



# United States Department of the Interior

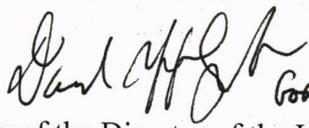
U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY  
12201 Sunrise Valley Drive  
Reston, VA 20192

In Reply Refer to:  
Mail Stop 100  
GS18000426

## Memorandum

To: Deputy Secretary  
  
Scott J. Cameron  
Acting Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management, and Budget

Through: Timothy R. Petty, Ph.D.  
Assistant Secretary for Water and Science

From: William H. Werkheiser  APR 10 2018  
Deputy Director  
Exercising the Authority of the Director of the U.S. Geological Survey

Subject: Revised U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Action Plan in Response to the  
Department of the Interior (DOI) Work Environment Survey

Attached is the revised USGS Action Plan prepared in response to the Deputy Secretary's December 13, 2017, memorandum calling for a plan that "specifies the actions you plan to take to address your bureau's or office's survey results, the schedule for accomplishing those actions, and a description of how you will assess the success of these actions."

The USGS Action Plan includes a summary of USGS-specific critical findings derived from the Work Environment Survey conducted by DOI last year. The actions we have identified are intended to be responsive to those findings and to build on existing anti-harassment efforts already under way, which are also briefly described in the Plan. This revision incorporates feedback received from the DOI Office of Human Capital on the original USGS submission, specifically including how success would be measured for the individual actions.

We would be pleased to answer questions or provide a briefing. I may be reached at 703-648-6600, or [applegate@usgs.gov](mailto:applegate@usgs.gov).

Attachment

## **USGS Anti-Harassment Action Plan**

### **April 2018**

This action plan has been developed to respond to the Department of the Interior's Work Environment Survey (WES) results for the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). The survey was conducted from January 9 to March 5, 2017 and assessed various employee perspectives regarding harassment or assault behaviors experienced within their work environment. As called for in the Dec. 13, 2017, memo from Deputy Secretary Bernhardt, the USGS is submitting this formal action plan to the Deputy Secretary and Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management, and Budget specifying the actions the USGS intends to take to address its survey results, the schedule for accomplishing those actions, and a description of how the USGS will assess the success of those actions.

The survey results showed that more than one in four employees reported experiencing one or more forms of harassment and/or assault related behaviors in the 12 months prior to the survey. Out of eight categories of harassment covered by the survey, the highest rates of harassing behaviors were associated with age and gender. In order to focus on the most important actions needed, the survey results have been categorized into a set of findings listed below.

The current USGS Anti-Harassment Policy was issued in 2010. This policy states the commitment of the USGS to "creating and maintaining a work environment where all employees have a fair and equal opportunity to succeed. Workplace harassment is a serious issue that prevents any organization from achieving this goal. It is the policy of the USGS that harassment or reprisal in any form will not be tolerated and will be addressed with appropriate disciplinary action." The policy was sent to all USGS employees and is posted at all Human Resources (HR) offices, the Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity (DEO), and on the USGS internal Web site.

#### Action Plan Focus: Critical Survey Findings

The full results of the DOI Workplace Environment Survey, including bureau- and office-specific results can be accessed at [www.doi.gov/employees/anti-harassment/reports](http://www.doi.gov/employees/anti-harassment/reports). The following high-level findings have been distilled from the detailed USGS Supplemental Statistical Report at [www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/uploads/usgs\\_wes\\_supplemental\\_statistical\\_report.pdf](http://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/uploads/usgs_wes_supplemental_statistical_report.pdf).

The first two high-level findings underscore the need for greater attention to **prevention** of harassing activities.

**Finding 1: More than one out of four USGS employees experienced harassing and/or assault behaviors in the 12 months prior to the survey. Survey results indicate this problem is widespread and warrants Bureau-wide action on multiple fronts to be addressed effectively.**

- a) 28.4% of USGS employees experienced one or more forms of harassment and/or assault related behaviors in the past 12 months. A prevalence rate of greater than one out of four employees warrants Bureau-wide action toward awareness and prevention.
- b) The majority of these experiences occurred during work hours (78%) and at a work location or site (85%) that was most frequently characterized as an indoor location (88.2%).
- c) Regardless of the particular behavior involved, for the majority of employees these experiences involved one person (58.9%) and often a peer and/or coworker (56.2%).

