



FEDERAL LABOR RELATIONS AUTHORITY

STRATEGIC PLAN

2022-2026



Federal Labor Relations Authority
2022-2026 Strategic Plan

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN



The Federal Service Labor-Management Relations Statute, or “the Statute,” was passed in 1978 and implemented the following year. It had its genesis in President John F. Kennedy’s 1962 [Executive Order 10988, *Employee-Management Cooperation in the Federal Sector*](#) (EO 10988), and President Richard M. Nixon’s 1969 [Executive Order 11491, *Labor-Management Relations in the Federal Service*](#) (EO 11491).

The Statute created the Federal Labor Relations Authority (FLRA) as an independent Federal agency that oversees the labor-management programs of most agencies in the Federal Government. Through that oversight, the FLRA protects the rights of, and facilitates the collective-bargaining relationships among, federal agencies, labor organizations, and employees. The Statute remains the source of the FLRA’s mission, which is as relevant today as it was when Congress enacted the Statute.

In recent years, the FLRA has experienced various challenges that have hindered its ability to successfully perform this mission. Specifically, the nearly four-year absence of a General Counsel, and the resulting inability to issue unfair-labor-practice complaints, has resulted in unprecedented case backlogs in the Office of the General Counsel (OGC); the FLRA’s successful alternative-dispute-resolution office, the Collaboration and Alternative Dispute Resolution Office (CADRO), was abolished, depriving the FLRA’s parties of a wide range of essential services and adding to backlogs in cases before the FLRA’s three Members; experienced staff departed, including those who left when the FLRA closed its Dallas and Boston Regional Offices; new case filings grew significantly; and the FLRA saw a precipitous drop in its Best Places to Work in the Federal Government rankings, dropping from the #3 small agency to the bottom two.

In 2021, President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. issued [Executive Order 14003, *Protecting the Federal Workforce*](#) (EO 14003) and [Executive Order 14025, *Worker Organizing and Empowerment*](#) (EO 14025). In EO 14025, President Biden repeats Congress’s finding, set forth prominently in the Statute, that “experience in both private and public employment indicates that the statutory protection of the right of employees to organize, bargain collectively, and participate through labor organizations of their own choosing in decisions which affect them . . . safeguards the public interest, . . . contributes to the effective conduct of public business, and . . . facilitates and encourages the amicable settlements of disputes between employees and their employers involving conditions of employment.”

More than ever, the FLRA should lead in making federal-sector labor-management relations work. We can do so by using our unique expertise to help prevent and effectively resolve labor-management disputes, and doing so in a transparent manner that respects the legitimate interests of key stakeholders.

But, to further those goals – and consistent with President Biden’s vision of promoting effective collective bargaining – the FLRA needs to rebuild. To that end, it has begun a multiyear, multiphase effort that will continue through the period of this Strategic Plan. Specifically, the FLRA has begun restoring FLRA staff levels, including restoring CADRO



and seeking to restore OGC and the Office of Administrative Law Judges (OALJ) staffing levels. It has begun efforts to rebuild employee engagement and satisfaction internally, including once again recognizing the FLRA employees' exclusive representative, the Union of Authority Employees. These efforts have begun to pay off, with the FLRA rising to the #7 – and the #2 most improved – small agency in the Best Places to Work in the Federal Government rankings. And more will be done in the coming years to continue those efforts and to enable the FLRA to better serve its customers.

President Biden begins EO 14003 by observing, "Career civil servants are the backbone of the Federal workforce, providing the expertise and experience necessary for the critical functioning of the Federal Government." In 2022, for this upcoming 60th anniversary of President Kennedy's EO 10988, let us reflect and refocus on our valuable workforce at the FLRA. Let us avail ourselves of the benefits of having a constructive relationship with the re-recognized UAE. And let us make the FLRA a great place to work, once again. To these goals, I am firmly committed.

I am proud to have the honor to serve as Chairman of the FLRA and to work with its incredibly resilient and resourceful employees.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ernest DuBester".

Ernest DuBester, Chairman
Federal Labor Relations Authority



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Federal Labor Relations Authority (the FLRA) is an independent agency created by Title VII of the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978. The FLRA has three independent statutory components—the Authority, the Office of the General Counsel, and the Federal Service Impasses Panel—each with unique roles and responsibilities.

MISSION STATEMENT

The FLRA's mission is

Exercising leadership in preventing and resolving labor-management disputes, giving full effect to the collective-bargaining rights of employees, unions, and agencies.

To accomplish this, the FLRA provides leadership in establishing policies and guidance to assist federal agencies with their labor-management-relations programs. The FLRA also: resolves complaints of unfair labor practices (ULPs); determines the appropriateness of bargaining units, and supervises or conducts secret-ballot elections for labor-organization representation; adjudicates exceptions to grievance-arbitration awards; adjudicates legal issues relating to the duty to bargain; and resolves impasses during negotiations.

VISION

The FLRA's vision, which drives achievement of its mission, is

Lead in promoting constructive federal labor-management relations.

Three strategic goals, each supported by several strategic objectives, guide the FLRA's pursuit of its vision and achievement of its mission.

The FLRA developed this strategic plan against a canvas of strengths and challenges that can affect overall mission delivery. The source of the FLRA's internal strengths is its skilled workforce guided by the Agency's values of transparency and accountability, along with its increasing focus on the innovative use of information technology (IT) and data-driven analysis. Challenges arise from budget uncertainty and Presidential-appointee vacancies. The goals and objectives in this plan support the FLRA's mission in light of these strengths and challenges.



STRATEGIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

FLRA Strategic Goals

Strategic Goal #1	Strategic Goal #2	Strategic Goal #3
We will resolve disputes under the Federal Service Labor-Management Relations Statute in a timely, high-quality, and impartial manner.	We will promote stability in the federal labor-management community by providing leadership and guidance through Alternative Dispute Resolution and education.	We will manage our resources effectively and efficiently in order to achieve organizational excellence.

Strategic Objectives

<p>1.1. Achieve or exceed case-resolution timeliness measures, as established by each component.</p> <p>1.2. Set a high standard of quality for the case-resolution process.</p>	<p>2.1. Offer high-quality outreach and prevention services, as well as reference resources, to promote more effective labor-management relations across the federal government.</p> <p>2.2. Maximize the use of Alternative Dispute Resolution practices in case resolution.</p>	<p>3.1. Recruit, retain, and develop a highly talented, motivated, and diverse workforce to accomplish the FLRA’s mission.</p> <p>3.2. Improve usage of existing technology and deploy new IT systems to streamline and enhance organizational operations.</p> <p>3.3. Act as an effective steward of agency resources.</p>
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INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

The FLRA is an independent administrative federal agency created by Title VII of the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978, also known as the Federal Service Labor-Management Relations Statute (the [Statute](#)), 5 U.S.C. §§ 7101-7135. The Statute’s purpose is to prescribe certain rights and obligations of the Federal Government’s employees, their exclusive representatives, and Federal agencies, and to establish procedures that are designed to meet the Government’s special requirements and needs.

MISSION AND RESPONSIBILITIES

FLRA MISSION: *“Exercising leadership in preventing and resolving labor-management disputes, giving full effect to the collective-bargaining rights of employees, unions, and agencies.”*

In striving to fulfill its mission, the FLRA executes the following five primary responsibilities, as set forth in the Statute:

1. *Resolving complaints of unfair labor practices (ULP)*. The FLRA is responsible for investigating, prosecuting, and adjudicating claims that agencies or labor organizations have failed to uphold their legal obligations to other parties or individual employees under the Statute.
2. *Determining the appropriateness of bargaining units, and supervising or conducting elections, for labor-organization representation (REP)*. The FLRA conducts secret-ballot elections for union representation, resolves objections regarding the conduct of such elections, and determines which employees may be included in bargaining units, as well as the appropriate composition of such units, under the Statute.
3. *Adjudicating exceptions to arbitrators’ awards (ARB)*. Under the Statute, parties’ collective-bargaining agreements must include negotiated procedures for the filing of grievances by employees, unions, or agencies, and those negotiated grievance procedures must provide for binding arbitration of unresolved grievances. The FLRA adjudicates appeals, known as exceptions, to the resulting arbitration awards, and reviews those awards to assess whether they are contrary to any law, rule, or regulation, or are deficient on other grounds similar to those applied by federal courts in private-sector labor-management relations. The FLRA may take such action as it considers necessary, including setting aside or modifying the awards.
4. *Adjudicating legal issues relating to the duty to bargain (NEG)*. The FLRA resolves negotiability disputes that can arise either when an agency claims that a contract proposal made during bargaining is outside the duty to bargain under all



circumstances, or when an agency head disapproves negotiated agreements on the ground that they contain provisions that are contrary to law. In cases regarding bargaining proposals, the FLRA may order the parties to bargain over negotiable proposals, and in cases involving agency-head disapprovals of negotiated agreements, the FLRA may order the agency to rescind its disapproval of lawful provisions.

