



Review of the ECCC Respect Bureau

Joint Audit and Evaluation Engagement

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Table of contents

Executive summary	i
1. Background	1
2. Objective, scope and methodology	3
3. Findings, recommendations and management responses	4
3.1 Governance and strategic planning	4
3.2 Communications and outreach	7
3.3 Management and performance of the Respect Bureau.....	9
3.4 Diversity and inclusion.....	15
4. Conclusion	16
Appendix A: Lines of enquiry and criteria.....	18
Appendix B: Logic model and examples of potential indicators.....	22
Appendix C : Respect Bureau evaluation forms analysis and survey results comparison	24

Executive summary

Background

The Respect Bureau came into existence on February 1, 2018 and serves as ECCC's organizational Ombuds office. Its mandate is to provide a safe place where all ECCC employees can raise, discuss and seek help to address work-related concerns or issues, without fear of judgement and reprisal. The Respect Bureau offers 6 types of services. These include Ombuds, coaching, facilitated discussions, workplace dialogue, exit interviews and training. Respect Bureau employees conduct activities in accordance with 4 guiding principles: confidentiality, independence, impartiality and informality.

Objective and scope

The objective of the review was to assess the extent to which Respect Bureau activities were effective in achieving the goal of promoting a respectful workplace, free from harassment, discrimination or violence. The review covered the 4-year period, from the Respect Bureau's creation in February 2018 to the end of the fiscal year 2021 to 2022. The focus was on governance and strategic planning, communication and outreach and management and performance.

Why it is important

In the [Twenty-Ninth Annual Report to the Prime Minister on the Public Service of Canada](#) (August 2022), the Clerk of the Privy Council stated that taking care of employee health and well-being and delivering results for Canadians should be the top priorities of all departments. The report emphasized that there is a need to create safe and collaborative working spaces where anyone can speak up and get the support they need.

The Respect Bureau is an important strategic enabler in supporting ECCC in achieving its mandate and priorities. Its ultimate goal is to support employees in fulfilling their day-to-day responsibilities in a respectful, healthy workplace.

It is also important to note the contribution that the Respect Bureau has made during the first 2 and a half years of the pandemic. As the federal public service, including the Department, moved to a remote work posture, the Respect Bureau had to quickly assess the situation, adjust its approaches and continue delivering services to the nearly 8,500 employees working across the country—mostly from home offices. Additionally, during that period, the number of visitors increased significantly. The fact that there is a high satisfaction rate in employee feedback and surveys is a testament to the efforts that the Respect Bureau put into visitor satisfaction during this period.

As the Department shifts to a hybrid work model, the Respect Bureau will have to be ready to support management and employees in this new phase of work. As such, there are

2 recommendations in the report for the Respect Bureau to consider as they develop their plans and activities for the coming years.

Conclusion

During the 4-year period covered in this report, ECCC's Respect Bureau activities have been implemented to foster and support the promotion of a respectful workplace. A governance structure has been established, with a terms of reference document and clear reporting relationship to the Deputy Ministers. In addition, partners are identified and being leveraged to support the delivery of the Respect Bureau's mandate. Officials are undertaking communication and outreach activities, which are important elements in supporting mandate achievement. The Respect Bureau is meeting its mandate, and Ombuds Standards of practice and processes and tools are in place to support service delivery.

The review identified areas for improvement that, once addressed, will reinforce an already well-functioning Respect Bureau as it continues to achieve its mandate. These include:

- reviewing and updating the documentation of roles and responsibilities within the Respect Bureau
- enhancing strategic planning practices
- developing communications and outreach plans more strategically, based on identified systemic issues and emerging departmental needs
- refining performance indicators and strengthening reporting on activities and trends

Recommendations

1. The Respect Bureau should review and update the documentation of roles and responsibilities and review its strategic and communication planning practices to ensure that its work plans are linked to its mandate and priorities and adequately resourced, and that the communications materials provide the best information on its services and how it can help employees navigate workplace issues.
2. The Respect Bureau should refine its performance indicators and strengthen reporting on activities and trends, to ensure that it has the information needed to determine whether it is operating as efficiently as possible and has the required resources to meet its mandate and provide timely information to key partners in the Department.

1. Background

In the 2018 [Clerk of the Privy Council Office Message on Safe Workspaces](#), departments and agencies were asked to put in place an Ombuds-type function to provide all employees with a trusted, safe space to discuss harassment without fear of reprisal and to help navigate existing systems.

