



COALITION OF FEDERAL OMBUDSMAN

MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Date/Time: June 12, 2019 1:30pm – 3:00pm (EST)

Location: Smithsonian Institution (Ripley Center Building) – 1100 Jefferson Drive SW, Washington, DC

Agenda:

1. COFO Mentoring Committee Update
2. Proactive Outreach for an Organizational Ombuds Program
3. Discussion Topics:
 - a. Ethics and pitfalls of assisting in the selection of agency employees for other offices (as with serving on an interview panel or helping rank potential interviewees)
 - b. General Questions – Space for newer ombuds and programs (and people looking to set up programs) to ask questions and get feedback. No issue is too big or small so ask away!
4. Announcements

Highlights:

1. COFO Mentoring Committee Update

The Mentoring Committee is working diligently to host new mentorship orientations for our second round cohort. From the start of our program in 2018 to present, we currently have 24 mentors and mentees, 12 pairings. We are also in the process of gathering feedback from the first cohort.

- a. If you have any questions, please contact COFOMentoring@nih.gov

2. Proactive Outreach for an Organizational Ombuds Program

- a. The Executive Committee is working proactively to conduct reach to agencies that may need an organizational ombuds program. The Executive Committee has sent letters to agencies that received a congressional letter tasked with establishing an organizational ombuds program.
- b. If you know of an agency or entity that may be in need of an organizational ombuds program, please reach out to Paul Sotoudeh: Paul.Sotoudeh@USPTO.GOV

3. Discussion Topics

- a. Ethics and pitfalls of assisting in the selection of agency employees for other offices (as with serving on an interview panel or helping rank potential interviewees)
 - i. Members engaged in a robust discussion regarding why an organizational ombuds should partake, or should not, partake, in hiring panels. Examples include:
 1. Organizational ombuds, both internal and external can participate based on their position of neutrality and providing appropriate feedback

from a neutral stance. Additionally, members discussed that the ombuds function would serve as a checks and balance to ensure that the interview process would be conducted fairly and ethically. For instance, the same questions are asked to all interviewees, references are checked according to the process, and the hiring process is followed diligently. The role of an ombuds on a hiring panel may be such that they are a non-voting member, specifically not serve as a panelist, rather to provide feedback on policies and procedures. The role of the ombuds may be to identify systemic issues should it arise in the formal process.

2. Members further discussed potential areas of concerns with an ombuds being a non-voting member in a hiring event: perception of a neutral entity such as an ombuds would be distorted when asked to make a recommendation by the panel and/or may be a conflict of interest. In this case, the ombuds would again not be a participating or voting member, but one that would serve to ensure the hiring process is followed ethically. Should there be a conflict of interest, the ombuds would naturally disclose their stance prior to the interviews.
 3. All participants agreed that an ombuds must follow the principles if and when serving on a hiring panel.
- b. General Questions for New Ombuds
 - i. If ombuds are seeking an external facilitator and/or mediator, Sharing Neutrals program provides mediators and facilitators to government entities. This program is managed by the Federal Conciliation Mediation Services. If you need contact details, please email Paul Sotoudeh (Paul.Sotoudeh@USPTO.GOV) or any member of the COFO Executive Committee.
 - c. Conference Committee: will be meeting in the next couple of weeks. COFO conference will take place in October 2019. Details to follow. If you are interested in participating, please email Paul Sotoudeh: Paul.Sotoudeh@USPTO.GOV

4. Announcements

- a. **Conferences:** U.S. Ombuds Association Conference will take place in Honolulu, Hawaii from 18-20 September 2019. Registration is now open.
- b. **Groups:** NY area group: if anyone is in the NY area or interested in participating in the NY Ombuds group, please contact Wendy Kamenshine (Wendy.Kamenshine@cfpb.gov). The group is composed of practicing ombuds in the NY area, working in private/public and academic sectors.
- c. **Call for Articles:** The ABA Dispute Resolution Section is seeking articles for the September 2019 edition of their Just Resolutions newsletter, which will be dedicated to articles about ombuds. For questions on submissions, please contact Shannon Lynn Burton: sburton@msu.edu
- d. **Event:** Interagency Working Group/Steering Committee will host the ADR Lunchtime Series. The presenter will be Dr. John Barkat, Mediator at the International Monetary Fund on Tuesday, 25 June from noon to 1:30PM EST. Please contact Cindy Mazur for more information: Cindy.mazur@fema.dhs.gov
- e. **Job Announcements**

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- i. CFBP Detailee Position: GS-12/GS-13 Acting Associate Ombudsman detailee position at the CFPB Ombudsman's Office. Resumes are due by 28 June. Please email questions/concerns to Wendy Kamenshine:
Wendy.Kamenshine@cfpb.gov.
- ii. Organizational Ombuds Position: GS14/15 at Department of Energy – position will be opening soon.
- iii. Program Specialist (ADR) Position: GS-260-13, Location Negotiable (Competitive Service) at Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of Resolution Management (ORM).

Attendees

In Person

Last	First	Agency
Berg	Mollie	National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency
Dyck	Juliana	Department of Energy
Hill	Gary	National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency
Kinnavy	Noreen	US Agency for Global Media, VOA, and Office of Cuba Broadcasting
Maurer	Bill	Department of Energy
Palosky	Dania	Smithsonian
Sotoudeh	Paul	USPTO
Vermillion	Chris	Transportation Security Administration
Wolfe	Lexi	Transportation Security Administration

On Phone

Last	First	Agency
Asar	Sharon	CFPB
Bolden	Ana	
Brown	Andrea	USPTO
Enriquez	Elisa	Los Alamos National Laboratory
Epps	Ayanna	FDIC
Fenneman	Rebecca	Federal Maritime Commission
Fox	Angela	USDA Food Nutrition Services
Gnatt	Sheldon	NSA
Gordon	Laurel	US Marshals Service
Harris	Robert	FDIC
Kamenshine	Wendy	Consumer Financial Protection Bureau
Katherine	Erica	FDA Office of Regulatory Affairs
Klein	Stephanie	
Lenkel	Laurie	FDA Office of the Commissioner
McNeil	Tracey	SEC
Merrix	Celeste	FLETC
Michael	David	NIH
Miller	Rozmyn	Consumer Financial Protection Bureau
Mills	Laurel	US Marshals Service
Patel	Bina	National Ground Intelligence Center
Rippey	Catherine	HHS (Medicare Beneficiary Ombudsman)
Rowe	Mary	MIT
Smith	Tyler	NIH
Todd	Julie	EEOC (Senior Administrative Judge)
Valdez	Robertta	FDIC External
Walker	Olivia	DOD, Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center

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Walker	Don	US Army Medical Command
Weber	Guy	National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency
White	Karen	National Guard Bureau
Whyte	Jean	Federal Reserve
Yuille	Deanna	FDA
Zeller	Jessica	FDA Office of Regulatory Affairs