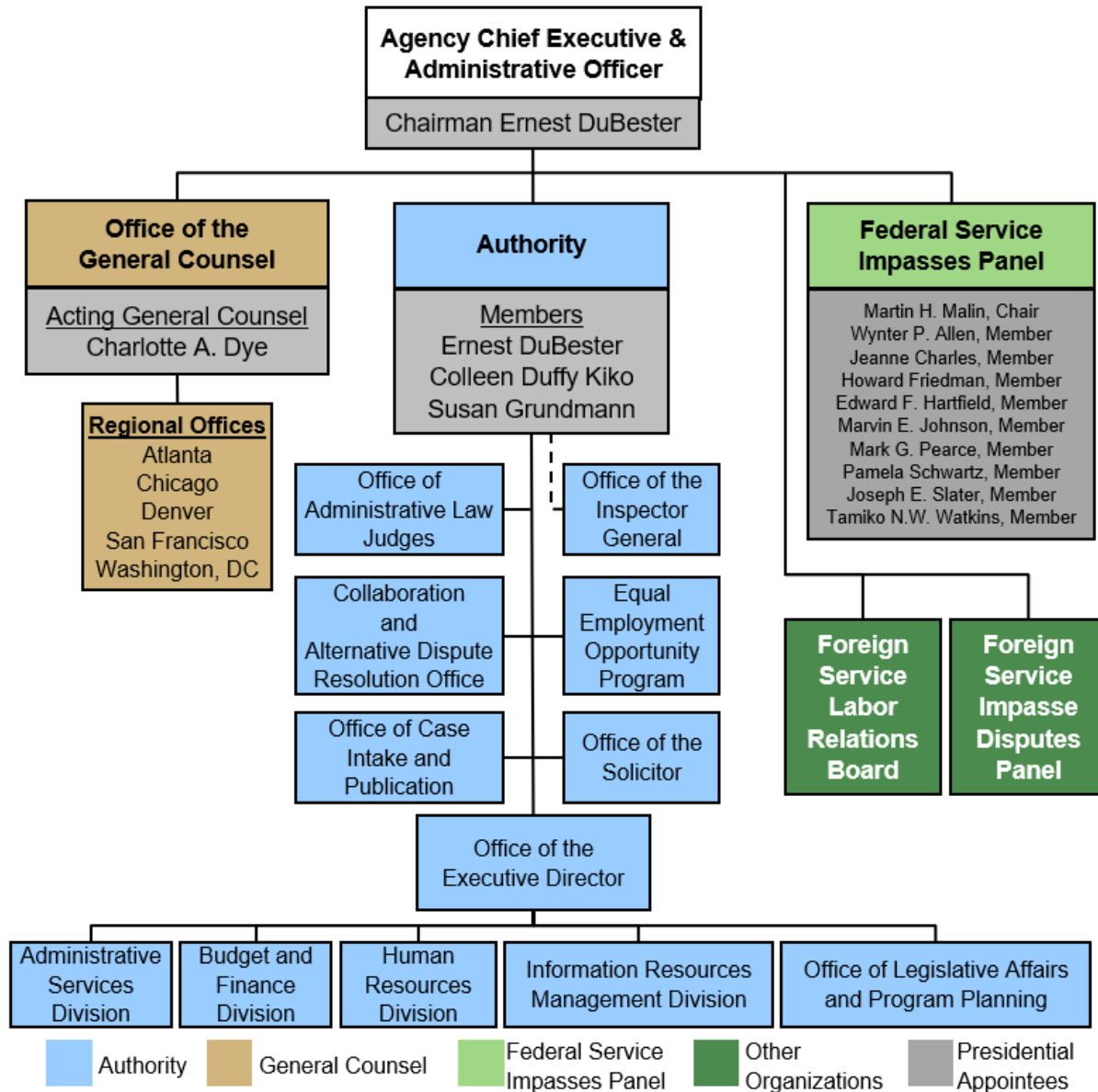
5. *Resolving impasses during negotiations (Impasse)*. If the parties cannot reach agreement after negotiations and third-party assistance, either of the parties can request assistance from the FLRA through the Federal Service Impasses Panel.

The Statute also directs the FLRA to “provide leadership in establishing policies and guidance” related to labor-management issues under its jurisdiction. Through its casework, the FLRA has developed extensive expertise in the Statute and the processes for optimal resolution of labor-management disputes. The guidance that it develops to share this expertise comes in the form of its web-based and in-person trainings, Alternative-Dispute-Resolution (ADR) services, and other outreach activities. These trainings, services, and activities, when executed alongside the agency’s case-adjudication responsibilities, are an essential part of how the FLRA aims to achieve its mission of promoting stable, constructive labor-management relations across the federal government.



ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Federal Labor Relations Authority



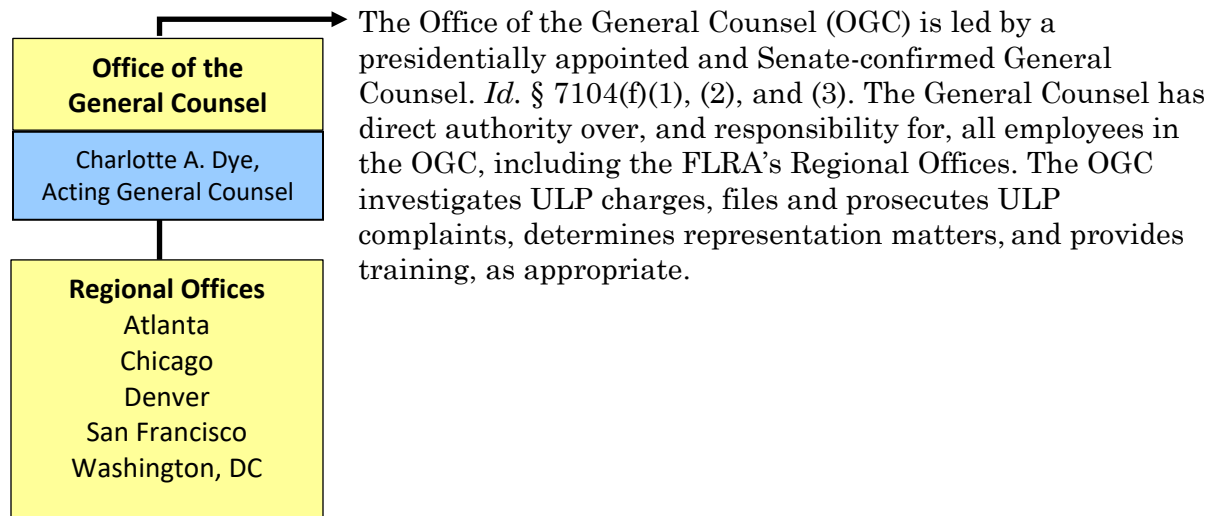
Headquartered in Washington, D.C., the FLRA has three statutory components: the Authority, the Office of the General Counsel, and the Federal Service Impasses Panel (the FSIP). Each component has unique adjudicative or prosecutorial roles.

The Authority, the FLRA’s adjudicatory body, is led by three presidentially nominated and Senate-confirmed Members. The Authority is responsible for adjudicating ULP complaints



heard by the Office of Administrative Law Judges,¹ exceptions to arbitrators' grievance-arbitration awards, disputes over the negotiability of collective-bargaining language, and disputes concerning bargaining-unit determinations.² Pursuant to § 7104(b) of the Statute, the President designates one Member to serve as Chairman of the FLRA. The Chairman is the Agency's chief executive and administrative officer.

