained unchanged for almost 35 years. This comprehensive revision overhauled the requirement governing agency ethics program to more effectively identify program roles and responsibilities, significantly clarify OGE's authorities with regard to agencies and individuals, strengthen ethics education requirements, more accurately describe the nature of OGE's issuances, institutionalize OGE's increased collaboration with agency ethics officials, and mandate agency ethics office's cyclical preparations for Presidential transitions, among other changes. The final rule reflects extensive input from agency ethics officials throughout the executive branch. See pages 8 and 16 for a description of the guidance and training provided to ethics officials on the new rule.

Changes to, and status of, proposed changes to executive branch financial disclosure, qualified trusts, and certificate of divestiture regulations. (5 CFR Part 2634)

In fiscal year 2017, OGE published a proposed rule to amend executive branch financial disclosure, qualified trusts, and certificate of divestiture regulations. OGE issued the proposed rule to, among other things, incorporate additional financial disclosure requirements imposed by the Stop Trading on Congressional Knowledge Act (STOCK Act), enacted on April 4, 2012. Written comments were received by December 5, 2016, and OGE is currently considering these comments prior to publishing a final rule.

In fiscal year 2017, OGE also issued a final rule amendment revising the executive branch financial disclosure regulation to reflect the retroactive increase of the threshold for reporting of gifts, reimbursements and travel expenses on public and confidential financial disclosures. The Ethics in Government Act and OGE regulations tie these increases to the increases by the General Services Administration of "minimal value" for purposes of the Foreign Gifts and Decorations Act.

Update to various civil monetary penalty provisions in ethics rules (5 CFR. Parts 2634 and 2636)

In fiscal year 2017, OGE issued a final rule adjusting each of the five civil monetary penalties provided in the Ethics in Government Act in accordance with the Federal Civil Penalties Inflation Adjustment Act Improvement Act of 2015. This rulemaking adopted as final, prior, interim regulations making "catch up" inflationary adjustments. The regulation also made the 2017 annual inflationary adjustment.

Changes to agency-specific ethics regulations and separate component designations

OGE consults with agencies to publish agency-specific supplemental ethics regulations and separate component designations that tailor ethics program requirements to meet specific agency needs. In fiscal year 2017, OGE jointly issued four agency supplemental regulations with the Postal Regulatory Commission (Proposed), the Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection (Proposed and Final), and the Department of the Interior (Direct Final). These agency supplemental ethics regulations included, among other things; employee prior approval requirements for outside employment; prohibited outside employment regulations; prohibited financial holdings regulations; seeking employment notice requirements; restrictions on certain financial transactions; and recusal requirements. They also designated separate agency components for specific purposes under 5 CFR Part 2635. Agency-specific supplemental ethics regulations calibrate ethics restrictions to the unique needs of employees of individual agencies.

In fiscal year 2017, OGE also updated component designations (5 C.F.R. Part 2641, Appendix B), based on agency recommendations for the purpose of applying the post-government employment ethics restrictions to former employees of specific components of executive branch agencies. These separate component designations ensure that the post-employment rules are appropriately focused on ensuring that former federal employees do not make unfair use of their prior federal employment to influence government, without overreaching indiscriminately to extend the restriction to separate components over which they lacked influence while serving in the government.

Strategic Goal 2: Contribute to the continuity of senior leadership in the executive branch

OGE plays a vital role in the continuity of the most senior leadership in the executive branch by supporting the President's constitutional role in nominating and appointing executive branch officials. OGE is a key Presidential transition service provider agency, tasked with working with agency ethics officials to identify and resolve any conflicts of interest leaders coming into government may have. Agency leaders play a significant role, both in promoting an ethical culture and supporting an agency's ethics program. The nomination process provides a unique opportunity for OGE to introduce incoming agency leaders to the executive branch ethics program.

OGE also operates *Integrity*, the electronic financial disclosure system these leaders use to report their financial interests. This work is especially critical during a Presidential transition when, due to vacancies in the most senior leadership positions, the nation is particularly vulnerable to national security and other risks.

In addition, OGE contributes to the continuity of senior leadership by supporting succession-planning efforts in executive branch agency ethics programs. Proper succession planning is the key to mitigating the loss of ethics expertise that stems from the significant turnover within the executive branch due to the retirement of experienced executive branch ethics officials.

Strategic Objective 2.1: Provide assistance to the President and the Senate in the nomination of top-level executive branch officials

OGE's nominee work is never more important than during a change of Presidential administrations. A Presidential transition is a critical time when the nation is vulnerable, with the potential for man-made, natural, or economic disasters to strike while the government's top leadership positions are vacant. During fiscal year 2017, OGE took steps to prepare for the transition and then worked expeditiously to make sure that prospective candidates were free of conflicts of interest, so that top leadership positions could be filled quickly.