**Finding 2: The highest rates of harassing behaviors were associated with age (17%) and gender (13.9%). Furthermore, among employees who experienced any type of harassment behavior, 26% indicated it was primarily based on their age, and 35.4% indicated it was primarily based on their gender.**

- a) With respect to age harassment, the experience rate was highest for employees age 29 or younger (58.5%). The second most prevalent experience rate was for employees age 50 or older (40.1%).
- b) With respect to gender harassment, it is also most prevalent with employees age 29 or younger (43.2%).

Other types of harassing behaviors reported were associated with racial or ethnic background (3.8%), religious beliefs (3.9%), perceived or actual disability (3.9%), sexual orientation (1.6%), sexual harassment (4.9%), and sexual assault (0.3%).

Findings 3 through 6 focus on the challenges associated with **effective response** to harassment activities.

**Finding 3: Harassment experiences are severely under-reported in USGS, and there are several facets to address from lack of awareness of resources to assist employees to cultural issues of indifference to skepticism regarding the outcomes of reporting.**

- a) DOI and USGS resources are significantly underutilized by employees. (EAP, Ombudsman, CADR Office or CORE PLUS, HR, IG, etc.)
- b) Regardless of the particular behavior involved, most employees did not make a complaint/grievance/report about their experience (80.2%); only 19.8% did.
- c) Regardless of the particular behavior involved, most employees talked to someone at work about their experience including coworkers (50.1%) or another employee (43%).
- d) Related to the previous finding, some employees talked to a supervisor (30.8%) or manager (14.5%).

- e) Employees' most frequent reasons for not making a complaint/grievance/report involved the perceived seriousness of the behavior. 75.8% did not consider it serious enough to report.

Other key reasons for not reporting were that employees did not think anything would be done (44.2%), or they thought it might hurt their career (35.8%).

**Finding 4: Responsiveness to complaints/grievances/reports needs improvement.**

- a) Regardless of the particular behavior involved, for employees who made complaints/grievances/reports, 39.5% indicated some action was taken.
- b) Actions focused on the organization involved explaining the rules to everyone (18.9%), management conducted a review/investigation or other assessment (12.8%), and an investigation was conducted by a law enforcement official (1.4%).
- c) Actions involving the person engaging in the harassing behavior included someone talking to the person (29.0%), moving or reassigning the person to avoid continuing contact (6.7%), or some official career action was taken against the person involved (3.7%); and in some situations, the person stopped the behavior (22.3%).

**Finding 5: There are both perceived and apparent disincentives to reporting harassing behaviors, including potential retaliation.**

- a) Of the employees that made a complaint/grievance/report, 40.1% were encouraged to drop the issue.
- b) Others indicated the person engaging in the harassing behavior took action against them for complaining (31.2%); their coworkers treated them worse, avoided them, or blamed them for the problem (22.1%); and some indicated leadership punished them for bringing the experience up (25.8%).

**Finding 6: Harassment is having a detrimental effect on the USGS workforce and mission.**

- a) For some employees, these experiences had a negative impact on their job performance, making it harder to complete their work (34.7%), negatively affected their performance evaluation or promotion potential (22.4%), or negatively affected their performance evaluation/renewal/permanent employment (11.4%).
- b) As a result of the harassing behavior or experience, 32.3% of employees considered leaving the USGS.

Steps Taken to Date to Address Harassing Conditions

The USGS is currently addressing harassment on multiple fronts: Building employee awareness to foster a healthy and inclusive work environment, ensuring that employees have the means to report harassment and know how to do so, and conducting training specific to supervisors so they know how to handle issues that arise. Some of the current activities include:

- Over the past two years, the USGS Director, Acting Director, and other senior bureau officials have issued a series of Leaders Blogs that go out to all employees through a weekly message and are posted on the internal website.
- Building an inclusive environment, including addressing harassment, is part of USGS leadership and supervisory training modules, and it has been a focus of multiple Executive Leadership Team sessions.
- The USGS provides sexual harassment prevention training at various centers and regions across the Nation and through DOI Learn. Per DOI guidance, DOI Civil Treatment for Leaders training is required for all supervisors.
- USGS has initiated Bystander Intervention Training modules focused on five steps to intervention to allow bystanders to move from being passive to being active. These have been offered at a number of science centers and are targeted for expansion.
- The Women in Science Dialogue (WISDom) is an internal, grassroots-driven USGS group that encourages women to support one another and create awareness of workplace challenges and obstacles – and offer solutions that make the USGS the best place to work for all. It is being established as the bureau’s first formal Employee Resource Group.
- USGS leaders are sharing experiences and strategies with NASA Goddard Space Flight Center to create a culture of inclusion in the workplace. USGS leaders have visited Goddard, and Goddard’s Director of Diversity and Inclusion presented an overview of NASA’s strategies and successes at a USGS Executive Leadership Team meeting.
- The Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity provides Equal Employment Opportunity counseling and investigation services, in accordance with Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, to all employees and applicants for employment for disparate treatment/harassment including sexual harassment.
- When the Office of Human Capital/Employee Relations (HC/ER) is advised of a sexual harassment situation (either through the employee or management), staff works with the supervisor/management official to immediately prevent further harassment, advise management on investigating the matter fully, and assist them in taking appropriate disciplinary action or connecting them to resources for other management action (i.e., training). HC/ER refers the alleged victim to the Employee Assistance Program and the DEO should the employee wish to pursue a complaint of discrimination.

### Action Plan for 2018

In response to the survey results, the USGS has identified a number of new actions in addition to the activities already underway to address the findings and to create an inclusive and safe work

environment by preventing harassment and assault behaviors; and establishing an effective response network for employees and supervisors when incidents occur.

A list of all the actions along with the key deliverables and timeline for implementation is provided in *Table 1*. The actions have been organized by the following types:

*Leadership Commitment and Communications* - USGS will launch a communication strategy to increase employee awareness regarding available resources, ways to report an incident, and what the process is for investigating complaints/grievances/reports. At the center of the strategy is the bureau's zero tolerance policy for workplace harassment and retaliation against an employee who makes a report of misconduct.

*Employee Resources* – Employees and their supervisors will have the resources and education they need to respond to an incident or allegation of harassment.

*Training* - USGS will use the results from the survey to require training for supervisors and all staff and to provide targeted training classes aimed at increasing employee and supervisor understanding, awareness, and responsibilities.

*Response Capacity* – USGS will strengthen its ability to respond to harassment allegations through the appointment of a dedicated Anti-Harassment Program Manager in the USGS Human Capital Office and is also examining its existing resources to increase program support staff available for mediation and conflict resolution as well as to manage investigations.

*Grassroots Engagement* - The bureau will use employee-driven initiatives aimed at developing a culture of inclusion to complement the actions identified led by Bureau leadership.

#### Assessing Effectiveness: Continuous Workplace Improvement

Assessment is a critical aspect for any undertaking and is particularly important given the critical nature of this action plan for the long-term health of the USGS and its people. The USGS plans to use the Critical Findings to develop a subset of questions to include in a similar prevalence survey in subsequent years. The USGS will also review the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) or other existing survey methods that could be used to develop metrics and track progress on the outcomes sought for the actions described in this plan. We will use our existing FEVS data as a baseline and will monitor future responses (FY19 and beyond) to gauge the success of the additional items within this plan.

Several survey tools exist that could be used as a baseline for assessment of some aspects of the action plan. One is the harassment reporting survey which has been undertaken by the USGS

Anti-Harassment and Discrimination Action Team with the support of the Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity, who have already conducted a random sample survey of 1,200 USGS employees in science centers that are participating in the peer support worker pilot project. That survey aims to assess employee understanding of harassment and experiences after reporting harassment. All results will be evaluated by the Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity, and the survey will be issued again at the end of the Peer Support Worker Pilot Program in October 2018. Another survey tool that could be used as a baseline for assessment is one that has been used in science centers that are participating in the peer support worker pilot project. It is a science center harassment survey distributed by center management to staff in order to gain insight into potential harassment issues that may exist in their respective center. Survey results can help center management focus on targeted areas for improvement, accountability, awareness, and training regarding harassment in their center, in close collaboration with the Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity.