Other programs and offices under the Chairman's jurisdiction include the Office of the Solicitor, the Office of Case Intake and Publication, the Collaboration and Alternative Dispute Resolution Office, and the Equal Employment Opportunity Program. Standing as an independent entity within the Authority is the Office of Inspector General.



The FSIP assists in resolving negotiation impasses between federal agencies and exclusive representatives under § 7119 of the Statute and under the Federal Employees Flexible and Compressed Work Schedules Act, 5 U.S.C. § 6131(c)(2)(A), (c)(3)(B) and (c)(3)(C).

The FSIP is composed of a Chairman and at least six other members, who are appointed by the President. *Id.* § 7119(c)(2).

Federal Service Impasses Panel
Martin H. Malin, Chairman Wynter Patrice Allen, Member Jeanne Charles, Member Tamiko N.W. Watkins, Member Edward F. Hartfield, Member Mark Gaston Pearce, Member Howard Friedman, Member Pamela R. Schwartz, Member Marvin E. Johnson, Member Joseph E. Slater, Member

¹ The Authority has delegated to the Office of Administrative Law Judges its authority under § 7118 of the Statute to determine whether any person has engaged in or is engaging in a ULP. 5 U.S.C. § 7105(e)(2).

² The Authority has delegated to the Regional Directors its authority to determine whether a group of employees is an appropriate unit; to conduct investigations and to provide for hearings; to determine whether a question of representation exists and to direct an election; and to supervise or conduct secret-ballot elections and certify the results thereof. 5 U.S.C. § 7105(e)(1).



**Foreign
Service
Labor
Relations
Board**

Pursuant to the Foreign Service Act of 1980, 22 U.S.C. § 4101-4118, the FLRA also provides full program and staff support to two additional bodies. The Foreign Service Labor Relations Board oversees the labor-management relations program for Foreign Service employees of the U.S. Agency for Global Media (formerly the Broadcasting Board of Governors), the U.S. Agency for International Development, and the Departments of State, Agriculture, and Commerce.

The Foreign Service Impasse Disputes Panel assists in resolving bargaining impasses arising in the course of collective bargaining between the exclusive representative and those same Foreign Service agencies.

**Foreign
Service
Impasse
Disputes
Panel**

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

This strategic plan’s development revolved around a return to the principles of the 2015-2018 Strategic Plan, for which FLRA leadership undertook a structured process that solicited the perspectives of the agency’s diverse employee, customer, and stakeholder base. That strategic-planning team comprised representatives from each FLRA component and the employees’ representative organization, the Union of Authority Employees. At that time, the team internally conducted one-on-one interviews with the FLRA’s entire leadership team, held targeted focus-group meetings with managers and employees, and solicited employee feedback through online message boards and e-mails.

For external stakeholders, the FLRA then held a series of focus groups, in which representatives from seven federal-employee unions and twelve federal agencies provided input on FLRA services and performance. In addition to soliciting feedback from agencies that use FLRA resources or who are parties to FLRA cases, the FLRA back then also sought input from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in the early stages of the strategic-planning process. Equipped with these perspectives and guided by the FLRA’s core values of transparency, accountability, open dialogue, and pre-decisional involvement, the strategic-planning team of that time held working sessions to develop and memorialize the goals, objectives, and performance measures of this strategic plan.



STRATEGIC GOALS, OBJECTIVES, STRATEGIES, AND PERFORMANCE GOALS

FLRA Strategic Goals

Strategic Goal #1	Strategic Goal #2	Strategic Goal #3
We will resolve disputes under the Federal Service Labor-Management Relations Statute in a timely, high-quality, and impartial manner.	We will promote stability in the federal labor-management community by providing leadership and guidance through Alternative Dispute Resolution and education.	We will manage our resources effectively and efficiently in order to achieve organizational excellence.

Strategic Objectives

1.1. Achieve or exceed case-resolution timeliness measures, as established by each component.	2.1. Offer high-quality outreach and prevention services, as well as reference resources, to promote more effective labor-management relations across the federal government.	3.1. Recruit, retain, and develop a highly talented, motivated, and diverse workforce to accomplish the FLRA’s mission.
1.2. Set a high standard of quality for the case-resolution process.	2.2. Maximize the use of Alternative Dispute Resolution practices in case resolution.	3.2. Improve usage of existing technology and deploy new IT systems to streamline and enhance organizational operations.
		3.3. Act as an effective steward of agency resources.

The FLRA has a distinct role and mission to fulfill in the federal government. The agency has three strategic goals, which support the agency’s ability to fulfill its mission.

GOAL 1: WE WILL RESOLVE DISPUTES UNDER THE FEDERAL SERVICE LABOR-MANAGEMENT RELATIONS STATUTE IN A TIMELY, HIGH-QUALITY, AND IMPARTIAL MANNER.

Goal Overview

As described in the introduction, the FLRA receives five different, primary types of cases from parties: Unfair Labor Practice (ULP), Representation (REP), Arbitration (ARB), Negotiability (NEG), and Bargaining Impasse (Impasse). The first strategic goal relates to the FLRA’s investigation, prosecution, and adjudication of these cases.

When resolving cases, the FLRA applies standards of timeliness, quality, and impartiality. Labor-management disputes that remain unresolved for a significant period of time or that are resolved in an ineffective manner can negatively affect other federal agencies’ ability to



accomplish their own missions. By evaluating progress against these standards, the FLRA will be able to continually improve and innovate its case-related processes and contribute to a more effective and efficient government.

