DEEOIC Outreach and Customer Experience Unit

Background

After several years of limited in-person outreach efforts due to the COVID-19 pandemic, DEEOIC was able to return to normal outreach operations in FY23. DEEOIC works with several federal agencies to conduct outreach across the country. These agencies include U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and their Former Worker Program, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), and the DOL and NIOSH Offices of the Ombudsman. Collectively, these agencies, along with DEEOIC, form the Joint Outreach Task Group (JOTG). DEEOIC is the primary organizer of the events and the other JOTG agencies typically send representatives to provide presentations and/or set up tables to meet with the public. The locations of outreach events for FY23 were selected by consideration of several factors including Executive Order 13985, which directed federal agencies to engage with underserved communities. DEEOIC conducted research using Census Bureau data to locate underserved communities near major facilities that are covered under the EEOICPA. Communities identified through this research were prioritized for in-person outreach. Other consideration factors included how recent the last outreach event in the area was and past attendance for events in the area.

The events typically include presentations from the DEEOIC and other JOTG agencies. DEEOIC provides an overview of the EEOICPA presentation, and another presentation covering medical benefits. The Office of the Ombudsman for the EEOICPA provides a presentation covering the services they provide and helpful tips for claimants. NIOSH provides a presentation on the dose reconstruction and special exposure cohort petition processes. DOE provides a presentation on records and their Former Worker Program provides information on free medical screenings for former workers at DOE nuclear weapons sites. When the location is near sites covered under the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA), DOJ sends representatives to provide a presentation on RECA. After the presentations, there is a question-and-answer session with all presenters and the agencies meet with the public at their tables. Throughout the events, DEEOIC and DEEOIC Resource Center employees are available to meet with claimants individually to assist with case status updates, medical benefits issues, and claims filing.

Because DEEOIC had to halt or severely limit in-person outreach efforts during the pandemic, an ambitious schedule was created for FY23 to cover as many major sites as possible. A total of nine outreach events were scheduled along with a two-day authorized representative (AR) workshop that was held before the outreach event in Oak Ridge, TN. AR workshops are smaller events conducted for ARs that include courses and presentations from DEEOIC and other JOTG agencies. The courses and presentations are geared specifically for ARs with the goal of educating them about various aspects of the EEOICPA so they can better assist the claimants they represent.

Results

As shown on the table below, most of the events were well attended and a significant number of attendees at each event requested individual assistance. The outreach event with the greatest attendance was the Oak Ridge, TN event with 288 attendees. The outreach event with the least

number of attendees took place in Pahrump, NV, which is a rural area west of Las Vegas. After speaking with attendees at this event, it appeared that weather was a significant factor in the low attendance. A nearby mountain pass was closed the morning of the event due to winter conditions, which also impacted the entire area surrounding Pahrump. Several attendees also stated that current workers of the Nevada Test Site wanted to attend the event but couldn't get off work. The AR workshop event also had a low attendance rate with only 15 of the 30 ARs who provided an RSVP attending the event. Although positive feedback was received from the ARs and presenters about the smaller class sizes, DEEOIC intends to take additional steps in the future to ensure higher attendance such as keeping a waitlist and reaching out to attendees for a final confirmation just before the event. Any slots that open up will be offered to those on the waitlist.

Regarding individual assistance provided at the events, the majority of attendees requested to meet with DEEOIC employees for case status updates. Many of these case status updates involved explaining denials and the reopening request process to claimants or simply providing updates on the status of their claims. DEEOIC Resource Center employees typically meet with attendees who want to file initial claims or file for impairment or additional medical conditions. Medical Benefits Examiners were also present at each event to answer case-specific medical benefits questions or trouble-shoot medical benefits issues.

The table below provides information on the date, location, attendance, and individual assistance provided at each event.

Date	Location	Attendance	Individual Assistance
02/28/2023	North Las Vegas, NV	175	62
03/01/2023	Pahrump, NV	25	11
04/11/2023	Oak Ridge, TN	15	N/A (AR Workshop)
04/12/2023	Oak Ridge, TN	15	N/A (AR Workshop)
04/13/2023	Oak Ridge, TN	288	93
05/16/2023	Richland, WA	225	71
06/27/2023	Farmington, NM	87	38
06/28/2023	Shiprock, NM	97	60
06/29/2023	Kayenta, AZ	127	40
08/16/2023	Hamilton, OH	133	94
09/12/2023	Arvada, CO	168	107

Recommendations

Beginning this year, surveys were offered to attendees at each event to help gauge their experience at our events. The outreach event survey includes 10 questions. The first seven questions are presented with a 1-5 Likert Scale response option. The questions align with the customer experience drivers as outlined in the OMB Circular A-11 Section 280 "Managing Customer Experience and Service Delivery." The first seven questions are provided in the table below along with the average score obtained for that question across all FY23 events.