Prepared for the Presidential Transition

Prior to the Presidential election in November 2016, OGE continued its efforts to actively prepare the agency and the executive branchwide ethics program for the Presidential transition, as well as work with the presidential campaigns to ensure a smooth transition. Specifically, in early fiscal year 2017, OGE provided a number of briefings and consultations for campaign officials engaged in planning Presidential transition activities. OGE also conducted multi-part training for members of the Presidential Transition Team and White House staff to prepare them to use OGE's electronic financial disclosure system, *Integrity*. OGE also developed a comprehensive and targeted set of publications for the incoming nominees and for the transition team staff working on nominations to facilitate

the success of the ethics portion of the transition. OGE provided the Transition Team and the White House with a large supply of the Nominee Ethics Guide for distribution to prospective Presidential nominees to facilitate their understanding and success in completing the required public financial disclosure reports. At the same time, OGE provided significant support to agencies in counseling departing officials about their post-employment restrictions.

Reviewed financial disclosure reports of the highest government leaders

OGE provides an independent review of the financial disclosure reports of candidates for the highest-level positions in the executive branch: Presidentially appointed, Senate-confirmed nominees and candidates for the Office of the President of the United

States. OGE makes sure that the nominees and Presidential candidates have complied with the extensive requirements for financial disclosure under the Ethics in Government Act. These requirements are highly complex, and ensuring full compliance is labor-intensive. OGE's goal with regard to a nominee's disclosures is to ensure that the Senate receives a complete accounting of relevant financial interests in order to facilitate its advice-and-consent role in considering the President's nominees.

In addition, OGE's review of nominees' disclosures presents a critical opportunity to evaluate their financial interests for potential conflicts of interest, and introduces incoming top leaders to the importance of ethical leadership. OGE approaches this function from the perspective of managing risk. To that end, OGE requires nominees to reduce the potential for ethical issues to arise in the first place. OGE also prescribes mechanisms for addressing conflicts of interest. In evaluating the potential risks for each nominee, OGE consults with agency ethics officials who are familiar with their agency's programs and activities. Based on these consultations, OGE and

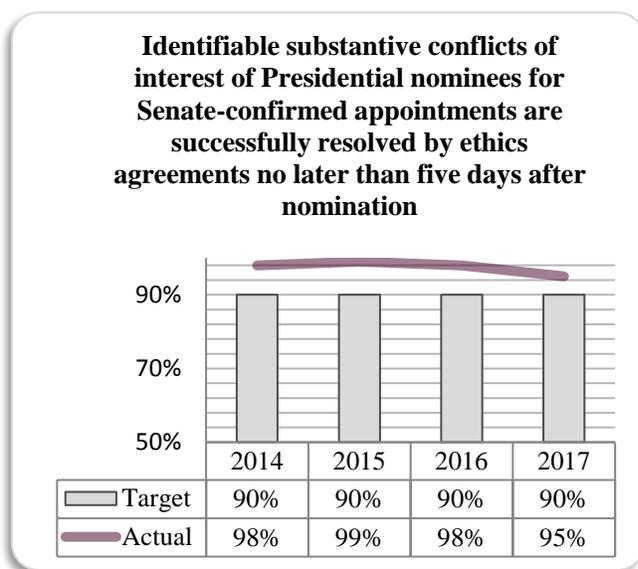


Figure 9: PAS Nominee Ethics Agreements

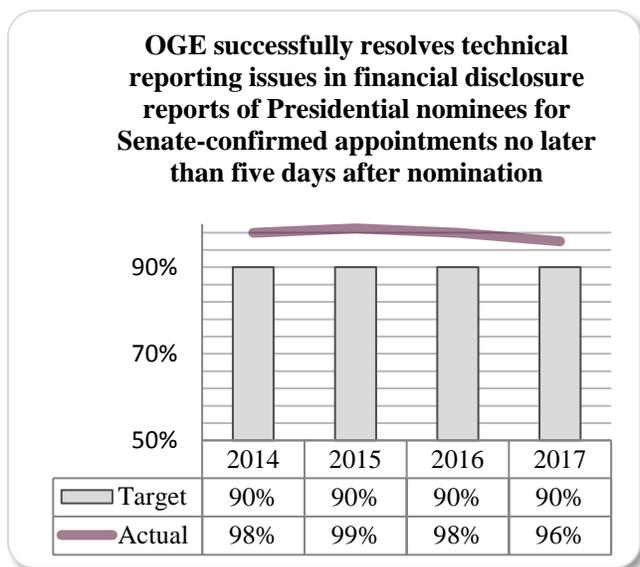


Figure 10: PAS Nominee Financial Disclosure Reports

agency ethics officials prepare an ethics agreement that describes the steps a nominee will take to avoid conflicts of interest. After confirming with the agency that there are no unresolved conflicts of interest, OGE transmits the review package directly to the Senate following a Presidential nomination.