Strategic Objectives

Objective 1.1: Achieve or exceed case-resolution timeliness measures, as established by each component.

It is difficult for parties to gain maximum benefit from the FLRA's investigation, prosecution, and adjudication of their cases if case resolution is not swift, or are issued too late to be relevant to the original dispute. Consequently, timeliness measures are essential for accountability in the agency's case-resolution processes. The process for each case type is unique, and a majority of the agency's case types are processed, at various stages, by different combinations of the agency's independent components and offices. For this reason, the FLRA historically has and will continue to set separate timeliness measures for each case type. Goals around these measures are developed and provided annually in the FLRA's Performance and Accountability Report (PAR). The agency will use the strategies described below to continually evaluate progress towards achieving its timeliness measures, and it will streamline and innovate processes or revise measures, as necessary, based on assessment of past performance, resources, parties' needs, and impacts on quality. Employing these strategies to facilitate the timely resolution of its cases will allow the FLRA to best serve its parties' needs and to make progress towards its mission of exercising leadership in preventing and resolving labor-management disputes, giving full effect to the collective-bargaining rights of employees, unions, and agencies.

Strategies:

The following strategies describe a data-driven process that the FLRA will use to achieve its timeliness goals:

- Establish goals for timeliness measures, and discuss lessons learned and best practices, both within and among the three components, at least annually
- Incorporate timeliness progress reviews into the existing regular meeting structure and/or other venues in order to share updates and best practices, promote accountability, and discuss steps for future performance improvement
- Continuously develop and implement process and material improvements discussed during the regular progress reviews or at any other appropriate time

Components Involved:

- FLRA Authority
 - OALJ
- FLRA OGC
- FLRA FSIP

Performance Goals for Objective 1.1:

- Performance Goal 1.1.1: Timely investigate, prosecute, and adjudicate each case type (ULP, REP, ARB, NEG, Impasse)
- Performance Goal 1.1.2: Resolve overage cases in a timely fashion



Objective 1.2: Set a high standard of quality for the case-resolution process

While timeliness is an important measure of the FLRA's effectiveness in handling its cases, it is universally understood within the agency that parties do not receive maximum benefit from timely case decisions without commensurate attention to quality. The FLRA assesses quality in terms of clear communication with parties, effective ULP and REP case investigations, and the issuance of well-written and understandable decisions and other written products, that provide deliberate, impartial, and legally sound analyses and consideration of the issues in dispute. As reflected in the strategies for this objective, the FLRA is committed to re-evaluating its concept of quality over time to increase the value that the agency's case-resolution processes bring to the federal-sector labor-management community.

Unlike timeliness and quality, impartiality is not targeted in a separate strategic objective for Goal 1 because it is inextricably linked to the agency's definition of quality. Specifically, faithful execution and clear communication of case processes, and production of clear, well-reasoned decisions, tie directly into parties' confidence in the impartiality of the FLRA's processes. Despite this inextricable linkage, Goal 1 explicitly mentions impartiality in order to emphasize it as a priority on which FLRA employees insist in the FLRA's case-review and disposition process.

Strategies:

The following strategies describe the processes and resources that the FLRA will use to make progress towards achieving its quality standards:

- Use established goals for quality and discuss lessons learned and best practices, both within and among the three components, at least annually
- Incorporate discussions of quality-standard adoption, both in terms of successes and needs for improvement, into the existing regular meeting structure and other venues
- Continuously develop and implement process and material improvements discussed during regular progress reviews and at any other appropriate time
- Use the FLRA's online resources to keep parties informed of what they can generally expect with respect to FLRA case processes in terms of timing, steps, etc.

Components Involved:

- FLRA Authority
 - OALJ
- FLRA OGC
- FLRA FSIP

Performance Goals for Objective 1.2:

- Performance Goal 1.2.1: Develop a mechanism for soliciting external feedback on the FLRA case-resolution process
- Performance Goal 1.2.2: Score highly on internal quality reviews regarding the case-resolution process



GOAL 2: WE WILL PROMOTE STABILITY IN THE FEDERAL LABOR-MANAGEMENT COMMUNITY BY PROVIDING LEADERSHIP AND GUIDANCE THROUGH ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION AND EDUCATION.

Goal Overview

FLRA leadership and employees possess considerable knowledge of the Statute and, through their casework, also have a unique view into critical labor-management issues and the best practices for handling disputes that may arise as a result of those issues. The FLRA has extensive experience applying these areas of expertise towards the facilitation of positive and effective labor-management relationships, and it has consequently developed a strong understanding of the compelling, mutual benefits of positive labor-management relations. Given its unique perspective and role, the FLRA is determined to continue serving as a leader in facilitating effective and collaborative labor-management relationships, and in actively promoting stability in the federal labor-management community, as captured in this second strategic goal.

The two key ways in which the FLRA provides leadership and guidance are through its ADR services and its education and outreach activities. ADR is a service that has been incorporated into all of the FLRA's case processes – in every component and at every stage of case processing. The FLRA will continue to maximize its use of ADR, where appropriate, and it will explore ways to measure and communicate ADR's positive impact and benefits. The agency's education and outreach activities include the trainings that it provides to the labor-management community, as well as its participation in leadership opportunities.

Strategic Objectives

Objective 2.1: Offer high-quality outreach and prevention services, as well as reference resources, to promote more effective labor-management relations across the federal government.

