



# Federal Labor Relations Authority

## Strategic Plan

2015-2018



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## Message from the Chairman



Over 50 years ago, President Kennedy issued [Executive Order 10,988, \*Employee-Management Cooperation in the Federal Sector\*](#), granting federal employees the right to engage in collective bargaining through labor organizations. In his memorandum to agencies, President Kennedy noted: “The participation of employees in the formulation and implementation of employee policy and procedures affecting them contributes to the effective conduct of public business.” For over 35 years, the Federal Labor Relations Authority (FLRA) has pursued President Kennedy’s vision by promoting stable, constructive labor-management relations, resolving disputes in a manner that contributes to an effective and efficient government, and providing leadership in establishing policies and guidance related to federal sector labor-management relations.

Our collective dedication to our mission is extremely powerful. It has helped us to manage changes in leadership, challenging political and economic climates, and evolving customer needs. It has also enabled us to become one of the “Best Places to Work in the Federal Government.” While I am proud of all that we have achieved already, I look forward to becoming even more effective at accomplishing our important mission, serving our customers, and meeting the needs of our employees. It is in this spirit that the FLRA has prepared this strategic plan.

The FLRA dedicated a great deal of effort into this entire strategic-planning endeavor. It was an important opportunity for all of us – senior leaders, the employees’ representative organization (the Union of Authority Employees (UAE)), and staff throughout the agency – to shape our shared vision for the future of the FLRA. This plan was developed through one-on-one interviews and focus groups with leadership, staff, and external stakeholders. We worked collectively to establish our shared goals, objectives, and strategies, as well as the supporting performance goals that will help us to accomplish our mission and drive improvements in our daily operations. I would like to emphasize several aspects of this effort:

- This was a highly participatory process, and served as an opportunity for leadership, staff, and external stakeholders to share ideas about our strategy.
- We asked for everyone’s best thinking and creativity – no ideas were off the table.
- This was a transparent effort, and we continuously communicated with agency employees – at all levels throughout the agency – for the duration of the project.

I am proud to present the FLRA’s Strategic Plan for 2015-2018, with full confidence that it will guide us as we seek to be even more effective at accomplishing our crucial



mission and supporting our top-caliber workforce. I want to thank everyone who contributed to the plan's development, and who took the time to provide valuable input that will help shape the future of the agency. I look forward to working together with you in achieving our goals and promoting positive labor-management relations across the federal government.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carol Waller Pope".