Much of OGE's work in fiscal year 2017 focused on reviewing an extraordinary volume of complex financial disclosure reports of Presidential nominees and on developing ethics agreements to resolve identified conflicts of interest. Presidential transitions are periods of peak activity for OGE. As is demonstrated in the key highlights below, despite these significant demands, OGE's average review time for nominee reports was faster during the fiscal year 2017 Presidential transition than during the last full transition in fiscal year 2009, despite the fact that the reports were more complex. Key highlights of OGE's nominee financial disclosure work are as follows:

- In fiscal year 2017, OGE reviewed the reports of nominees for approximately 46 percent of the PAS positions.
- OGE cleared 85 percent of the nominee reports it received in fiscal year 2017.
- The average review time from receipt of a nominee report to OGE clearance was 4 percent faster in the fiscal year 2017 Presidential transition than in the fiscal year 2009 Presidential transition.
- 59 percent of nominee reports were complex or extremely complex during the fiscal year 2017 Presidential transition. In the fiscal year 2009 Presidential transition, 35 percent of nominee reports were complex or extremely complex.

As part of its effort to ensure that the Senate receives a complete accounting of each nominee's relevant financial interests, OGE developed a comprehensive job aid for agency ethics officials to support Presidential nominees for positions requiring Senate confirmation (PAS nominees) in complying with applicable requirements for public financial disclosure. The aid, a collection of public financial disclosure checklists, also supported agency ethics officials in reviewing PAS nominees' financial disclosure reports.

Performance Goal: OGE measures its performance by the successful and timely resolution of conflicts and technical reporting issues for nominee financial disclosure reports. OGE's standard is to resolve conflicts and technical reporting issues no later than five days after a nomination is made. OGE exceeded its targets in this area.

Successfully launched nominee functionality and operated Integrity, OGE's electronic executive branch-wide public financial disclosure filing system

In fiscal year 2017, OGE successfully operated its electronic filing system, *Integrity*, which played an integral role in the success of the nominee financial disclosure process during the Presidential transition. A culmination of years of effort, in fiscal year 2017 OGE ensured that the system was seamlessly adopted for use by the new Administration for the

most senior leaders in government and provided strong operational stability and support for the system resulting in very positive feedback from the new Administration and governmentwide system administrators. OGE actively coordinated with Presidential campaigns regarding OGE's role in the nomination process and provided campaign staff with comprehensive training on the use of *Integrity*. This training was provided as part of OGE's efforts to ensure that the transition team had the tools and knowledge needed to begin processing PAS nominees immediately after the election.

As a result of OGE's multi-year effort, at the end of fiscal year 2017, 136 agencies were processing financial disclosure reports in *Integrity*, with a total of 14,301 individual filers registered in the system. Between January 1 and September 30, 2017, those filers submitted more than 23,601 public financial disclosure reports.

Beginning in fiscal year 2016, OGE successfully developed and launched a complex new workflow functionality in *Integrity* for reviewing Presidential nominees. This enabled OGE to manage the influx of the highest-level officials in the new Administration, so they could securely and efficiently file their public financial disclosure reports electronically. In December 2015, the Obama White House began directing prospective PAS nominees to submit their financial disclosure reports through *Integrity*. The response from users of the nominee functionality in *Integrity* was overwhelmingly positive, demonstrating the system was ready for use during the Administration transition.

As part of the increased governmentwide focus on planning early for the Presidential transition, in late fiscal year 2016, OGE also coordinated with Presidential campaigns regarding OGE's role in the nomination process and provided comprehensive training to designated campaign staff on the use of *Integrity*. This training was provided as part of OGE's efforts to ensure that the transition team had the tools and knowledge needed to begin processing PAS nominees immediately after the election. This work, plus the experiences gained from the prior Administration's use of *Integrity*, enabled the President-elect's transition team to start processing PAS nominees through the system beginning soon after the election and continuing throughout fiscal year 2017. While many of the nominee financial disclosure reports submitted during this time period were the most complex ever encountered by OGE, the efficiencies provided by *Integrity* contributed to an overall decrease in the average processing time at OGE by 4 percent as compared with the Presidential transition in 2009.

Notably, both nominees and their designees commented favorably on *Integrity's* streamlined appearance and ease of use. OGE also has received positive reviews from agency ethics officials about the system, as well as the Help Desk services and training provided by OGE. For example, in a recent survey of executive branch ethics officials, 66 percent of those responding said using *Integrity* improved or much improved accuracy of reporting on nominee reports while 61 percent said that using *Integrity* improved or much improved processing of nominee reports. Similarly, 65 percent of those responding said that using *Integrity* improved or much improved the accuracy of reporting on annual, termination and periodic transaction reports, and 66 percent said using *Integrity* improved processing those reports. Further, in a recent survey of agency *Integrity* administrators, 91

percent of those responding indicated they were satisfied or very satisfied with the support provided by OGE.