The Respect Bureau, which serves as Environment and Climate Change Canada's (ECCC) organizational¹ Ombuds office, was announced on November 28, 2017. It officially opened its doors on February 1, 2018. Its mandate is to provide a safe place where all ECCC employees can raise, discuss and address work-related concerns or issues, including harassment and violence, without fear of judgement and reprisal. In 2019, its mandate was expanded to include informal conflict management (ICM) services. Like other departments, ECCC has the responsibility to ensure that Ombuds support services and informal conflict management services are available to employees, to address workplace conflict at the earliest stage and the lowest cost.

The Respect Bureau aligns itself to the evolving policy framework, including [The 2018 Clerk of the Privy Council Office Message on Safe Workspaces](#), Section 207 of [Federal Public Sector Labour Relations Act](#), the Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS) [Directive on the Prevention and Resolution of Workplace Harassment and Violence](#) and the [Work Place Harassment and Violence Prevention Regulations](#).

The Respect Bureau offers the following services:

- **Ombuds discussions.** These discussions offer a confidential space where individuals can share, without fear of reprisal or judgement, a workplace situation or concern. Ombuds are available to listen to workplace concerns, guide visitors to the relevant available resources and support them in developing options for moving forward. The Ombuds also work with partners such as management, unions, labour relations and other human resources teams to raise organizational awareness about systemic issues or patterns, to promote fair and transparent practices.
- **Coaching.** Coaching is a one-on one discussion to listen to individual concerns and provide tools and support to empower individuals to address workplace issues. It can help individuals break down the issue at hand, identify underlying issues and develop options for moving forward.

¹ An organizational-type Ombuds differs from legislative-type Ombuds, which has in addition the power to conduct investigations (for example, Veterans Ombudsman).

- **Facilitated discussions.** A facilitated discussion is a voluntary, interest-based process. Conflict Management Practitioners support and guide the parties to prepare and engage in a different conversation process.
- **Workplace dialogue.** A workplace dialogue is a participatory, cooperative problem-solving process facilitated by Conflict Management Practitioners. It helps identify underlying issues, to enable the group to come to a common way forward.
- **Exit interview.** An exit interview enables individuals to share their experience and perspective. It raises issues that may help improve the workplace, helps the Ombuds effect change in the Department, complements the Department's automated exit questionnaire process and helps the Respect Bureau learn more about the health of the organization.
- **Training.** The Respect Bureau offers needs-based training to entire teams, upon request. These training sessions help develop communication skills, improve interpersonal relationships, encourage open dialogue and build trust. Furthermore, the Respect Bureau's Awareness Session on Conflict Management is part of the mandatory learning activities established by ECCC to promote a safe, inclusive, healthy and respectful workplace.

The activities and services are identified on the Respect Bureau's Intranet page and are based on 4 guiding principles, in accordance with the standards of the [International Ombuds Association](#) (IOA) and the Organizational Ombuds Council (OOC). These are:

- **Independence:** The Respect Bureau is independent in structure, function and practice. It exercises sole discretion over whether or how to act regarding an individual's concern, a trend or a systemic issue. Its choices are independent of the Department's existing formal structure. The Ombuds report to the Deputy Ministers.
- **Impartiality:** Practitioners listen to and objectively consider the concerns and interests of all parties. They do not defend the interests of any individual in the organization. As such, the Respect Bureau does not serve as an advocate for any party in a dispute. Rather, it advocates for productive communication and fair processes.
- **Informality:** The Respect Bureau does not participate in investigations or formal processes. Its services are voluntary and are not a required step in a recourse. Informing the Respect Bureau of an issue does not constitute an official notice to the Department.
- **Confidentiality:** Any information that an individual shares during any conversation with the practitioners is confidential. The only exception to the confidentiality rule is if the Respect Bureau obtains an individual's permission or when the law requires it. Information shared by a visitor is not disclosed without the visitor's permission, except where there may be an imminent risk of serious harm to an individual's safety or to the workplace. The Respect Bureau does not maintain records that identify visitors.

The requests for Respect Bureau services have been increasing every year since its inception. In the latest Respect Bureau Biannual Report for 2020 to 2022, they report 1,788 confidential meetings with 811 visitors, of which 41% were with the Ombuds and 59% were with practitioners.

