

# BEST PLACES TO WORK IN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT®

## COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT

Robust, two-way communication between agency leadership and employees is essential to building trust, empowering staff and fostering engagement within an organization.

Every year, however, less than 50% of Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey respondents say they believe their feedback will be used to improve their agency. In order to improve engagement and build a positive work experience, employees need to know their voices matter and that their feedback is being taken seriously.

The 2022 survey and continued communication and feedback on the results between employees and leaders are particularly important to the effects of workplace policy changes as agencies find an effective “new normal.” The 2022 survey also covered several new topics such as the introduction of questions on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility. Therefore, this survey will also serve as a benchmark for employee perceptions as agencies implement related initiatives.”

The Partnership for Public Service and Boston Consulting Group created this toolkit to help federal leaders— along with communications and human resources staff—communicate with employees about the FEVS and the Best Places to Work in the Federal Government® rankings, and ultimately to demonstrate that employee feedback is valued and being used to make their agencies better places to work. This toolkit provides guidance and templates, but we recommend that any plans or materials be customized to meet your agency’s needs.

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### IN THIS TOOLKIT:



#### Communications Plan

A recommended timeline for communications and feedback-related activities throughout the year, as well as a downloadable communications plan template.



#### Message Templates

Downloadable email templates to encourage FEVS participation, announce FEVS and Best Places to Work results, and update employees on ongoing efforts to address their feedback.



#### Marketing Materials

Links to download Best Places to Work posters, banners and pictures for use on social media pages, agency websites or as printed collateral.

# COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

It is important to plan and communicate with employees about collecting their feedback and the progress being made to address issues raised at different times throughout the year. This section includes a recommended timeline for activities and a communications plan template to help organize messaging.

## Recommended Timeline

Collecting, disseminating and acting on employee feedback is a year-round endeavor. We recommend dividing up messaging and actions into distinct periods throughout the year:

RECOMMENDED TIMELINE	
1 Month Before and During FEVS Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepare a communications plan for the coming months and continue updating employees about ongoing efforts to improve your workplace.</li> <li>Encourage employees to complete the FEVS through frequent and tailored communication.</li> </ul>
1 to 2 Months After FEVS Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>While you wait to receive and analyze your new FEVS data, take time to review data from previous years. This will help put your new data into context.</li> <li>Continue to act on existing priorities.</li> </ul>
1 Month After Receiving FEVS Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyze and discuss the FEVS results with agency leadership.</li> <li>Disseminate the results to every work unit with available data.</li> <li>Share initial takeaways with employees.</li> </ul>
2 to 3 Months After Receiving FEVS Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Convene employees—through focus groups or town halls—to gain additional insights into your FEVS results. Qualitative data can help bring life to the survey and help you better understand what issues deserve attention in the coming year.</li> <li>Set new priorities or refine existing ones based on your survey results and input from employees.</li> <li>Inform employees about your Best Places to Work in the Federal Government results.</li> </ul>
4 to 6 Months After Receiving FEVS Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determine what actions the organization will take to address new or refined priorities.</li> <li>Share the list of actions with employees.</li> <li>Report action planning progress to employees.</li> </ul>

### Department of Health and Human Services Prioritizes Year-Round Communication and Sees Results

During the past few years, human resources and public affairs leaders at the Department of Health and Human Services assembled a robust collaborative effort to improve internal communications on the FEVS, to improve employee perceptions of how feedback is used and to build a culture that prioritizes employee engagement. One product from this collaboration was the implementation of the slogan, “You Spoke, We Listened, This Happened,” which guides communications with employees throughout the year. “One of the first things we do each year is to outline a plan to send regular pulse emails to all employees. Last year, in addition to communications at the division level, we sent 10 departmental messages before, during and after the FEVS survey was available,” said James Egbert, human capital strategy branch chief at HHS.

The department also established a FEVS/Engagement program team. Several internal communications experts support this team’s work disseminating information about agency priorities, informing employees throughout about activities and demonstrating the results of their efforts.

Egbert stressed that different divisions and offices within HHS have unique cultures, and that messages are crafted to meet their needs. “In one organization with many employees geographically dispersed, a brief, yet fun FEVS key term crossword puzzle might work well to get employees thinking about participating in the upcoming FEVS. In another organization, sharing an infographic about survey confidentiality might be more appropriate in mustering higher levels of participation,” Egbert said.

These efforts appear to have paid off as HHS has experienced a substantial increase in survey participation. The response rate at the department jumped by nearly 15 points from 57.2% in 2018 to 71.9% in 2019 while the government-wide rate rose by 2 points.

## Communications Plan Template

Whatever form of communication you choose, employees should know that their leaders care about survey results and their concerns. Making this the driving message is essential to any effort to improve engagement and the employee experience.