In addition to having a customer focus, OGE has also continued to prioritize system security. For the third time since the system went live, *Integrity* underwent a full security assessment conducted by an independent agency in fiscal year 2017. This assessment was successful, resulting in a recommendation that *Integrity* be reauthorized.

Performance Goal: OGE exceeded its performance goals related to *Integrity*. In a recent survey of agency *Integrity* administrators, 91 percent of those responding indicated they were satisfied or very satisfied with the support provided by OGE. OGE also met or exceed its goal related to *Integrity* processing financial disclosure reports.

	Indicator	Target	Actual
OGE’s electronic filing system is processing financial disclosure reports.	PAS/DAEO public reports, except as designated by the White House	85%	85%
	Executive branch agencies	60%	99%
	Nominee public reports as designated by the White House	95%	100%

Strategic Objective 2.2: Promote leadership support of the executive branch ethics program

The success of each agency’s ethics program is in large part dependent on the commitment of the agency’s leadership to, and involvement in, the ethics program. Leadership support of an agency’s ethics program helps agencies identify, assess, and mitigate risk to an agency’s programs and reputation. It enables agency leaders to accomplish their agencies’ missions in ways that ensure the integrity of government operations.

Held agencies accountable for timely reviewing financial disclosures of senior leaders

Agencies review the annual financial disclosure reports of their most senior civilian Senate-confirmed leaders and submit them to OGE for a second-level review. In turn, OGE reviews the reports for possible indications that agencies may not have conducted sufficient conflicts of interest analyses. The timely review and certification of these reports is critical because financial disclosure is the primary tool for identifying and resolving potential conflicts of interest on the part of executive branch officials. An agency’s failure to collect and review PAS officials’ reports, resolve all conflicts of interest, and obtain OGE’s certification in a timely manner places filers at risk of violating criminal conflicts of interest laws. More broadly, it could diminish the credibility of the ethics program and undermine the public’s confidence in the integrity of the government’s operations.

To ensure timely review and certification of these reports by agencies, OGE tracks agencies' submission of these reports to OGE each year. OGE sends year-end status reports to agency heads regarding these submissions. In fiscal year 2017, for the second time, agencies completed their reviews and submitted all expected 2016 reports to OGE before the end of calendar year 2016.

Briefings for incoming leaders and a notice to new supervisors

As part of the amendments to 5 C.F.R. § 2638, OGE included a new requirement that agencies provide its most senior leaders with an additional ethics briefing within 15 days after their appointment to discuss the individual's immediate ethics obligations, as well as written materials related to the ethics program to each civilian employee who is required to receive supervisory training. These requirements ensure that the government's top leaders understand their ethical obligations and how they can support other employees in maintaining a strong ethical culture at their individual agencies.

Performance Goal: In response to the calendar year 2016 Annual Agency Ethics Program Questionnaire, 100 percent of agencies reported that their agency leaders demonstrate support for the ethics program. In addition, ethics officials from 89 agencies indicated that they reported directly to the heads of their agencies regarding the status of their ethics programs in calendar year 2016.

Strategic Objective 2.3: Support succession planning in executive branch ethics programs

OGE supports succession planning in executive branch ethics programs to minimize the impact of knowledgeable employees leaving the workforce. Succession planning requires the documentation of current processes, transfer of institutional knowledge, and availability of personnel prepared to assume ethics official positions at all levels of the program. OGE provides training that supports succession planning in agency ethics programs and requires agencies to respond to questions on the Annual Questionnaire regarding succession planning.

Enhanced the professional development of agency ethics officials

In fiscal year 2017, OGE supported the documentation of current processes both directly and indirectly. To communicate to agencies the importance of documenting current processes and to track their efforts in this regard, OGE's Annual Agency Ethics Program Questionnaire asked questions about the use of standard operating procedures. Certain program review processes also focused on agencies' use of standard operating procedures, and the program review reports for plenary program reviews included recommendations for establishment or enhancement of procedures when they were lacking.

In fiscal year 2017, OGE supported the transfer of institutional knowledge through a variety of means and issued written guidance, which it made available on its website. OGE

convened quarterly meetings for the leadership of agency ethics offices to disseminate information uniformly throughout the executive branch. OGE prepared job aids and training material for use by agency ethics officials (see page 17), which OGE made available on its website. OGE continued to host an electronic site on MAX.gov for agency ethics officials to share their own written products with one another. OGE has also actively encouraged agencies to develop knowledge libraries through intranet sites, videos, and shared network drives.

Throughout the year, OGE presented professional development opportunities for ethics officials at all levels. OGE offered monthly distance-learning events, an Ethics Fundamental Series for new ethics officials, and separate monthly distance-learning events for experienced ethics officials, OGE's Advanced Practitioner Series. OGE also regularly offered financial disclosure training for ethics officials of all skills levels. OGE offered this training via the "Google+" platform, which broadcasts training sessions to hundreds of attendees in a single session. OGE also posted recordings of these training sessions on OGE's YouTube channel to provide ongoing, on-demand access.