The Respect Bureau budget for fiscal year 2021 to 2022 was about \$1 million and there are currently 10 staff members. At the time of the review, the staff consisted of 2 organizational Ombuds, 1 assistant Ombuds, 4 senior conflict management practitioners, 1 project coordinator, 1 administrative coordinator and 1 strategic advisor.

2. Objective, scope and methodology

Objective

The objective was to assess the extent to which Respect Bureau activities are effective in achieving its goal of promoting a respectful workplace, free from harassment, discrimination or violence.

Scope

The review covered the 4-year period, from the Respect Bureau's creation in February 2018 to the end of fiscal year 2021 to 2022, and focussed on the following themes:

- **Governance and strategic planning** - A formal governance structure, enabled by clear responsibilities and strategic planning processes, is in place and working as intended to support the administration of the Respect Bureau as it matures.
- **Communications and outreach** - Communications and outreach activities are strategically planned to enable the Respect Bureau to achieve its intended objectives.
- **Management and performance of the Respect Bureau** - The Respect Bureau operates effectively and efficiently, in accordance with its mandate and the [Ombuds Standards of Practice](#).

The review specifically excluded an examination of the Respect Bureau's information technology/information management system, which is in the process of being replaced. It also excluded an examination of the classification of positions within the organization, since this is currently under review by the Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer. Finally, the review did not examine the effectiveness of the 'Respect Bureau' moniker.

Methodology

The review leveraged a blend of audit and evaluation techniques as follows:

- A review of relevant documentation, including policies, guidelines and procedures, to corroborate observations gained by other lines of inquiry
- Interviews conducted with key Respect Bureau personnel
- Interviews conducted with key stakeholders, including senior executives and representatives from unions, employee networks, labour relations and human resources
- A benchmarking exercise conducted with Ombuds offices in 3 federal departments.
- A questionnaire sent to 10 departmental branch heads, to better understand their interactions with the Respect Bureau
- A department-wide survey sent to all 8,530 ECCC employees², to better assess knowledge and uptake of Respect Bureau services among employees and managers, with a response rate of 21% (1,808 respondents)

[Appendix A](#) provides details on the review criteria and coverage.

3. Findings, recommendations and management responses

3.1 Governance and strategic planning

Findings: A governance structure has been established, with a terms of reference document and clear reporting requirements to the Deputy Ministers. In addition, partners are identified and are being leveraged to deliver on the Respect Bureau's mandate.

There are opportunities identified to strengthen the documentation of roles and responsibilities within the Respect Bureau and enhance strategic planning practices.

² An average of 8,530 employees for the review period was used throughout this report, which corresponded to the approximate number of ECCC employees working during the review period.

Governance and roles and responsibilities

Terms of reference

The Respect Bureau's Terms of Reference, signed December 16, 2021, outline key governance components governance, which are also reflected in the approved organizational chart. There are 2 Ombuds at ECCC who report directly to the Deputy Ministers. This is a unique model within the federal public service. In addition, an Assistant Ombuds focuses on issues of diversity and inclusion. The office operates independently of line and staff reporting structures and without influence from other functions or entities within the organization.

The Terms of Reference document the mandate of providing Ombuds and Informal Conflict Management (ICM) services to employees by building collaborative relationships with internal and external partners. The partners are clearly identified and include the Executive Management Committee, the Human Resources Branch, the Corporate Services and Finance Branch, all executives and managers, bargaining agent presidents and stewards, employee networks, champions, the Senior Disclosure Officer, the Science Integrity Lead, the Organizational Ombudsman Council, leads on key government initiatives and central agencies. The identification of services and guiding principles in the terms of reference align with good practices in other departments and agencies. Moreover, the Respect Bureau has a number of documents that describe its functions and activities.

A 2-Ombuds approach

The 2-Ombuds approach is unique among federal departments, which normally only have 1 Ombuds. ECCC officials selected this model so that the function could have a greater presence in the workplace, since the Ombuds is also the Director of the Respect Bureau and must balance administrative priorities while carrying out Ombuds activities. The 2-Ombuds model allows, for example, for a better distribution of files and participation at numerous committees, as well as a more consistent presence in the regions.

The review found that the use of this model could potentially present challenges in understanding accountabilities in the Respect Bureau, particularly given the complex nature of the services offered, which include both Ombuds and Informal Conflict Management services. In this regard, there is an opportunity to enhance the Terms of Reference, to provide clarity on the distinctiveness of the role of each Ombuds. This would help clarify roles and responsibilities related to accountabilities, particularly as it relates to internal bureau decision making.