Carol Waller Pope  
Chairman  
Federal Labor Relations Authority

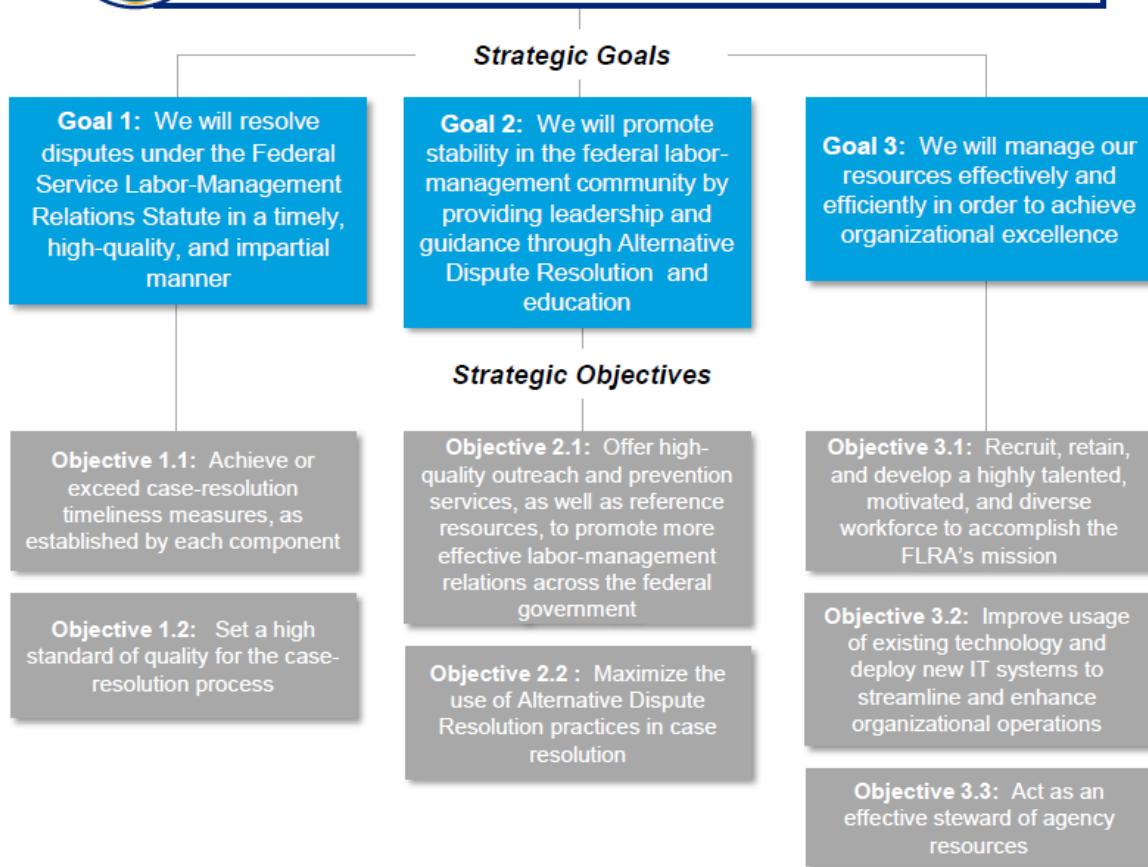


## Executive Summary

The Federal Labor Relations Authority (FLRA) is an independent administrative agency, created by Title VII of the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978. The FLRA’s mission is to *promote stable, constructive labor-management relations through the resolution and prevention of labor disputes in a manner that gives full effect to the collective-bargaining rights of employees, unions, and agencies*. Three strategic goals, each of which is supported by a number of strategic objectives, promote the FLRA’s ability to accomplish this mission.



**Mission:** The FLRA promotes stable, constructive labor-management relations through the resolution and prevention of labor disputes in a manner that gives full effect to the collective-bargaining rights of employees, unions, and agencies.



The FLRA developed this strategic plan against the backdrop of external trends and challenges that affect overall mission delivery. These trends include budget uncertainty, an increasing caseload, and internal and external workforce challenges. The goals and objectives in this plan support the FLRA’s mission in light of these trends and challenges.



The FLRA has identified performance goals that will allow the agency to both monitor progress towards achieving its strategic goals and to recalibrate strategies, as necessary. These goals incorporate the FLRA's increasing focus on data analytics. In developing this strategic plan, the FLRA referenced evidence-based performance and resource trends, and it intends to use data collected to measure mission and organizational progress against this strategic plan, in conjunction with future evaluations, to support data-driven agency decision making.



## Introduction

### Background

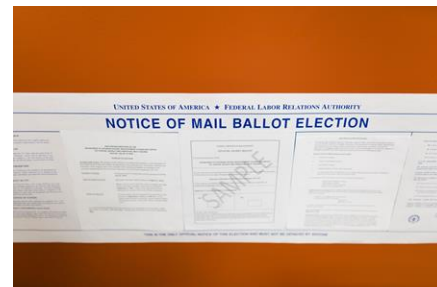
The Federal Labor Relations Authority (FLRA) is an independent administrative agency that was created to promote productive labor relations within the federal government by Title VII of the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978, also known as the [Federal Service Labor-Management Relations Statute](#) (the Statute), 5 U.S.C. §§ 7101-7135. The Statute formally codified the legal rights of federal employees, labor organizations, and agencies after President John F. Kennedy issued his milestone Executive Order 10,988 in 1962, which authorized federal employees to bargain collectively for the first time. To protect these rights, the FLRA was charged with responsibility for establishing policies and guidance for the administration of the federal government's labor-management-relations program, which today covers approximately 2.1 million non-Postal federal employees.

