

Enforcement Collaboration

At a leadership retreat in early 2015, a concern was raised about the lack of coordination among DOL's enforcement agencies. As a result, the Enforcement Working Group (EWG) was created to stimulate greater collaboration among the enforcement agencies, better leverage resources, and increase the reach of DOL's enforcement presence. Prior to the group's establishment, enforcement efforts were often siloed; when collaboration occurred, it was ad hoc.

The EWG is chaired by the Deputy Secretary and supported by the Office of the Solicitor. The members of the group are:

DOL's enforcement agencies:

- Occupational Safety and Health Administration
- Mine Safety and Health Administration
- Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs
- Office of Labor-Management Standards
- Employee Benefits Security Administration
- Wage and Hour Division

Key DOL "elbow" agencies:

- Office of the Solicitor
- Office of Public Affairs
- Office of the Assistant Secretary for Policy

The group meets monthly on the 4th Tuesday of every month from 2-3PM in SOL's conference room, which has video teleconference so that the regions can participate. At each meeting, sub-groups report on the progress of their tasks and feature presentations from internal and external presenters about enforcement best practices.

The sub-groups meet separately to further tasks assigned. The current sub-groups and status of tasks are:

- **Cross Training** – The cross-training group, led by Patricia Davidson, the career Deputy Administrator for Program Operations in the Wage and Hour Division, is developing a common training resource to introduce DOL enforcement staff to the responsibilities of each of the other enforcement programs and to increase awareness about the most common violations, with an eye toward increasing the detection of violations and improving cross referrals. The training will be distributed through LearningLink, the Department's online learning platform and will be mandatory for all incoming enforcement staff. This group is also tasked with establishing and improving cross-agency referral protocols.
- **Data Sources for Analytics & People Finding** – This group is led by Marika Litras, the career OFCCP Director of the Division of Program Operations and a statistician. This group shares information about internal and external data sources that enforcement agencies use for targeting inspections and finding people owed back

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wages. The group shared information about useful sources of data, and identified areas for cost-savings through shared contracts, such as offering other enforcement agencies to join OFCCP's contract for people finding services which can result in cost savings. The group is also looking at data visualization products that could make DOL data easier to sift through and digest for the public and is focused on how to build capacity to use data through effective data governance and management.

- **Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers** – The FLETC group, led by Mabel Capolongo, the career Director of the Employee Benefits and Security Administration Office of Enforcement, has overseen a significant expansion in the amount of inexpensive investigatory training available to DOL investigators. The FLETC is an interagency training body for 91 federal law enforcement agencies, which is part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. FLETC offers an advanced interviewing techniques course which has been taken by 60 Department of Labor employees from six agencies in two locations. The investigation class focuses on advanced law enforcement techniques needed by Department investigators related to interviewing witnesses, such as workers, supervisors and managers. When the Department can offer a meeting place and invite staff who are stationed near that meeting place, the training is very inexpensive, about \$150 per participant for three full days of training. The Department and FLETC are considering entering into a Memorandum of Understanding that will include tailoring the training to civil labor law enforcement.
- **Strategic Communications** – The strategic communications group, led by Jesse Lawder, a political appointee in the Office of Public Affairs, identified communications topics of common concern for the agencies to learn from each other's successes and challenges. The group also hosted two informative off-the-record conversations with journalists – one with reporters who do in-depth investigative pieces and one with reporters with a very specific labor beat to help agencies understand the role media plays in covering enforcement matters.

The Enforcement Working Group also sunset a **debt collection sub-group** that improved Department-wide debt collection (e.g. collecting back wages, pension contributions and penalties from employers who don't pay them right away) by improving Department of Labor processes and by working with the U.S. Department of the Treasury.

Both national office and regional staff have appreciated the value of sharing best practices and believe in the importance of maintaining this group. EWG members are currently considering what topics to focus on in 2017 and how to better incorporate regional staff in the discussions.