When asked, the majority of partners noted that having 2 Ombuds did not affect their perception of the function's performance and that things were working well. That said, some partners indicated that the structure has the potential to be unclear for those new to the Department or outside of the Respect Bureau. As such, it is important for Respect Bureau officials to review the current documentation on the roles and responsibilities of each Ombuds to ensure that decision-making authorities within the Respect Bureau are adequately described.

Clarification of roles and responsibilities: Ombuds and Informal Conflict Management

Interviewees revealed that there might be a lack of clarity concerning the responsibilities of the Ombuds versus those of the Informal Conflict Management practitioners. The lack of clarity might be a consequence of the nature of the services provided. It could be difficult to identify a visitor's needs at initial contact, given the various avenues available to help resolve the workplace situation they are experiencing. As such, there may be an opportunity to clarify, document and communicate the roles and responsibilities of the Ombuds and the Informal Conflict Management practitioners. This could help visitors better identify their needs. It should be noted that in October 2022, the Respect Bureau Intranet site was updated that provided information on the various services offered and what employees could expect. This may help resolve the issues that interviewees raised during the conduct phase of this project.

Strategic planning

Strategic planning is important to establish connections among an organization's mission, vision, objectives and activities. It enables the identification of priorities and the allocation of resources to achieve mandate commitments and priority areas.

The Respect Bureau produces a number of documents that outline annual objectives, activities and a general communications plan. While these documents help with the planning of activities, there may be an opportunity to put in place a more robust strategic planning process that aligns its work with departmental priorities and commitments such as the diversity, inclusion and employment equity plans and helps with the alignment of the Respect Bureau's mandate and priorities to resource allocations.

We found that there are opportunities for the Respect Bureau to conduct environmental scanning to determine issues that may be on the horizon and to review planned activities against available resources. These activities would support the Ombuds in providing assurance that they have the required resources to meet their mandate and priorities and would help identify potential improvement opportunities with the associated resource requirements.

The Respect Bureau's practices in this regard are somewhat aligned with those in other departments reviewed as part of our benchmarking exercise. We observed that other departments had elements of operational and strategic planning in place. For example, one department had a detailed operational plan that included numerous components such as budget, communications, data, events, human resources, stakeholders and performance measurement tools. The document mapped out expected outputs and the methods to track progress. Another department had undertaken a 3-year strategic planning exercise that looked at the alignment of its work to departmental priorities. This exercise included a strategic analysis that led to the identification of 3 priority areas and associated performance indicators.

By strengthening strategic planning processes, the Respect Bureau could get a better sense of issues that may arise in the short to medium term (for example, elements of the implementation

of a hybrid work model, a move to hoteling arrangements, future pandemic related policies). It could help officials identify the potential risks, required activities and associated resources to support the Department and employees in carrying out work to meet priorities and mandate.

3.2 Communications and outreach

Findings: Communications and outreach activities are taking place and are important elements in supporting the Respect Bureau in achieving its mandate.

While there is an annual communications plan in place, there is an opportunity to plan activities and events more strategically, taking into account systemic previously identified and emerging issues and needs.

Communications plans

The Respect Bureau develops an annual communications plan, which identifies a variety of ways to share information and promote its services. The plan outlines communications objectives such as enhancing employee awareness of the Respect Bureau's role, targeted audiences, key messages, activities and events and the communication channels.

The Respect Bureau uses a variety of ways to inform employees of their services. These include mandatory training sessions, the Intranet and Ecollab pages, social media, employee networks, internal departmental newsletters, Deputy Ministers' messages and other means to reach employees. The Respect Bureau also makes an effort to share reports and present dashboards to some branch heads. In addition, Respect Bureau officials are accessible through a variety of ways, including a 1-800 phone number, generic email box, direct contact with Respect Bureau staff and through referrals from partners.

We reached out to over a dozen partners through interviews and questionnaires. A number of respondents mentioned that meetings are taking place at fixed intervals or on an as-needed basis. Overall, partners noted that communication channels were in place between their organizations and the Respect Bureau. A number of respondents also mentioned that they would appreciate more regular communications from the Respect Bureau on issues, trends and data to support decision-making.

Employee knowledge of the Respect Bureau

In response to our survey to all staff, 88% of respondents (n=1,583) indicated they were aware that the Department has a Respect Bureau that provides Ombuds and Informal Conflict Management services. Furthermore, 80% of respondents noted that they believe they have enough information to allow them to seek services.