The USGS will also review the current exit survey process to determine whether exit surveys could provide useful information for measuring progress on anti-harassment practices by tracking why people leave the USGS. Another potential approach would be to conduct “stay surveys” to track why people stay with the USGS; this could also be a way of identifying best practices.

In order to monitor progress on this plan, the USGS will establish a standing Anti-Harassment Executive Steering Group led by the Associate Director for Administration, the Chief of the Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity, and at least one other senior executive with significant line management responsibilities. The group will report to the Deputy Director and will provide regular updates to the bureau’s Executive Leadership Team on progress at quarterly face-to-face meetings.

### Conclusion

The goal of the USGS is that all employees maintain a high degree of integrity, which is the foundation of the USGS Guiding Principles. These principles, adopted by our executive leadership and promulgated to all staff are: Be respectful, be accountable, communicate, value differences, encourage, focus, and collaborate. Building an inclusive, harassment-free environment is essential to realizing these principles. The Work Environment Survey has served as a wake-up call for the USGS about the extent of the challenge we face as it has across the Department of the Interior. The actions described in this plan will enable the USGS to build on anti-harassment activities already underway and make concrete steps toward providing the best workplace we can for all our employees. Maintaining our reputation as a world-class science agency demands it, and our people deserve nothing less.

Table 1: USGS Work Environment Survey Response Action Plan

Type of Activity	Action Item	Key Deliverable(s)	Start Date	Implementation Goal Date	Responsible Party(ies)	Budget/Resources Needed	Expected Impact	How Success Will Be Assessed (metrics/other indicators of success)
Leadership Commitment and Communications	<b>1. Leadership Message:</b> Issue statement from the Director conveying expectations for all employees to set the tone from the top down of accountability for super-visors and all employees	1.1 All-employee email and associated Leaders Blog post on intranet 1.2 Highlight Sexual Harassment Awareness Month in April with emphasis on employee resources 1.3 Establish Anti-Harassment Executive Steering Group to lead and provide oversight for spectrum of national and field-based efforts to improve the working environment	upon issuance of new DOI anti-harassment policy	04/24/18	USGS Director	Staff time	Workforce feels valued and supported and understands leadership commitment to eliminating harassment.	Improved FEVS responses to The New IQ index
Leadership Commitment and Communications	<b>2. Initiate Employee Engagement:</b> Ensure employee interaction and feedback is part of the initial communication strategy on the new DOI policy roll-out	2.1 Initiate series of town hall meetings for employees, including participation of DOI ombudsman 2.2 Explore focus group participation to count toward annual diversity/EEO training requirements	5/1/2018	09/30/18	Anti-Harassment Executive Steering Group	Staff time	Workforce feels valued and supported and understands leadership commitment to eliminating harassment.  Employee feedback and recommendations point to concrete actions that management can take.	Improved FEVS responses to The New IQ index

Leadership Commitment and Communications	<b>3. Communications Plan:</b> Leverage full spectrum of internal communications mechanisms to ensure consistent and thorough information about anti-harassment policy and plans are provided to the workforce	3.1 Complete the communications strategy 3.2 Develop easy-to-navigate intranet site as one-stop source 3.3 Launch a marketing campaign to increase employee awareness of available resources, ways to report an incident, and what response to expect 3.4 Continue regular Town Hall meetings on this topic 3.5 Incorporate resource information into "Need to Know" digest 3.6 Expand site visits by DOI ombuds and DEO forums	5/1/2018	09/30/18	Associate Director (AD) for Communications and Publishing	Staff time	Awareness and employee feedback mechanisms are institutionalized.  More instances of harassing conduct are reported to management for action.	Improved satisfaction with reporting experience associated with filing complaint/grievance/report. (WES Q49, multiple measures)  Improved utilization and helpfulness ratings of employee resources for reporting harassment experiences (WES Q55, multiple measures)
Employee Resources	<b>4. Policy and Program Implementation:</b> Take necessary steps for policy roll-out and complete implementation	4.1 Release updated anti-harassment policy and establish process to handle immediate and prompt management inquiries 4.2 Develop and issue policy and implementation guidance, in line with DOI policy, explaining the processes and procedures for reporting and responding to complaints 4.3 Issue FY19 requirement of 4 hours	4/23/2018	11/30/18	AD for Administration; Chief, Office of Diversity & Equal Opportunity	Staff time	USGS compliance with DOI policies and EEOC regulations.  Management accountability for eliminating harassment in the workplace.  Awareness and employee reporting mechanisms institutionalized and effective.	% of supervisors and employees trained  Decrease (after potential initial increase due to more reporting) in % of employees reporting harassment  For employees making complaints to management, increase in % of employees reporting management conducted a review/investigation or other assessment