### Mission and Responsibilities

**Mission:** The FLRA promotes stable, constructive labor-management relations through the resolution and prevention of labor disputes in a manner that gives 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 primary 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.



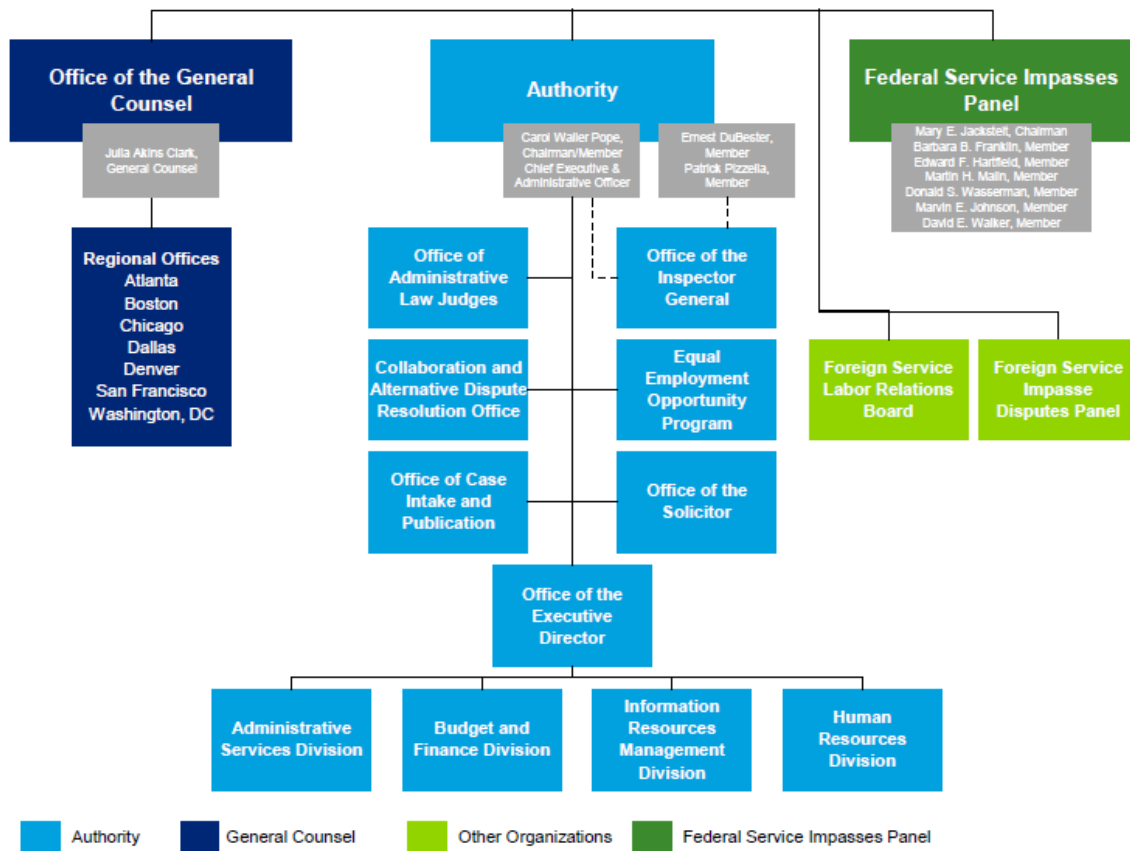




## Organizational Structure

Headquartered in Washington, D.C., the FLRA is organized into three statutory components – the Authority, the Office of the General Counsel (OGC), and the Federal Service Impasses Panel (FSIP) – each with unique adjudicative or prosecutorial roles.