The following table outlines a sample plan for communicating about:

- The FEVS prior to its administration.
- FEVS results.
- Best Places to Work results.
- Ongoing efforts to improve the employee experience based on feedback.

COMMUNICATIONS PLAN TEMPLATE				
Target Audience	Message	Vehicle	Responsibility	Timeline
<i>Who do we want to inform?</i>	<i>What do we want to tell them?</i>	<i>How are we going to tell them?</i>	<i>Who will be involved in the communication and how?</i>	<i>When will we communicate?</i>
Employees	Encourage FEVS	[In addition to email, group settings—agency events, town halls, or team meetings—can be effective places to encourage staff to complete the survey.]	[Determine what levels and sections of the organization should be involved. It may help to consider the role of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Senior leaders.</li> <li>• Work unit leaders.</li> <li>• Supervisors.</li> <li>• Communications sta!.</li> <li>• Human resources sta!.</li> <li>• Employee union(s).]</li> </ul>	[Consider how early and often to communicate with staff in the time leading up to the survey launch.]
Employees	Announce FEVS results.	[In addition to email, consider other vehicles to share the results: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Town hall briefings;</li> <li>• Supervisor conversations.</li> <li>• Video messages.</li> <li>• Intranet posts.]</li> </ul>	[Consider what level of the organization, in addition to senior leadership, that this message should come from. Is there a role for work unit or component heads?]	[Consider how quickly you can share results after receiving them from the Office of Personnel Management.]
Employees	Announce Best Places to Work results.	[In addition to email, consider other vehicles to share the results: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Town hall briefings.</li> <li>• Supervisor conversations.</li> <li>• Video messages.</li> <li>• Intranet posts.</li> <li>• Physical collateral posted in high-traffic areas.]</li> </ul>	[Consider what level of the organization, in addition to senior leadership, that this message should come from. Is there a role for work unit or component heads?]	[Consider how quickly you can share results after receiving them from the Office of Personnel Management.]
External Audience	Announce Best Places to Work results.	[If results are positive, consider sharing them through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social media.</li> <li>• Agency newsletters.</li> <li>• Job postings.]</li> </ul>	[Consider ways to involve employees and their stories in external announcements about your results.]	[Consider how quickly you can share results after receiving them from the Partnership.]
Employees	Update about ongoing efforts to improve the employee experience	[In addition to email, consider other vehicles to share updates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Town hall briefings.</li> <li>• Supervisor conversations.</li> <li>• Video messages.</li> <li>• Intranet posts.]</li> </ul>	[Consider what level of the organization, in addition to senior leadership, that this message should come from. Is there a role for work unit leaders or employee-led working groups?]	[Determine key milestones that warrant messaging throughout the year.]

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## MESSAGE TEMPLATES

Although it has limitations, email can still be a useful way to communicate with large groups of employees at once, particularly if the workforce is spread across different locations. While there is no magic number of times you should communicate via email, we recommend prioritizing messages during the following time periods:

- Before the FEVS launches to encourage employees to complete the survey.
- After your agency receives its FEVS data reports and dashboards from OPM.
- After your agency's results in the Best Places to Work rankings are announced.
- A few times throughout the year to keep employees up to date on activities designed to improve the employee experience based on their feedback.

The following templates can give leadership a head start on conveying critical messages to employees in a timely manner.

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### Encouraging FEVS Participation

Subject: Your Feedback Matters: [Year] Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey

[Salutation]

It's time to complete the annual Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey!

[Thank employees who took the survey in the previous year]

On [exact time], you should receive a message from the Office of Personnel Management that includes instructions and a link to complete this year's FEVS. Your feedback on your job, supervisor and leadership is important for the [agency name]'s success, and I hope you will take the time to complete the survey. [Remind employees of your policy around time they can use to complete the survey]

I also encourage you to be candid in your responses. Honest feedback is the only way that we can know what is going well within [agency name] and what we can do to make it an even better place to work. As a result of last year's survey, we have [give examples of changes made within the agency based on feedback from previous surveys].

As always, the survey is completely anonymous. Individual results will not be shared with [agency name] and your responses cannot be linked back to you. If you have any questions, please see [agency FEVS manager or other appropriate contact].

Finally, know that the FEVS is not your only avenue for sharing feedback. If you have any ideas, concerns, or questions about your experience at [agency name], please reach out to [point employees to the appropriate resources].

[Signature]

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## Announce FEVS results

Subject: [Year] Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey Results: A Message from [name]

[Salutation]

The [year] Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey results have arrived. Thank you to those who took the time to complete the survey and to strengthen [agency name]. Our participation rate was [note the response rate and compare to an appropriate benchmark such as your response rate in the previous year or government-wide.]