The FLRA currently offers training to the federal-sector labor-management community and provides self-service resources on its website that relate to the Statute and the handling of different types of labor-management disputes. These and other forms of outreach not only empower and educate the members of the labor-management community, but also spread awareness about the shared benefits of positive labor-management relations in government, and contribute to prevention of disputes. Additionally, they allow the FLRA to demonstrate leadership.

By targeting its outreach to areas of highest need, tailoring content to specific audiences, and ensuring that its website is an easily navigable and content-rich case-processing and case-law reference for all users, the FLRA can build on its reputation as a leader in facilitating effective and collaborative labor-management relations. This increases its overall ability to promote an effective and efficient government.

Strategies:

The following strategies describe a complementary set of approaches that the FLRA will use to continually improve the value of its outreach and prevention activities, trainings,



and resources:

- Encourage positive, open communication between labor and management representatives
- Conduct independent, objective, and timely analyses of labor-management issues and trends to inform case and outreach activities
- Deploy cross-component teams to deliver external trainings, when appropriate
- Provide tailored outreach and training, including animated, live, and recorded video and audio, targeting audiences with the greatest need
- Improve the FLRA website to make it a more user-friendly, empowering resource for parties and the federal-sector labor-management community

Components Involved:

- FLRA Authority
 - OALJ
 - CADRO
 - Office of Legislative Affairs and Program Planning
- FLRA OGC
- FLRA FSIP

Performance Goals for Objective 2.1:

- Performance Goal 2.1.1: Provide targeted training, outreach and prevention, and facilitation activities within the labor-management community
- Performance Goal 2.1.2: Provide effective, useful, up-to-date case-processing and case-law resources and trainings for the labor-management community

Objective 2.2: Maximize the use of Alternative Dispute Resolution practices in case resolution

The FLRA currently offers ADR services to parties across all of its five primary case types. When administered appropriately, ADR has the potential to help parties reach mutual understanding on contentious issues and strengthen their underlying relationships. Congress and other government stakeholders have recognized ADR as an effective way to promote stability in the federal workforce. Consequently, by maximizing its appropriate use of ADR and building up evidence around the benefits of ADR, the FLRA will be able to solidify its reputation as a leader in the labor-management community and across the federal government. The natural differences between the structure and work of each FLRA component necessitate that the conversations around maximizing and measuring ADR's benefits account for each component's unique role and capabilities. These differences require that ADR standards and performance measures be tailored to each component's – and each office's – unique situation.

Strategies:

The following strategies describe the methods that the FLRA will use to maximize its use of ADR:

- Set standards for how and when ADR should be offered in each component in order to maximize parties' access to ADR
- Evaluate the estimated benefits achieved through implementation of ADR practices



Components Involved:

- FLRA Authority
 - OALJ
 - CADRO
- FLRA OGC
- FLRA FSIP

Performance Goals for Objective 2.2:

- Performance Goal 2.2.1: Successful resolution of a significant portion of FLRA cases through ADR
- Performance Goal 2.2.2: Expanded use of ADR in ARB cases
- Performance Goal 2.2.3: Examination of potential expanded use of ADR in REP cases

GOAL 3: WE WILL MANAGE OUR RESOURCES EFFECTIVELY AND EFFICIENTLY IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE.

Goal Overview

The FLRA’s ability to fulfill its core mission under the Statute depends on effective management of the organization and its resources. The organizational-excellence goal emphasizes how the agency’s employees, information-technology (IT) infrastructure, and allocation of resources are central to achieving all of the strategic goals and objectives outlined in the strategic plan. FLRA leadership is committed to continuously strengthening FLRA operations in targeted areas and identifying improvements that will maximize delivery of services while maintaining a highly engaging and empowering work environment.

The landscape of the federal workplace and workforce continues to evolve, as do the needs of the parties that the FLRA serves. Career civil servants are the FLRA’s backbone. It is crucial for the FLRA to simultaneously focus on developing the workplace and the workforce of the future, while retaining valuable institutional knowledge. In the past, the FLRA has ranked among the top small agencies on the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey and the Partnership for Public Service’s “Best Places to Work in the Federal Government” rankings, and it has been recognized as a top small agency for innovation. The agency’s leadership seeks to continue and build upon this success and to develop and retain an engaged, highly skilled, and productive workforce.

Finally, the agency must be prepared to meet ever-changing business demands through the increased use of IT to best manage the workload and interact with parties. The FLRA will continue to be an effective steward of taxpayer dollars, with a renewed focus on maximizing the use of technology for more efficient case processing and data analytics to inform operational decision making. The agency’s future operational approaches are designed to foster nimble and seamless deployment of resources to support productive labor-management relations across the federal government.



Strategic Objectives

Objective 3.1: Recruit, retain, and develop a highly talented, motivated, and diverse workforce to accomplish the FLRA's mission

The FLRA's success is largely dependent on employee-driven mission performance, because its products and services—whether case decisions, ADR, or training—are labor-intensive. From 2017 to 2020, the FLRA lost nearly 30 percent of the staff, and the FLRA faces an increasing case load. The FLRA is now seeking to hire staff again, after cases began to increase with the appointment of an Acting General Counsel. These factors combine to create the imperative for this objective.