**FLRA Organizational Chart**





*The Authority* comprises three presidentially nominated and Senate-confirmed Members responsible for adjudicating ULP complaints, determining whether to grant exceptions to arbitrators' grievance-arbitration awards, resolving disputes over the negotiability of proposals and provisions made during collective bargaining, and reviewing representation decisions of Regional Directors in representation disputes over union elections and unit determinations.



Other program offices under the jurisdiction of the Authority include the Office of the Solicitor, the Office of Administrative Law Judges (OALJ), the Office of Case Intake and Publication, and the Collaboration and Alternative Dispute Resolution Office (CADRO).

*The OGC* investigates alleged ULP charges, files and prosecutes ULP complaints, determines representation matters, and provides training and ADR services. The General Counsel is appointed by the President, subject to Senate confirmation, and is independent of the Authority. The General Counsel has direct authority over, and responsibility for, all employees in the OGC, including the FLRA's seven Regional Offices – in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Denver, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C.



*The FSIP* resolves impasses between federal agencies and federal unions arising from negotiations over conditions of employment under the Statute and the Federal Employees Flexible and Compressed Work Schedules Act. The FSIP normally comprises seven part-time Presidential appointees.





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 Agency for International Development, the U.S. Information Agency, and the Departments of State, Agriculture, and Commerce. *The Foreign Service Impasse Disputes Panel* is responsible for assisting in the resolution of negotiation impasses that arise between those Foreign Service employees and federal agencies during the collective-bargaining process.

## Stakeholder Engagement

In developing this strategic plan, FLRA leadership undertook a structured process that solicited the perspectives of the agency's diverse employee, customer, and stakeholder base. The strategic-planning team comprised representatives from each FLRA component and the employees' representative organization – the UAE. Internally, the team 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.

To gather feedback from external stakeholders, the agency 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 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 held working sessions to develop and memorialize the goals, objectives, and performance measures of this strategic plan.