As you may remember, leadership chose to prioritize solving a few challenges that were voiced in the FEVS last year:

- [List priority areas]

I am happy to see in the results that this hard work is paying off:

- [Call out survey items where there were notable score increases from the previous year]
- [Call out survey items where you saw the highest percent positive scores or the lowest percent negative scores]

At the same time, there are a few areas where we still need to focus our attention:

- [Call out survey items where there were notable score decreases from the previous year]
- [Call out survey items where you saw the lowest percent positive scores or highest percent negative scores]

I take these issues seriously and will ensure that our leadership team continues to work with employees to identify potential solutions to our ongoing challenges. As always, I encourage you to share your ideas and opinions for how to improve your experience at [agency name] through [list various communication outlets that are available].

I encourage you to take a look at the results [provide instructions on how employees can view the results for the agency or their work unit].

Again, thank you for your feedback and for helping make [agency name] a [better/great] place to work.

[Signature]

### The Do's and Don'ts of Data Analysis

The FEVS provides valuable insights into the employee experience, but consider these guidelines while analyzing your data and formulating takeaways for employees.

#### DO:

- Set aside time to review results.
- Maintain an open, objective perspective.
- Review reports at least twice and look for patterns before drawing conclusions.
- Take a positive and constructive approach.

#### DON'T:

- Be defensive regarding results that point to areas needing improvement.
- Judge or search for justifications.
- Focus on how to solve problems during the data review.

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## Announcing Best Places to Work Results

Subject: Our Best Places to Work Results

[Salutation]

Today, the nonpartisan, nonprofit Partnership for Public Service and Boston Consulting Group released the [year] Best Places to Work in the Federal Government rankings. The rankings are based on the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey results and assess how federal public servants view their jobs and workplaces.

This year, [agency name] ranked [ranking] out of [rank out of] [size] agencies and our overall employee engagement score [increased/decreased] by [point change]. To put these results in context, [compare to an appropriate benchmark such as your results from the previous year or government-wide results].

[Remind employees what you are doing to improve or continue to perform well]

[Reference a well-performing subcomponent or congratulate the workforce if you received an award]

I am committed to identifying and spreading the bright spots that exist across [agency name] and ask each of you to do the same. Together, we can [improve/continue to shine].

[Signature]

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## Update on Ongoing Activities

Subject: How We Are Using Your Feedback to Improve: An Update on Ongoing Activities

[Salutation]

This year, our leadership team set specific goals to address concerns that employees raised in the annual Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey. We are committed to responding to these challenges to ensure [agency name] is an engaging workplace where employees feel heard and supported.

Through last year's survey, we received feedback that employees were concerned about:

- [Call out areas that are being addressed in your efforts]

As a result of your feedback, we chose to prioritize a few efforts this year:

- [Call out activities you have undertaken to understand and address concerns]

Because of these efforts, we have begun to see changes occur within [agency name]:

- [Call out any immediate results you have seen or implemented]

Our leadership team takes your feedback seriously. We will only be successful in delivering on our mission if employees are engaged and empowered to do their best work. We realize that we still have room to grow, but we will continue to find new ways to respond to the challenges we face.

[Signature]

### Get Creative

Try to think of a catchy slogan to use when discussing employee feedback. A phrase like "You Said, We Did" coined by the Department of the Interior or "You Spoke, We Listened, This Happened" used by the Department of Health and Human Services is a great way to show employees that their feedback has an impact and remind them that it matters.

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## MARKETING MATERIALS

Building a culture that prioritizes employee feedback and engagement is not easy government is a testament to the hard work of an agency's leadership and staff. The Best Places to Work rankings offer the opportunity to market the employee experience at your agency to internal and external audiences.

We have seen agencies use the Best Places to Work results to promote their success in various ways. You can:

- **Showcase your Best Places to Work awards plaque:** If your agency is fortunate to receive an award as a top ranked or most improved agency, posting your plaque in a common area, like your office lobby or a prominent conference room, can be a great way to market your success. If you are interested in ordering additional plaques, please contact [bptw@ourpublicservice.org](mailto:bptw@ourpublicservice.org).
- **Post a Best Places to Work banner on your career page:** Using a Best Places to Work image on your agency career page or job postings can attract jobseekers and help you build a reputation as an employer of choice.
- **Post a Best Places to Work banner on your social media pages:** Social media can be a great way to market your success to employees, potential jobseekers, and the public.
- **Post Best Places to Work signage around your office:** Signage placed around an office can be a great way to remind employees that their feedback is meaningful and that they share in your agency's success.

Download and use any of our social media graphics to market your agency as a best place to work. All content has been optimized for printing and digital use.