In order to attract and engage a highly skilled workforce to support the FLRA's mission, the agency must invest in its most valuable resource—its employees. The FLRA will prepare for retirements by maximizing and institutionalizing knowledge transfer, engaging in succession planning to ensure that the next generation of leaders is well prepared, and developing new employees with the technical and leadership skills necessary to accomplish the agency's mission. It has become increasingly important that the FLRA promote work-life balance strategies that will allow for efficient processing of a growing caseload, while retaining an engaged workforce that is well-equipped to achieve the mission. This increased focus on human-capital management and leadership development will strengthen the FLRA's ability to sustain – and improve – its high level of mission performance and promote effective and efficient labor-management relations.

Strategies:

The following strategies describe the initiatives that the FLRA will undertake to cultivate a top-caliber workforce capable of effectively fulfilling the agency's mission:

- Employ a targeted recruitment strategy to hire a diverse, highly skilled workforce
- Work across components to more effectively build capacity and share knowledge for leadership development and skills-based redundancies
- Cultivate a working environment that develops, empowers, and fairly rewards employees
- Engage in succession planning, and develop strategies to maximize the transfer of institutional knowledge
- Promote innovation
- Promote a healthy work-life balance to retain a productive workforce

Components Involved:

- FLRA Authority
 - Office of the Executive Director
 - Human Resources Division
- FLRA OGC
- FLRA FSIP
- Office of Personnel Management (OPM)

Performance Goals for Objective 3.1:

- Performance Goal 3.1.1: Demonstrate strong recruitment and retention practices



- Performance Goal 3.1.2: Maintain and grow agency expertise through employee development
- Performance Goal 3.1.3: Develop internal tools and benchmarks for skills assessment, training-needs assessment, and effective succession planning

Objective 3.2: Improve usage of existing technology and deploy new IT systems to streamline and enhance organizational operations

The rapid evolution of the technological landscape is having a significant impact on how government employees expect to communicate and accomplish their work. To meet the modernizing expectations of its internal and external stakeholders, the FLRA must maximize use of its existing technology, and consider possible future investments in new technology. Enhancing the use of data and electronic capabilities will allow for more efficient interaction with parties, better management of the FLRA’s caseload, and a more flexible work environment. As the FLRA explores the use of new, innovative technologies, decision makers must remain cognizant of the limited resources available to invest in new technology. FLRA leadership will ensure that any new, potential IT investments are strategic and sound.

The FLRA will work to identify IT solutions that drive new levels of performance and close gaps between current and desired capabilities, while promoting full use of existing technology. A major initiative is the electronic-case-filing (eFiling) system that was initially implemented in FY 2012. The agency began accepting eFilings in FY 2013, and it seeks to fully implement an “end-to-end” electronic case file that will significantly streamline the processing and handling of cases, while reducing procedural deficiencies. Additional gains can be made through internal activities that promote skills development. One example is reverse-mentoring, where employees with a strong understanding of IT capabilities infuse their knowledge throughout the agency.

Strategies:

The following strategies outline activities that the FLRA will pursue to fully maximize the use of IT to gain efficiency:

- Improve eFiling capability and maximize its use in receiving case filings
- Enhance employee technology usage and skills at every level
- Assess and develop in-house IT capabilities on an ongoing basis
- Achieve 100% electronic-records storage
- Develop and implement data-analytics tools to improve case processing, outreach, and internal operations

Components Involved:

- FLRA Authority
 - Office of the Executive Director
 - Administrative Services Division
 - Information Resources Management Division
- FLRA OGC
- FLRA FSIP



Performance Goals for Objective 3.2:

- Performance Goal 3.2.1: Improve eFiling capability and maximize its use in receiving case filings
- Performance Goal 3.2.2: Enhance employee technology usage and skills at every level

Objective 3.3: Act as an effective steward of agency resources

The FLRA's key resources are its employees and its appropriations. Both of these resources need to be carefully assessed, effectively managed, and prudently deployed. The strategies supporting this objective will provide leadership with the information necessary to make complex organizational decisions, while maximizing limited resources. This objective differs from the previous two, because it focuses on the allocation of resources and the supporting management practices.

The FLRA's leadership is committed to strategically and transparently managing the agency, while maintaining an environment that engages employees at all levels. The agency's leadership will work to continue and build on the FLRA's former success in the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey and the Partnership for Public Service's "Best Places to Work in the Federal Government" rankings through initiatives like updating the employee performance-management process to better reflect desired organizational outcomes, enhancing effective employee development, and promoting fair employee recognition.

The FLRA will also focus on creating greater alignment between administrative offices and program offices to strengthen performance and cohesion throughout the organization. Finally, it will monitor and modify these and other efforts to improve performance by renewing its focus on collecting and analyzing data to make effective decisions.

Strategies:

The following strategies will help improve the FLRA's operations and drive increased mission performance:

- Develop a workforce-planning system that will allow for optimal deployment of administrative and professional staff when resource needs increase in specific offices or regions
- Implement a performance-management process that encourages all FLRA employees to achieve objectives that lead to successful organizational outcomes
- Utilize a strategic-resource-planning process to inform the budget-planning cycle.

Components and External Partners:

- FLRA Authority
 - Office of the Executive Director
- FLRA OGC
- FLRA FSIP
- Office of Management and Budget (OMB)
- Performance Improvement Council (PIC)
- Office of Personnel Management (OPM)



Performance Goals for Objective 3.3:

- Performance Goal 3.3.1: Achieve high internal customer-service scores on delivery of administrative services
- Performance Goal 3.3.2: Meet or exceed established operational measures
- Performance Goal 3.3.3: Be a leader in the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey and in the “Best Places to Work in the Federal Government” rankings



MAJOR MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES, CHALLENGES, AND RISKS

While the FLRA is committed to increasing government-wide effectiveness and efficiency, and improving service to its parties, there are external trends and challenges that pose a clear risk to overall mission delivery. These trends primarily include vacant positions, budget uncertainty, an increasing caseload, workforce challenges, and potential changes in legislation or regulation.