Respondents mentioned that the ECCC Awareness Session on Conflict Management was the primary source of awareness of the Respect Bureau (65%), with ECCC news (38%) and presentations by the Respect Bureau (35%) being the other important sources of information. The Intranet page was cited as a source by 26% of respondents. Given recent updates to the

Intranet page, it will be important for the Respect Bureau to enhance its knowledge of this important communications tool.

Also of interest, when staff were asked in the survey about with which aspect of the Respect Bureau they were familiar. The highest response was related to Informal Conflict Management services at (89%), followed by coaching and training (74%). Interestingly, 45% noted that they were familiar with the fact that it is an Ombuds office. This is an important element of the Respect Bureau's work that appears to be less well know by respondents. However, the recent enhancement of the Respect Bureau's Intranet page will contribute to increasing overall awareness of their service offerings.

Outreach – at headquarters and in the regions

While the Respect Bureau has been making efforts to reach employees both at headquarters and in the regional offices, 6 of the 8 partners interviewed indicated that the Respect Bureau could undertake more outreach. For example, just before the pandemic, Respect Bureau staff travelled across the country to provide information on its role and services and to listen to organizational needs. These site visits were very well received and perceived to be effective. During the pandemic, there were fewer opportunities for face-to-face encounters. As such, Respect Bureau staff interviewed indicated a need for continued efforts to ensure that ECCC staff have the knowledge and awareness to be able to see the bureau as a key point of contact should a workplace issue arise.

Enhancing communications

While there is an annual communications plan in place, there are opportunities to improve how it is developed to take into account systemic issues and lessons learned from previous years and to better align the plan with departmental priorities and emerging risks.

Developing a more robust communications plan could help in a number of ways. It could serve to depict how the Respect Bureau's various services such as coaching, facilitated discussion, workplace dialogue and training can support informal conflict management in the workplace. It could assist in the identification of specific issues or audiences to target messaging and in setting goals with associated indicators to measure progress and results. Moreover, targeted communications could help prevent audience fatigue caused by employees hearing the same awareness message over a number of years. It could also help promote increased awareness among targeted groups of the resources available to them and the ways in which the Respect Bureau promotes fairer outcomes in the Department. Furthermore, as the Department implements a hybrid work model, it could help in identifying ways and means to communicate with employees who are now working in the physical workplace and at home via telework agreements.

It is also important that the Respect Bureau review its communications plan to address potential reputational risks. Respondents to our staff survey indicated that they believe the Respect Bureau has decision-making authority in resolving conflicts. This perception might lead to

unclear expectations among visitors and impact the reputation of the Bureau with some employees. This is particularly important given the staff turnover that has occurred during the past 2 years and the hybrid work model currently being implemented.

Furthermore, there is an opportunity to share targeted messages during the year, even if they were not planned at the beginning of the fiscal year. We learned that other departments were proactive in sending communications in response to external events, such as those related to the Black Lives Matter, COVID-19 and planning for the return to the physical workplace. These targeted messages were provided to inform employees and provide them with information on resources that they could consult if required.

Recommendation 1
The Respect Bureau should review and update the documentation of roles and responsibilities and review its strategic and communication planning practices to ensure that work plans are linked to its mandate and priorities and adequately resourced, and that communications materials provide the best information on its services and how it can help employees navigate workplace issues.
Management response
The Ombuds and Director, Respect Bureau agrees with the recommendation. The Respect Bureau will review and update the documentation of roles and responsibilities and the strategic and communication planning process to ensure that work plans are linked to the mandate and priorities. This will ensure that the resources and efforts support the effective delivery of our services and lead to expected outcomes.

3.3 Management and performance of the Respect Bureau

<p>Findings: The Respect Bureau operates effectively, in accordance with its mandate and the Ombuds Standards of Practice. Processes and tools have been developed to support service delivery. Feedback forms on employee discussions are collected and reviewed to support trend analysis.</p> <p>There are opportunities for improvement related to strengthening performance indicators and reporting on activities and trends. This would help the Ombuds determine whether they are operating as efficiently as possible and whether they have the required resources to meet their mandate.</p>

Effective administration

Meeting expectations

The Respect Bureau is in place and meeting the expectations set out in the [2018 Clerk of the Privy Council message and action plan](#). The action plan provides high-level guidance for department and agency Ombuds offices, recognizing that the mode would be custom fit to each organization, with accessibility by front line employees in mind. Furthermore, the Respect

Bureau complies with Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat guidance on key elements of an [Informal Conflict Management System in the Core Public Administration](#). We observed this through process walkthroughs, interviews and in survey responses.