In fiscal year 2017, OGE supported the development of new ethics officials by continuing to add to its library of fundamental distance-learning series. This series focuses on topics of direct interest to new ethics officials. OGE Desk Officers also met with several new agency ethics officials to provide them an overview of their responsibilities, ethics program requirements, and training opportunities to meet their professional development needs. Finally, OGE gathered information from agencies about succession planning through their responses to questions on its Annual Questionnaire. The results are reflected in the performance goal below.

Performance Goal: Per the Annual Questionnaire, 96 percent of agencies are actively engaged in succession planning to ensure long-term continuity of ethics programs. The top two tools agencies reported using to address succession planning are: (1) structured courses (112 agencies) and (2) mentoring (88 agencies).

Strategic Goal 3: Promote transparency of the executive branch ethics program

Building public confidence in the impartiality of government decisionmaking is at the core of OGE's mission. Therefore, OGE directs resources toward raising the visibility of the systems in place to identify and resolve conflicts of interest and making ethics documents publicly available. Transparency increases accountability and public confidence by providing information to the public about the workings of government and the integrity of its decisionmaking processes.

Strategic Objective 3.1: Raise the visibility of the executive branch ethics program and the U.S. Office of Government Ethics

Raising the visibility of both the executive branch ethics program and OGE are critical steps toward building public confidence and awareness of the systems in place to protect the integrity of government operations and programs. To raise the visibility of the executive branch ethics program and the agency, OGE engages with audiences inside the federal government, as well as external audiences, including members of the general public, state and local governments, private sector organizations, professional associations, government oversight groups, the media, and foreign delegations. OGE actively shares information on its official website, on social media, through media contacts, and through presentations by OGE staff.

Used OGE's website and social media as platforms to educate and provide access to key documents

OGE's website is its primary tool for communicating with its external stakeholders and is a valuable tool for building confidence in the systems designed to detect and resolve conflicts of interest in the federal executive branch. OGE reviewed and modified its web pages regarding public and confidential financial disclosure, as well as the website's forms library, to ensure that the information was current, intuitive, and consistent. See page 32 for additional information about the posting of key ethics documents on OGE's website.

Performance Indicator: An indicator of OGE's success in expanding its outreach efforts is the increased number of new visitors to the agency's website.

OGE uses social media to broaden its reach to key external stakeholders. Specifically, OGE uses its Twitter account to educate the public about the executive branch ethics program and to drive traffic to substantive ethics content on its website. In fiscal year 2017, OGE continued to refine the tone and content of its Tweets to be more engaging and public-friendly, and less technical.

Performance Goal: OGE saw a significant increase in size and growth of its Twitter followers (an increase of over 5,000 percent).

Responded to requests for information and provided assistance

OGE responded to an unexpected large volume of requests for information and assistance from its external stakeholders on topics such as conflicts of interest, enforcement, public financial disclosure, gifts from outside sources, and post-employment. In many cases, a request was related to an issue that fell outside of OGE's jurisdiction. In those instances, OGE made an effort to direct citizens to the appropriate resource.

In fiscal year 2017, OGE responded to nearly 1,400 requests for assistance from the press, a 778 percent increase over the prior fiscal year. These interactions resulted in more accurate reporting about the ethics laws and regulations and OGE's work. These interactions also multiplied OGE's ability to reach the public to promote further understanding of the executive branch ethics program and its role in ensuring government integrity. OGE also responded to requests for assistance from other stakeholders, including 47,000 requests from private citizens. This engagement promoted understanding of the executive branch ethics program and related ethics laws and regulations.

Performance Indicator: In fiscal year 2017, OGE received approximately 50,000 requests from non-government, external stakeholders. In addition, over 3,000 media articles highlighted the work of OGE during fiscal year 2017. This coverage helped the public understand the framework for government ethics in the executive branch.

Collaborated with and engaged stakeholders

In fiscal year 2017, OGE continued to engage with professional, good government, and interagency groups to discuss emerging ethics issues and trends, share model practices, develop sound ethics policies, and combine resources to more effectively ensure that government decisions are made for the benefit of the public and not for private gain. In fiscal year 2017, OGE continued to participate as a member of the Ethics and Compliance Initiative (EC&I), the Council on Governmental Ethics Laws (COGEL), and the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE). As a member of COGEL, OGE shared its legal analysis, programmatic experience, and model practices with the private sector and state and local government agencies. (For more information on OGE's involvement with CIGIE, see page 15.) In addition, OGE participated in interagency groups, such as the General Counsel Exchange, to share information about OGE and the executive branch ethics program, as well as to discuss general administrative legal and performance issues faced by all executive branch agencies. OGE's involvement with these organizations not only fostered valuable communication, it also led to innovations in OGE's practices related to training, program and performance management, and general law.

