

United States
Merit Systems Protection Board
Strategic Plan
FY 2007 – FY 2012



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | Page |
|---|------|
| Introduction | 1 |
| The MSPB Mission..... | 1 |
| Relationship between strategic goals and performance goals | 2 |
| Strategic Goal 1: Adjudication | 3 |
| To provide fair, high quality, timely and cost effective adjudication of cases filed with MSPB and to make effective use of alternative methods of dispute resolution in MSPB proceedings. | 3 |
| Performance goals | 3 |
| Performance indicators/measures | 4 |
| Strategic Goal 2: Merit Systems Studies..... | 5 |
| To conduct studies that support strong and viable merit systems that ensure the public's interest in a high quality, professional workforce managed under the merit principles and free from prohibited personnel practices. | 5 |
| Performance goals | 5 |
| Performance indicators/measures | 5 |
| Strategic Goal 3: Management Support and Organizational Excellence..... | 6 |
| To achieve organizational excellence and strategically manage MSPB's human capital, information technology and other internal systems and processes. | 6 |
| Performance goals | 6 |
| Performance indicators/measures | 6 |
| Means and strategies to be used to achieve the strategic goals | 7 |
| Key external factors that could affect goal attainment..... | 7 |
| Evaluations used in preparing this strategic plan | 7 |

Merit Systems Protection Board Strategic Plan FY 2007 – FY 2012

Introduction

The Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) is an independent, quasi-judicial agency established to protect Federal merit systems and the rights of individuals within those systems. MSPB's role in protecting the merit systems is essential to ensuring the American people that Federal employment decisions are based on law and merit, and that employees are able to serve the public free from management abuse and partisan political pressure. The purpose of this strategic plan is to set out MSPB's updated/revised strategic goals for fiscal years (FY) 2007 - 2012. MSPB is committed to its continued, long-term success in protecting merit and individual employee rights.

This updated Strategic Plan is the result of review of MSPB's current strategic plan, its performance in the last few years, and projected requirements based on current and future developments in Federal human capital management and their impact on merit systems and individual employee rights. In addition, MSPB consulted with Congress, MSPB employees and the MSPB Professional Association, and made the plan available for comment by numerous other stakeholder groups including agency senior leaders, Federal human resources professionals, Federal employees and management groups, and the public.

The MSPB Mission

The mission of the Merit Systems Protection Board is:

*To protect Federal merit systems and the rights of individuals
within those systems.*

MSPB carries out its statutory responsibilities and authorities primarily by adjudicating individual employee appeals and by conducting merit systems studies. In addition, MSPB reviews the significant actions of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to assess the degree to which those actions may affect merit.

Relationship between strategic goals and performance goals

To accomplish its mission, MSPB has established the following strategic goals:

1. To provide fair, high quality, timely and cost effective adjudication of cases filed with MSPB and to make effective use of alternative methods of dispute resolution in MSPB proceedings.
2. To conduct studies that support strong and viable merit systems that ensure the public's interest in a high quality, professional workforce managed under the merit principles and free from prohibited personnel practices.
3. To achieve organizational excellence and strategically manage MSPB's human capital, information technology and other internal systems and processes.

This strategic plan provides the foundation for MSPB's work and forms the basis for its annual performance goals. There are two or more performance goals for each strategic goal. The performance goals are included in the annual performance budgets and are designed to cover the scope of the strategic goal. Quantitative or qualitative performance measures or indicators provide the basis for assessing organizational and individual performance within the agency. A general list of the performance measures or indicators is provided under each strategic goal. While individual agency program offices usually focus on achieving the performance goals related to one strategic goal, they also contribute to achieving one or more performance goals related to the other two strategic goals.

Strategic Goal 1: Adjudication

To provide fair, high quality, timely and cost effective adjudication of cases filed with MSPB and to make effective use of alternative methods of dispute resolution in MSPB proceedings.

Appeals brought by individual employees are heard first by administrative judges (AJs) in MSPB's eight regional and field offices. If an employee or agency is not satisfied with the resolution of the case at this level, either may file a petition for review (PFR) with the full three-member Board at headquarters. The AJ or the Board may also order compliance with final MSPB orders, grant attorney's fees when appropriate, and provide remedies such as consequential and/or compensatory damages. MSPB has jurisdiction to adjudicate appeals in a variety of areas:

- Personnel actions such as removals, suspensions, furloughs and demotions;
- Administrative decisions affecting an individual's rights or benefits under the Civil Service Retirement System or the Federal Employees' Retirement System;
- Employee complaints filed under the Whistleblower Protection Act (WPA), the Uniformed Services Employment & Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA), and applicants who file under the Veterans Employment Opportunities Act (VEOA); and,
- Cases brought by the Special Counsel, including complaints for disciplinary actions based on Hatch Act violations, other complaints for disciplinary action, and petitions for corrective action based on allegations of prohibited personnel practices.

This strategic goal highlights MSPB's commitment to provide high quality and timely decisions on individual appeals, and to make effective use of a range of dispute resolution services to individuals and to agencies. MSPB also works to process cases cost effectively and to maintain customer satisfaction with its adjudication processes and services including outreach efforts such as those designed to educate stakeholders about MSPB processes.

Performance goals

1. Issue high quality decisions.
2. Issue timely decisions.
3. Process cases cost effectively.

4. Make effective use of alternative methods of dispute resolution in MSPB proceedings.
5. Achieve and maintain customer satisfaction with MSPB's adjudicatory and alternative dispute resolution processes and with adjudication outreach efforts.