		<p>of training for employees and 8 hours for supervisors on diversity and equal employment opportunity to include anti-harassment policy</p> <p>4.4 Educate all managers and supervisors on their obligation to immediately follow up on harassment complaints and issues raised by any employee</p> <p>4.5 Modify supervisory and management performance metrics to ensure anti-harassment policy and reporting expectations are clearly articulated and to demonstrate accountability for proper response</p> <p>4.6 Review and update the employee handbook to ensure it includes appropriate anti-harassment policies and resources</p> <p>4.7 Ensure policy and procedures about retaliation are clear and available to employees</p>						
Training	<b>5. Additional Targeted Training:</b> Provide training and resource	<p>5.1 Offer topical training to address age- and gender-related harassment</p> <p>5.2 Provide anti-</p>	5/1/2018	09/30/18	AD for Administration; Chief, Office of Diversity &	Staff time	Employees are more likely to take action when they witness harassment,	Decrease (after potential initial increase due to more reporting) in % of employees reporting age- and gender-related

	materials to address specific findings in the Workforce Environment Survey	harassment materials and resources to new employees as part of consistent bureau-wide approach to onboarding 5.3 Expand availability of bystander training 5.4 Evaluate current mentoring resources for early-career staff and make a stronger push for volunteer mentors			Equal Opportunity		leading to fewer instance of harassment over time and victims feeling more supported by their peers.	harassment  Decrease in % of bystanders who did not take any action when witnessing harassment
Response Capacity	<b>6. Strengthen Human Resources Support:</b> Ensure adequate expertise and capacity for responding to and addressing reports of harassment	6.1 Review USGS HR resources for handling the potential increase in complaints/grievances/reports of harassment (in accordance with EEOC laws and regulations) 6.2 Provide training to HR and DEO staff to ensure effective anti-harassment resource support within the bureau 6.3 Conduct process analysis to identify potential improvements to management responsiveness and transparency	6/1/2018	09/30/18	AD for Administration	Staff time	Supervisors are supported in addressing reports of harassing conduct.  HR staff are able to conduct/oversee timely investigations.  Management is able to address any misconduct effectively and in a timely manner.	Improved satisfaction with reporting experience associated with filing complaint/grievance/report. (WES Q49, multiple measures)  Improved utilization and helpfulness ratings of employee resources for reporting harassment experiences (WES Q55, multiple measures)
Grassroots Engagement	<b>7. Cultural Issues:</b> Fully realize the USGS Guiding Principles	7.1 Update codes of conduct to reflect anti-harassment and inclusion responsibilities 7.2 Task existing USGS groups (e.g., Diversity Councils, Best Places to	6/1/2018	09/30/18	Anti-Harassment Executive Steering Group	staff time	Employees realize and embrace their role in ensuring a harassment-free workplace in USGS.	Improved FEVS responses to The New IQ index

		Work Council) to address Work Environment Survey results						
Grassroots Engagement	<b>8. Empowering the Field:</b> Continue to support existing and new employee-led efforts to improve the working environment in the USGS	8.1 Continue peer-support pilot and evaluate potential for expansion to additional centers 8.2 Submit WISDom to DOI as first USGS employee resource group (ERG) 8.3 Produce bureau guidance on how to implement additional ERGs	5/1/2018	09/30/18	Chief, Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity	staff time	Awareness and employee feedback mechanisms are institutionalized.  More instances of harassing conduct are reported to management for action.  Employee resource groups are expanded as an effective mechanism for continuing to build employee involvement and commitment in a healthy and inclusive working environment in USGS.	Annual review of peer-support program provided to Anti-Harassment Executive Steering Group  Increase in number of employee resource groups over time