OGE also organized in-person meetings with ethics practitioners and the leadership of good governance and government watchdog groups in fiscal year 2017. For example, prior to the election, OGE met with the Partnership for Public Service to discuss ways that OGE and the Partnership could work together to help ensure a smooth Presidential transition. These meetings created opportunities to collaborate and share resources and

information that enhanced the executive branch ethics program. Further, through OGE-initiated “three branch meetings,” OGE continued to collaborate with the most senior ethics practitioners from the legislative and judicial branches of the federal government on topics of common interest in the field of government ethics, such as conflicts of interest and financial disclosure. These meetings resulted in a greater understanding of approaches taken to address common issues and the differences in the role of each branch’s ethics program.

OGE engaged in other efforts to build relationships with external stakeholders and promote understanding of the executive branch ethics program and OGE’s mission. OGE accepted speaking invitations to address its external audiences, including professional associations, international anti-corruption groups, and the human capital community, on topics including conflicts of interest, ethical leadership, and program management. For example, OGE presented to the Deputy Chief Human Capital Officers about their role in implementing an effective ethics program at their respective agencies.

Performance Indicator: In fiscal year 2017, OGE accepted 20 speaking invitations to address its external audiences.

Shared information with foreign delegations and supported anti-corruption efforts

OGE's international program supports U.S. anti-corruption foreign policy in three ways. OGE assists the State Department in ensuring the U.S. meets its international anti-corruption obligations, participates in international organizations which shape international anti-corruption norms and good governance policies, and supports other countries' efforts to effectively manage conflicts of interest.

OGE helped the U.S. meet its international anti-corruption obligations

As a signatory to the Council of Europe's anti-corruption conventions, the U.S. participates in the peer review mechanism which monitors states' compliance with those commitments. The peer review mechanism is known as GRECO, which is the French acronym for the "Group of States against Corruption." In fiscal year 2017, GRECO completed its review of how the U.S. prevents corruption among federal prosecutors. At the request of DOJ and the State Department, OGE provided detailed comments on the draft final U.S. report, which was adopted at the GRECO plenary meeting in December 2016.

The U.S. is also signatory to the Inter-American Convention against Corruption, which also has a peer review mechanism. In fiscal year 2017, OGE reported to the Department of State on progress made with respect to the six recommendations OGE received during a previous round of review.

OGE shaped international anti-corruption norms and good governance policies

During fiscal year 2017, OGE reviewed and commented on a variety of documents which were ultimately adopted by several inter-governmental anti-corruption working groups and entities. For example, OGE provided input on successive rounds of a G20 Anticorruption Working Group (ACWG) proposal for "High Level Principles on Organizing against Corruption." The ACWG routinely develops and endorses such high level principles in order to strengthen international anticorruption standards. OGE also reviewed, at the request of the State Department, two draft G7 documents containing draft "key messages on public integrity" which formed part of the G7 agenda on anticorruption. OGE also commented on multiple drafts of a draft G7 "Leaders' Declaration." The declarations are public statements of the G7 countries' consensus policy views on key topics, including anticorruption.

OGE supported other countries' efforts to effectively manage conflicts of interest

During fiscal year 2017, OGE responded to data calls from the Organization of American States, the World Bank, the United Nations Working Group on the Prevention of Corruption, and the G20. These international organizations use the data to conduct comparative studies, identify and highlight integrity innovations, assist developing countries that plan to implement new or improve existing ethics programs, outline regional strategies for cooperation on the topic, and share model practices.

OGE also continued to meet with foreign public and private sector groups through the State Department’s International Visitor Leadership Program and similar programs. Through these programs, foreign delegations come to OGE to learn about the executive branch ethics program and how that program fits into the broader context of anti-corruption, good governance, and transparency. In fiscal year 2017, OGE briefed 20 foreign delegations comprising 260 individuals representing 101 countries.

Strategic Objective 3.2: Ensure that ethics information is publicly available

Public availability of ethics information assures the American public that senior leaders are making decisions based on the interests of the public rather than their own personal financial interests. Ethics information includes public financial disclosure reports, program review reports on agency ethics programs, and written policy guidance. The availability of this information also assists executive branch employees in understanding the basic obligations of public service, holds OGE and agency ethics officials accountable for their activities, and supports ethics officials in carrying out the duties of their positions.

Timely made ethics documents available online

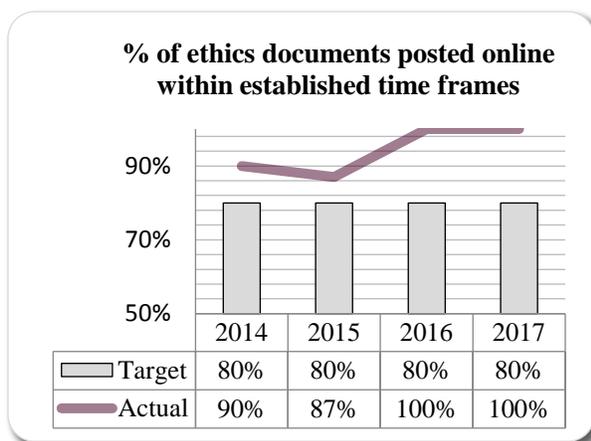


Figure 11: Posting Ethics Documents

In fiscal year 2017, OGE continued to timely make ethics documents available on its website. These documents included public financial disclosure reports and ethics agreements, program review reports on agency ethics programs, reports on payments for travel received from non-federal sources in connection with attendance of employees at certain meetings, and written policy guidance.