I am satisfied with the event today.	This event increased my trust in DEEOIC.	I was able to get my questions answered during this event.	It was easy to understand the information presented during this event.	This event was scheduled for a reasonable amount of time.	I was treated fairly during this event.	Employees I interacted with during this event were helpful.
4.23	4.06	4.28	4.17	4.27	4.53	4.49

As demonstrated in the table above, average scores in each of the seven customer experience drivers are above four, indicating the events are well received by stakeholders. The highest average scores were related to how stakeholders were treated by staff at the events. The lowest scores are related to increased trust and attendees not easily understanding the information that was presented. In terms of possible improvements to these areas, the presenters always stay until all questions are answered in the question-and-answer session, so it is unlikely that these scores are related to questions asked in that format. For future events, we will recommend staff who meet with attendees individually ask them if their questions were answered at the end of their interactions.

The 8th question asks attendees how they heard about the event. The response to this question was overwhelmingly by mailers sent out by DEEOIC to claimants and authorized representatives in the area. There was some variation in the answers to this question when the results are broken out by event. The events in New Mexico and Arizona that were on or near the Navajo Nation received a higher response rate to the "other" option. Based on feedback from attendees, many of the "other" responses on the surveys for these events were likely due to radio ads that were provided in both Navajo and English on popular radio stations in the area. Due to the higher "other" response rate, it is recommended that DEEOIC continue the practice of radio advertising for events in this area in the future and an option for radio be added to the list of responses for this question.

The 9th question is an open-response question that asks attendees why they attended the event. The most common responses to this question were related to getting more information about the programs or to get case specific information such as why a particular claim was denied.

The 10th and final question on the survey is presented in an open-response format and asks claimants to report on the most and least valuable parts of the event. Many responses to this question indicated the most valuable part was the information provided, while many responses also indicated the presentations were too long or too complicated. Based on this feedback, we recommend that DEEOIC review the EEOICPA overview and medical benefits presentations and work with JOTG agencies to determine if presentations can be simplified and/or condensed for future outreach events.

An issue that occurred at several of the earlier events in the year was a backup of attendees waiting for individual assistance as soon as the question-and-answer session ended. Attendees who wanted individual assistance would all head to the registration desk at the same time, creating a backup to get signed in for individual assistance. This also resulted in the attendees towards the end of the list having to wait several hours in some instances to receive assistance. One change that was made early in the year was sending more staff to assist with case status updates at the events, which reduced overall wait times. There were also changes made to the registration process. Attendees were asked when they first checked into the event if they would like individual assistance rather than waiting until after the presentations and question-and-answer session to start handing out numbers and letters. Those who requested individual assistance were given numbers or letters at the start of the event. This alleviated the rush to the registration desk after the question-and-answer session was over. Although this was helpful, it did not reduce the back-up of people waiting for individual assistance as soon as the presentations and question-and-answer sessions were completed.

In the last several events of the year, DEEOIC started calling numbers for individual assistance right at the start of the events. This was accomplished by writing numbers and letters that were handed out to attendees during check-in process on a board at the front of the room during the presentations. Those who chose not to leave the presentations kept their place in line and were assisted after the question-and-answer session. Most of the people called chose to leave the presentations for individual assistance. This process greatly improved wait times and made the overall individual assistance process go more smoothly throughout the day. It also prevented many of those who did not come to listen to the presentations from having to sit through all of them before being helped. Due to its success, this process will stay in place for all future JOTG Town Hall style events as we continue to look for other ways to improve the customer experience.

Finally, in the last event in Arvada, CO, it was brought to our attention that some attendees may be concerned about having registration sign in sheets which include information that can be seen by other attendees at the event. For all future events, the registration process will be changed so that the registration lists are not visible to attendees as they check into the event. Although this may slow down the registration process, DEEOIC believes that protecting information of all attendees should always take precedence over faster processes.

DEEOIC will continue to provide outreach attendees with the opportunity to fill out surveys at future events. The Outreach and Customer Experience Unit (OCXU) will continue to analyze the survey results to not only identify areas for improvement but also to highlight the successes of the outreach program.