Intake processes

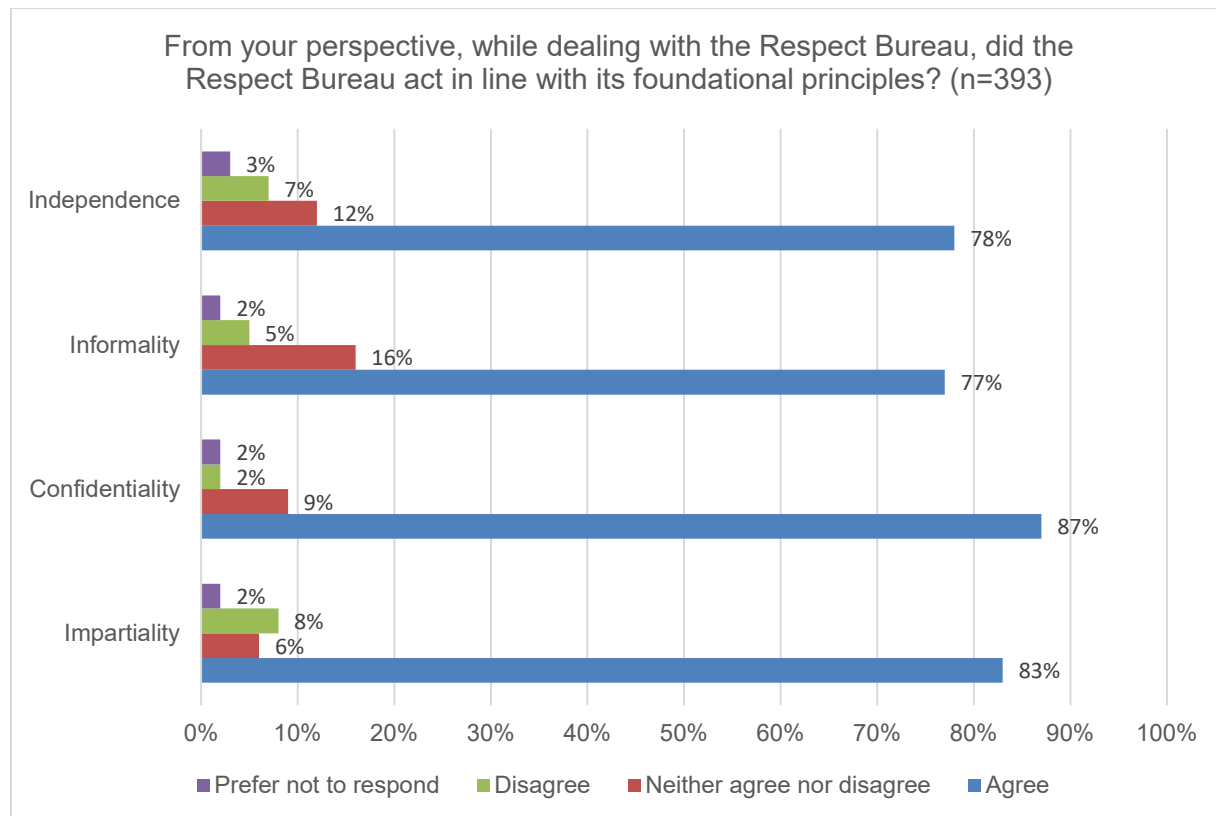
The documentation review and interviews with partners indicated that overall referral processes are established and used however, the review team found that these processes were not fully documented. It is important to document and formalize processes, to establish and evaluate internal controls and to ensure that the Respect Bureau is meeting its service standards. It also supports clear expectations for those who are looking to use the Respect Bureau's services.

Furthermore, the review team found no evidence of a complete set of comprehensive documents, including process maps or procedures, in place to support informal conflict management service delivery. Improving and standardizing documentation could help ensure consistency and quality of service across cases within the Respect Bureau, providing a clear foundation within which to operate and build upon and ensuring continuity of service delivery in the event of staff turnover.