Of significance, in fiscal year 2017, OGE processed requests from the public, news media, and government to inspect approximately 4,600 documents under the

Ethics in Government Act including public financial disclosure reports, periodic transaction reports, certificates of divestiture, and other covered records.

In an effort to promote transparency, OGE continuously conducted reviews to identify new data sets to be made publicly available. In fiscal year 2017, in part because of significant public demand, for the first time, OGE made certificates of divestiture available through its electronic Form 201 request process, and began to post documentation of senior officials’ compliance with their ethics agreement.

Performance Goal: OGE exceeded its target to timely post 100 percent of ethics documents online within established time frames.

Administered a strong Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) program

In fiscal year 2017, OGE experienced a 500 percent increase in FOIA requests, compared to the same period in fiscal year 2016. OGE has no full-time dedicated FOIA staff, but relies on 6 functional staff with competing demands. Despite this increase in FOIA requests, OGE received the highest possible score on an array of important measures from DOJ's Office of Information Policy (OIP) in its annual assessment of agency progress in implementing the Attorney General's FOIA Guidelines for 2017. These included having an effective system in place for responding to FOIA requests, increasing proactive disclosures, utilizing technology, improving timeliness in responding to requests, and applying a presumption of openness in responding to FOIA requests.

OGE also continues to conduct regular self-assessments of its FOIA processing procedures and response templates and, when appropriate, makes changes to increase efficiency, improve search processes, increase transparency, and otherwise improve the operation of OGE's already strong FOIA program. For example, OGE began posting on its website copies of all records processed for release under the FOIA since January 1, 2017, with applicable exemptions.

In addition, OGE continued to engage in outreach and collaboration with the FOIA community. OGE's FOIA Officer, along with one of OGE's IT Specialists, participated in OIP's Sunshine Week panel, where they discussed a small agency's perspective on handling FOIA requests and developing efficiencies in-house. OGE's FOIA team has also been involved with the development of the National FOIA Portal, providing a small agency's perspective to system developers.

Section IV – Managing for Results

This section describes OGE’s past and planned work related to its management objectives and the steps OGE has taken to maintain a culture of performance.

Management Objectives

OGE devotes significant resources toward promoting professional development opportunities for its staff and improving its processes. These two efforts are critical to OGE achieving its mission-focused strategic objectives. Organized by management objective, this section highlights major accomplishments that OGE achieved in fiscal year 2017, and provides data on OGE’s success in achieving its management objectives and performance goals during fiscal year 2017.

Management Objective 4.1: Promote professional development opportunities aimed at building OGE employees’ knowledge, skills, and abilities

OGE is committed to meeting its employees’ professional development needs by providing significant education and training opportunities and support through the dedication of time and resources. In fiscal year 2017, OGE continued its use of a unique professional development program called the Employee Development Plan (EDP) process, which results in the achievement of measurable professional development targets annually for staff at all levels.

In fiscal year 2017, all OGE employees participated in the OGE Employee Development Plan (EDP) program. The EDP incorporates the requirements of OPM’s Individual Development Plan but goes further by identifying individual employee learning objectives that must be tied directly to OGE’s strategic plan and to the organizational goals of the employee’s work unit. The EDP identifies specific formal training, mentoring, self-study, and/or on-the-job training activities that the employee will complete in the covered period. Significantly, the EDP also identifies objective measures for assessing the employee’s acquisition of the targeted knowledge or skills. Often, this measurement will involve the employee’s completion of a work product or delivery of a presentation related to the training that is evaluated by the employee’s supervisor to determine whether the training was effective. To ensure accountability in this continuous learning process, the completion of the EDP is part of each employee’s performance standards. This mixture of support and accountability has helped OGE to foster a performance culture through continuous learning.

In addition to these significant investments in internal opportunities for professional development, OGE supported its employees in enhancing their knowledge and skills by sponsoring their participation in external training programs. These programs included classes at the Graduate School USA and the Treasury Executive Institute, as well as events hosted by the federal performance, legal, IT, and communications communities.

Performance Goal: In fiscal year 2017, 100 percent of employees successfully completed their employee development plan.

Management Objective 4.2: Transform the way OGE conducts business through process improvement

OGE strives for excellence by continuously reviewing and refining its strategies and processes for achieving its mission. As part of this effort, OGE continues to review and standardize its procedures and to implement new technological solutions to increase efficiency and effectiveness. Fiscal year 2017 was an outstanding year for OGE’s informational technology program.