After nearly four years without a General Counsel, the appointment of an Acting General Counsel has allowed ULP complaint processing to recommence. Now the FLRA is in a period of restoration of FTEs and funding. An always uncertain fiscal environment reduces the FLRA's flexibility in making resource decisions, such as hiring additional staff to address the increasing caseload, dedicating additional resources to ADR and training, or investing in IT capabilities that will allow for more efficient case processing. To help mitigate budget risks throughout the FLRA rebuild, the FLRA must remain vigilant in focusing on effectively managing limited financial resources to position the agency to meet strategic priorities, a strategy that is addressed in Strategic Objective 3.3.

The FLRA has experienced an exponentially increasing workload. Following President Biden's Executive Order 14003, this trend is likely to continue over the next few years, thereby placing the FLRA in the continued position of needing to achieve more without a commensurate increase in resources. Ongoing attrition, coupled with future budget uncertainty and the increasing caseload, could potentially cause a loss of institutional knowledge and expertise. While the FLRA is known for its highly engaged workforce, future employees will likely have different expectations around technology and workplace flexibilities; left unaddressed, this could lead to recruitment and retention issues. Because the FLRA provides its services to over 2.1 million non-Postal federal employees worldwide, changes in legislation or regulations that affect the FLRA or other agencies, could lead to increases in case filings. Together, these trends could affect the agency's ability to meet the goals outlined in this plan, and fulfill its mission under the Statute. The FLRA will continue to focus on its core values of transparency, accountability, open dialogue, and pre-decisional involvement, along with its increasing focus on the innovative use of resources and data-driven analysis, to maintain high levels of mission performance and employee engagement that contribute to an effective and efficient federal government.

In recent years, the FLRA has made substantial progress in addressing and resolving three challenges identified by its Office of the Inspector General (OIG). The remaining challenges identified by the Inspector General include IT security and proper handling of records. The FLRA has dramatically improved its scores on National Archives and Records Administration metrics over the last two years. The FLRA has shown significant improvement from being a moderate risk to a low-risk agency.

With respect to these ongoing challenges, the Office of the Executive Director, on behalf of the agency, has made and continues to make progress towards their resolution with the input of agency leadership, management, and employees and their representative union. Detailed information about the agency's progress towards the OIG's findings is reported annually in the PAR.



EVIDENCE BUILDING

Since 2009, the FLRA has routinely assessed program performance, with an emphasis on building evidence to support decision making and to drive innovative approaches throughout the agency. The FLRA remains committed to continuously building its research and evaluation base to help develop strategies for effectively achieving its mission and to inform budgetary allocations across the agency. As part of the FLRA's focus on evidence, the Authority holds regular, data-driven management meetings regarding general case processing, where meaningful discussions occur around program performance, areas for improvement, and sharing of best practices across components. In addition to program performance, the FLRA frequently reviews its administrative services (IT, human resources, and financial management), including through use of internal-survey tools, and it seeks continuous improvement in internal-service delivery.

The FLRA referenced evidence-based performance and resource trends in developing this strategic plan. Many of the agency's future strategies focus on increasing the use of targeted data to maximize mission outcomes. A number of ongoing and planned evaluations, which are particularly informative in achieving the FLRA's strategic goals and objectives, are summarized below. In conducting future studies and evaluations, the FLRA may choose to deploy an internal task force to assess an organizational issue, conduct internal process reviews that will lead to efficiency gains, and/or conduct research on a topic of organizational importance for inclusion in outreach materials. The initiation and scope of these evaluations will be assessed throughout the strategic-plan period based on the availability of resources and the expected organizational impact.

FUTURE EVALUATIONS

Possible studies and/or evaluations that the FLRA will undertake in support of its strategic goals include:

- Study the deployment of a case-issuance strategy to identify possible efficiency gains
- Analyze current timeliness and quality standards to identify areas for innovation and improvement in processes and in updating standards
- Identify the most effective mechanisms for obtaining party feedback on the quality of the FLRA case-resolution process
- Analyze case-filing data to identify top targets for training initiatives
- Analyze case-filing data to identify the organizations that are designated as being "frequent filers" or having chronically contentious relationships



APPENDIX: ABBREVIATIONS

ADR	Alternative Dispute Resolution
ARB	Arbitration*
CADRO	Collaboration and Alternative Dispute Resolution Office
eFiling	Electronic-case-filing system
FLRA	Federal Labor Relations Authority
FSIP	Federal Service Impasses Panel, a body comprising a Chairman and at least six other Members appointed by the President
Impasse	Bargaining Impasse*
IT	Information Technology
NEG	Negotiability*
OALJ	Office of Administrative Law Judges
OGC	Office of the General Counsel, headed by a presidentially appointed, Senate-confirmed attorney
OIG	Office of the Inspector General
OMB	White House Office of Management and Budget
OPM	Office of Personnel Management
PAR	Performance and Accountability Report
PIC	Performance Improvement Council
REP	Representation*
The agency	Federal Labor Relations Authority
The Authority	Body comprising three presidentially appointed, Senate-confirmed Members
The Statute	Federal Service Labor-Management Relations Statute
UAE	Union of Authority Employees
ULP	Unfair Labor Practice*

(* denotes a specific type of case filed with the FLRA)