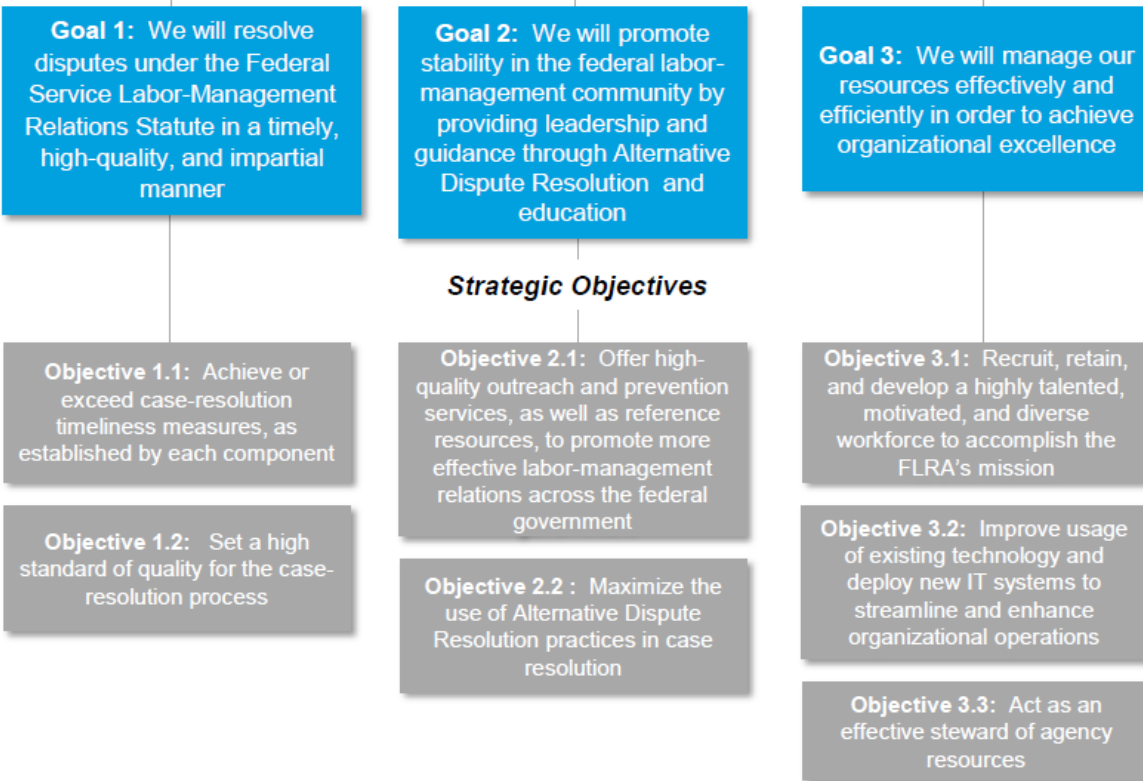
## FLRA Strategic Goals

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.



**Mission:** The FLRA promotes stable, constructive labor-management relations through the resolution and prevention of labor disputes in a manner that gives full effect to the collective-bargaining rights of employees, unions, and agencies.

### Strategic Goals

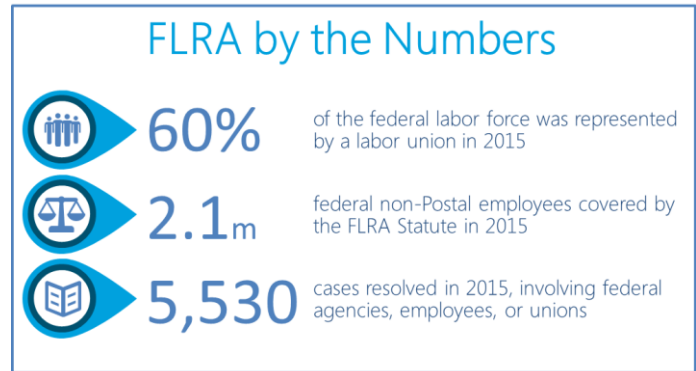




## Goal 1: We will resolve disputes under the Federal Service Labor-Management Relations Statute in a timely, high-quality, and impartial manner

### Goal Overview

The FLRA’s five primary responsibilities, as described in the introduction, relate directly to the five different types of cases that the agency receives from parties: Unfair Labor Practice (ULP), Representation (REP), Arbitration (ARB), Negotiability (NEG), and Bargaining Impasse (Impasse). The first strategic goal reflects that the agency’s key statutory activities involve the review 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 the ability of other federal agencies 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 adjudication of their cases if case resolution is not swift, or if decisions 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 can be 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 the needs of its parties, and make progress towards its mission of promoting constructive, stable labor-management relations.

### *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 existing monthly 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 monthly progress reviews or at any other appropriate time



### *Contributing Components:*

- FLRA Authority
  - OALJ
- FLRA OGC
- FLRA FSIP

### *Performance Goals:*

Performance goals for Objective 1.1 include:

- Produce timely review and disposition of each case type (ULP, REP, ARB, NEG, Impasse)
- 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 judges quality in terms of effective process execution, clear communication with parties around case processes, and the issuance of well-written and understandable decisions 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: 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 close overlap, impartiality is mentioned explicitly in the language of Goal 1 in order to emphasize it as a particularly important aspect of the FLRA's case-review and disposition responsibilities.



### *Strategies:*

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

- Establish 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 existing monthly meeting structure and other venues
- Continuously develop and implement process and material improvements discussed during monthly 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.