Developed and launched new technological solutions

In fiscal year 2017, OGE developed or refined several web applications and automated tools that enable the agency to conduct business with greater efficiency and effectiveness. The table below provides a few examples of the technological solutions that OGE implemented during the fiscal year.

Internal	Description
Agency Information Management	Every year, U.S. Office of Government Ethics receives thousands of questions and requests for information from agency ethics officials, members of the public, Congress, and the press. The Agency Information Management System is a key desk officer tool and agencywide data source. The improvements to the system focused on making the data more dynamic and useful for analysis.
Program Review and Oversight Management	See page 12 for description.
Administrative Resource Management System	OGE developed the Administrative Resource Management System (ARMS), an internal application used to streamline the process for staff to request administration support. ARMS allows the Administrative Operations Branch (AOB) to effectively track and record administrative work and to ensure timely completion. The tracking feature has not only increased OGE’s efficiency in providing administrative support but also has allowed AOB to better manage the wide range of administrative work in a manner that positively contributes to accountability.

Digitized Paper Forms	OGE Forms allow for the creation, modification, tracking, and workflow routing of agency standard forms. For example, OGE digitized forms for loaning equipment, requesting training, and gaining access to network resources.
Email Records Capture and Management Engine	The agencywide records management application enables all OGE employees to save email as a record with the click of a button. This system also has tools built in to facilitate FOIA research and document collection.
DOJ Referrals	This application provides OGE staff with a place to record and track status of disciplinary actions that are referred by agencies to the Department of Justice. The system also generates reminders and correspondence from OGE to agencies.
External	Description
Form 201	OGE modified its online Form 201 to enable the public to access Certificates of Divestiture through the system.
Institute for Ethics in Government (IEG) Online Resources and Training Aids	OGE began development on a mobile and desktop web application for accessing and registering its numerous training resources

Continuously reviewed and improved OGE's operating procedures

In an effort to work smarter, in fiscal year 2017, OGE continued to review its processes and procedures for ways to make improvements in programs that support the ethics community and OGE's internal operations. OGE continued to streamline and standardize internal processes. In fiscal year 2017, OGE developed or updated 49 standard operating procedures in each of its key program areas. For example, OGE updated numerous standard operating procedures related to financial disclosure, including processing requests by the public. OGE also updated several internal procedures related to accessing agency equipment, network security, and records management.

Performance Goal: OGE exceeded its performance goal to create or revise four standard operating procedures for key agency programs.

Records

OGE took significant steps to enhance its records management program in order to ensure agency records are available to the public and OGE staff and to comply with records management requirements. These enhancements include: annual records management training; designation of records liaisons and file custodians for each OGE division/branch; new records management guidance materials; transfer of permanent records to NARA for permanent preservation; new email guidance; implementation of the Controlled

Unclassified Information (CUI) Program; and providing assistance to OGE staff to ensure OGE materials posted on websites are Section 508 compliant and accessible to individuals who are visually impaired.

Maintaining a Culture of Performance

OGE maintains a culture of performance through extensive communication, policy, accountability, and performance mechanisms. Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey results demonstrate the success and opportunities for improvement stemming from these efforts.

In fiscal year 2017, OGE pursued efforts to increase employees' understanding and commitment to a performance culture using a variety of internal communications methods. For example, OGE continued to conduct regular "all hands" meetings with the entire OGE staff to discuss progress toward meeting agency goals and to promote an understanding of OGE's priorities and direction. OGE also held regular executive and senior staff meetings to discuss agency goals, priorities, and the status of significant program activities. OGE held supervisors accountable for ensuring ongoing communication regarding OGE goals and priorities with all staff. In addition, OGE held a mid-year Strategic Objective Review to review progress on each of the agency's strategic objectives established by OGE's strategic plans. This review informed OGE's strategic decisionmaking, budget formulation, and near-term agency actions as well as preparation of the Annual Performance Plan.

To evaluate its progress in maintaining a culture of performance, OGE participated in the executive branchwide Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (EVS) in fiscal year 2017, achieving a 71 percent participation rate. The results show that OGE has a highly engaged workforce. OGE had an 83 percent score on the engagement index score which looks at questions related to leadership, supervisors, and intrinsic work experiences. OGE's score is significantly higher than the governmentwide average. Further evidence of OGE's success at maintaining a culture of performance is its 97 percent positive rating for employees knowing how their work relates to the agency's goals and priorities. Notably, 100 percent of employees indicated a willingness to do what it takes to achieve these goals and 92 percent of employees expressed an understanding that they are held accountable for achieving results. Overall, OGE's 2017 EVS results recognized 61 items identified as strengths (65 percent positive or higher) and 1 item identified as a challenge (35 percent negative or higher).