Performance indicators/measures

MSPB uses the following set of balanced measures to track achievement of its adjudication performance goals. From time to time, MSPB may report additional measures to highlight specific aspects of performance in a particular year.

- Percentage of final MSPB decisions unchanged (affirmed or dismissed) on review by the United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit.
- Percent of cases decided by the Board on Petition for Review (PFR) that are reversed and/or remanded to MSPB judges for a new decision, adjusted for those not due to error or oversight on the part of the AJ.
- Average case processing time.
- Percentage of cases decided within time standards.
- Average case processing cost adjusted for changes in the number of decisions issued.
- Percentage of cases successfully resolved through settlement and through mediation.
- Customer satisfaction with adjudication and alternative dispute resolution processes and with adjudication outreach efforts.

Strategic Goal 2: Merit Systems Studies

To conduct studies that support strong and viable merit systems that ensure the public's interest in a high quality, professional workforce managed under the merit principles and free from prohibited personnel practices.

This goal emphasizes MSPB's responsibility and authority to protect merit through Governmentwide assessment and oversight. To accomplish this goal, MSPB conducts independent, objective studies to assess the impact of Federal management laws, regulations, policies and practices on the Federal merit systems and on the prevention of prohibited personnel practices. MSPB also reviews the significant actions of OPM to assess how those actions impact the merit systems. In addition, MSPB shares knowledge gained about merit-based management and appellate issues and processes to assist those who have a role in developing or implementing merit-based policies and practices that impact the Federal workforce.

Performance goals

1. Conduct merit systems studies and recommend improvements to policy-makers and practitioners.
2. Assess the practice of merit in the workplace.
3. Achieve and maintain customer satisfaction with merit systems studies products and outreach efforts.

Performance indicators/measures

- Number and scope of MSPB reports and *Issues of Merit* newsletters issued.
- Studies or study recommendations referenced in policy papers, professional literature, legislation and the media.
- Periodically conduct and report on results of merit principles surveys or other surveys to monitor perceptions of merit in the workplace.
- Customer satisfaction with reports, newsletters, Website and outreach efforts.

Strategic Goal 3: Management Support and Organizational Excellence

To achieve organizational excellence and strategically manage MSPB's human capital, information technology and other internal systems and processes.

This strategic goal emphasizes MSPB's desire to strategically manage its internal programs and achieve organizational excellence in support of the agency's mission. It is essential that MSPB effectively and efficiently manage its human capital, information technology and other internal systems and processes. It is equally important that MSPB is managed in accordance with the merit systems principles, and all the laws and regulations governing Federal management and accountability. In this way, MSPB is able to carry out its role to protect the Federal merit systems and the rights of individuals within those systems.

Performance goals

1. Attract, develop and retain a high quality, diverse and highly motivated workforce.
2. Effectively use information technology to enhance organizational performance and efficiency, and provide appropriate access to and dissemination of MSPB information.
3. Effectively and efficiently operate financial, budget and other support programs.

Performance indicators/measures

- Effective and efficient operation of management programs.
- Comply with all legal and regulatory requirements.
- Optimal internal customer satisfaction.

Means and strategies to be used to achieve the strategic goals

The Board's most valuable asset is the expertise and experience of its employees, supervisors and managers. The Board relies on them to develop and implement effective and efficient policies and operational processes to achieve its strategic goals. In order to ensure their continued success the Board strategically recruits and develops its employees to make sure it has the right people with the right skills in the right jobs. The Board also makes extensive use of information technology and automated systems in accomplishing all of its goals. To effectively implement these strategies, the Board must obtain and effectively and efficiently manage its financial resources.

Key external factors that could affect goal attainment

External factors that could impact the Board's ability to achieve its goals include agency-specific and Governmentwide changes in the laws and regulations governing the Federal civil service, changes in the Federal workforce, and changes in the way work is accomplished. These factors may affect the number and complexity of appeals and the importance and complexity of merit systems studies. In addition, the availability of budgetary, technical and program resources and the quality of potential job applicants will impact the Board's ability to obtain and retain a skilled workforce, as well as provide adequate space and technological support to carry out its work. MSPB has no control over these factors, yet must be prepared to fulfill its responsibility to protect the merit systems and individual employee rights. To do this, the Board must preserve its critical assets, especially its highly-skilled staff. This will be particularly challenging as the number of employees eligible for retirement increases over the next few years.

Evaluations used in preparing this strategic plan

MSPB used a number of formal and informal program assessments in updating and revising its strategic plan. The Board routinely collects feedback from its customers and stakeholders via comments from persons who visit the Board's Website and discussions during outreach events. In FY 2004, the Board administered a customer satisfaction survey of the agency representatives involved in appeals. The Board also conducted an internal evaluation of its PFR process, and is currently conducting an evaluation of its initial appeals and settlement processes.

In FY 2003, the Board conducted extensive outreach in developing its merit systems studies research agenda. The Board is using the same process currently to revise and update the new research agenda. In FY 2004, the Board administered a customer satisfaction survey to the recipients of its merit systems studies and

newsletters. The Board anticipates conducting similar program assessments to improve the effectiveness of the Board's adjudication and studies missions. The Board used limited external support to obtain information for this strategic plan, but the plan itself was drafted by MSPB employees.