*Contributing Components:*

- FLRA Authority
  - OALJ
- FLRA OGC
- FLRA FSIP

*Performance Goals:*

Performance goals for Objective 1.2 include:

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

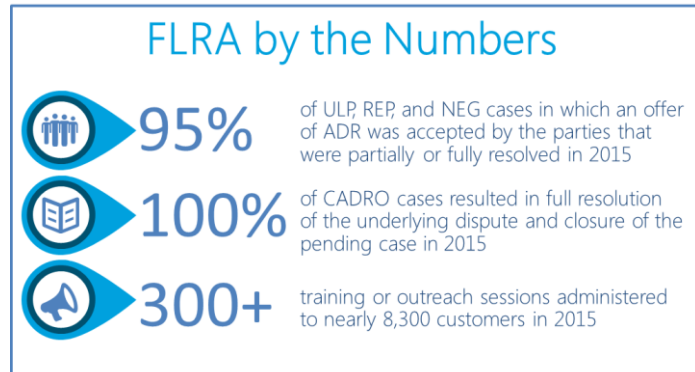




## Goal 2: We will promote stability in the federal labor-management community by providing leadership and guidance through Alternative Dispute Resolution and education

### 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 forums, such as the National Council on Federal Labor-Management Relations (National Council), the American Bar Association, and other professional labor and employment law organizations and associations.





## 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, such as participation on the National Council, 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 contribute to the implementation and ongoing success of [Executive Order 13,522: Creating Labor-Management Forums to Improve Delivery of Government Services](#).



Based on feedback obtained from parties during the strategic-planning process, the FLRA heard first-hand the value that its trainings and resources provide to the labor-management community. Feedback providers also made recommendations for improvement, which the FLRA has incorporated into the actionable strategies that support this objective. 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 by supporting labor-management forums and other collaborative labor-management relationships
- 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, targeting audiences with the greatest need
- Improve the FLRA website to make it a truly user-friendly, empowering resource for parties and the federal-sector labor-management community

### *Contributing Components and External Partners:*

- FLRA Authority
  - OALJ
  - CADRO
  - Office of the Executive Director
- FLRA OGC
- FLRA FSIP
- National Council on Federal Labor-Management Relations
- Office of Personnel Management (OPM)
- Office of Management and Budget (OMB)

### *Performance Goals:*

Performance goals for Objective 2.1 include:

- Provide targeted training, outreach and prevention, and facilitation activities within the labor-management community
- Provide up-to-date case-processing and case-law resources and trainings for the labor-management community that are effective and useful



### *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 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 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 the benefits of ADR 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

#### *Contributing Components:*

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

#### *Performance Goals:*

Performance goals for Objective 2.2 include:

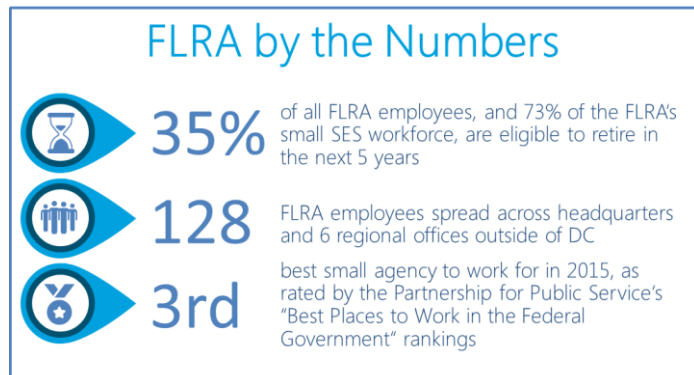
- Successful resolution of a significant portion of FLRA cases through ADR
- Expanded use of ADR in ARB cases



### 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. Approximately 60% of the FLRA’s workforce has been with the agency for five years or less, and many of the agency’s most experienced employees are currently eligible to retire. In light of these facts, it is crucial for the FLRA to simultaneously focus on developing the workplace and the workforce of the future, while retaining valuable institutional knowledge. Over the past few years, the FLRA has consistently 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 will continue to build on this success 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. Consistent with government-wide trends, the FLRA is faced with increasing retirement projections that, if not carefully managed, could lead to a significant loss of institutional knowledge. In the 2015 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, 15% of the FLRA's respondents reported that they intend to retire within the next 5 years, and, in fact, 35% will be eligible. The FLRA has recently been faced with a fairly stagnant level of staffing and an increasing case load. 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

*Contributing Components and External Partners:*

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

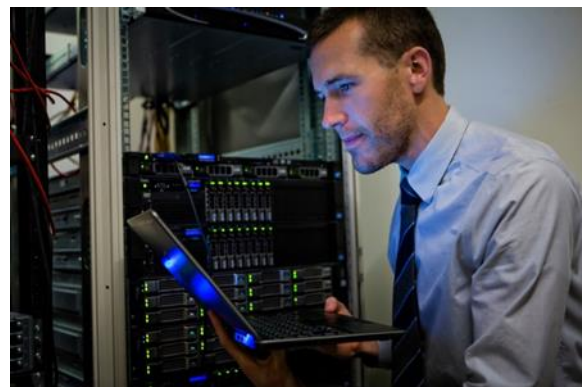
*Performance Goals:*

Performance goals for Objective 3.1 include:

- Demonstrate strong recruitment and retention practices
- Maintain and grow agency expertise through employee development
- 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 intends to fully implement an “end-to-end” electronic case file that will significantly streamline the processing and handling of cases, while reducing procedural deficiencies, by FY 2019. 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
- Develop and implement data-analytics tools to improve case processing, outreach, and internal operations

#### *Contributing Components and External Partners:*

- FLRA Authority
  - Office of the Executive Director
- FLRA OGC
- FLRA FSIP
- Office of Management and Budget (OMB)

#### *Performance Goals:*

Performance goals for Objective 3.2 include:

- Expand the use of eFiling
- Utilize data-analytics tools that permit data-driven analysis of agency-wide performance and effectiveness





### *Objective 3.3: Act as an effective steward of agency resources*

The FLRA's key resources are its employees and its financial 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 continue to build on the success seen in recent years' 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:

- Conduct an internal assessment of the "supply and demand" for ADR services
- Develop a workforce-planning system that will allow for better 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
- Conduct a survey for program-office staff to provide feedback on administrative services, at least annually
- Build a strategic-resource-planning process to inform the budget-planning cycle



*Contributing 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:*

Performance goals for Objective 3.3 include:

- Achieve high internal customer-service scores on delivery of administrative services
- Meet or exceed established operational measures
- Maintain standing as 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 budget uncertainty, an increasing caseload, workforce challenges, and potential changes in legislation or regulation. Over the past few years, there has been an environment of great budget uncertainty throughout the federal government. This 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, the FLRA must remain vigilant in focusing on effectively managing limited financial resources to better position the agency to meet strategic priorities, a strategy that is addressed in Strategic Objective 3.3.

The FLRA has experienced an increasing workload due to cases filed in response to sequestration, furloughs, and agency budget cuts. It is likely that these trends will 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 an 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 could lead to increases in case filings greatly impact it. Together, these trends could affect the agency's ability to meet the goals outlined in this plan, and fulfill its mission under the Statute. With potentially challenging times ahead, 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). Because of the FLRA's careful and creative management of resources, the OIG no longer considers a human-resources shortage to be a critical challenge facing the agency. The remaining challenges identified by the Inspector General include IT security and proper handling



of records. 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, agency leadership holds monthly, data-driven management meetings 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
- Assess the current employee performance standards and implement recommendations that will lead to a more meaningful employee performance-review process



- 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 seven part-time, presidentially appointed Members
Impasse	Bargaining Impasse*
IT	Information Technology
National Council	National Council on Federal Labor-Management Relations
NEG	Negotiability*
OALJ	Office of Administrative Law Judges
OGC	Office of the General Counsel
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*