4 operating principles in action

During interviews, we were informed that when employees seek Respect Bureau services, they are informed of the 4 operating principles, namely independence, informality, confidentiality and impartiality. Table 1 illustrates that the majority of respondents to our all-staff survey believed that these 4 principles were met in their interactions with the Respect Bureau. There were few 'disagree' responses, with impartiality and independence rating just below 10%. Employees and managers who sought out services also shared these views. While the 'disagree' numbers are relatively low, they provide important information for the Respect Bureau to consider.

Figure 1: Visitors' views on the 4 principles



Timeliness

In interviews, Respect Bureau staff indicated that they aim to respond to individuals who seek support as soon as possible. Moreover, 85% of 393 respondents to our all-staff survey indicated they were able to speak to a Respect Bureau representative in a reasonable amount of time. This demonstrates that those who are using the service believe that they are getting a response in a timely manner. In interviews, senior management acknowledged that the Respect Bureau has been proactive in raising issues, both current and systemic issues in a timely manner, while meeting the 4 principles.

Respondent perceptions of the services provided

We asked survey respondents to answer questions related to whether the Respect Bureau had helped identify and evaluate options to address workplace issues and whether the Respect Bureau was able to help resolve the workplace issue or concern raised.

Identification of options. Overall, 69% of respondents agreed that the Respect Bureau helped them identify options to address workplace issues and 12% did not agree. 15% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed and 3% preferred not to respond.

Help resolve workplace issue/concern. Overall, 48% agreed that the Respect Bureau helped resolve a workplace issue or concern and 19% disagreed. 30% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed and 3% preferred not to respond.

A review of the comments for those who did not agree revealed the following:

- partial resolutions of issues (20 responses)
- some challenging individuals or workplace situations had not changed (12 responses)
- ongoing issue (7 responses)
- individuals had left the organization (4 responses)

The data provides interesting information that potentially relates to the understanding or expectations that individuals have of the Respect Bureau's mandate and what it can do to help them. The Respect Bureau provides support and coaching to individuals facing challenging situations and does not have authority to make decisions and implement changes. As such, the results of the survey provide information that could help the Respect Bureau as it enhances its communications and outreach planning and implementation.

Staff competencies

As per the Informal Conflict Management System Resource Guide on professional knowledge, skills and abilities required, the review found that the Respect Bureau had staff with the required competencies to achieve its mandate. Team members are trained in the topics of conflict resolution, mediation and facilitation, mental-health related situations in the workplace, teamwork, diversity and inclusion and have completed all mandatory training. The interviewees indicated that professional communication occurs between the Ombuds and the Informal Conflict Management practitioners to support them fulfilling their roles and responsibilities.

Capacity

We noted that the Respect Bureau has the highest ratio of employees per practitioner compared to benchmarked organizations. ECCC has a ratio of 1 practitioner for every 2,600 employees. Among the organizations against which we conducted our benchmarking exercise, the following ratios of employees per practitioner have been identified - 1 practitioner for every 1,300 employees, 1 practitioner for every 1,400 employees, and 1 practitioner for every 1,800 employees. It will be important for the Ombuds to conduct a further analysis of Respect Bureau capacity as it moves to strengthen planning and performance measurement practices. It is also important to be aware of potential risks related to capacity issues in the near future, given the evolving work context within the Department. The factors to consider include the implementation of the hybrid work model, the overall labour shortage and the competition for available talent among federal departments and agencies.

Shift during the pandemic

The Respect Bureau was created in February 2018 and operated for 2 full years before the pandemic affected all departmental operations. Prior to the pandemic, Respect Bureau officials travelled across Canada to listen to individuals and to better understand workplace issues, in support of aligning its service delivery options to organizational needs.

As the federal public service, including ECCC, moved to a remote work posture, the Respect Bureau had to quickly assess the situation, adjust its and approaches and continue to deliver services to about 8,500 employees working across the country, from home offices, for the most part. During that period, the number of visitors increased significantly. The fact that employee feedback and surveys indicate a high satisfaction rate is a testament to the efforts that the Respect Bureau put into ensuring visitor satisfaction.

Performance management and reporting

At the onset of this review, we learned that the Respect Bureau did not have a logic model or formal performance measurement strategy beyond what is required in departmental planning processes. Our review team developed a preliminary logic model, in collaboration with the Respect Bureau. Some examples of indicators were developed by the review team, to provide examples of effectiveness, relevance and organizational indicators (see [Appendix B](#)).

During the review, we found that the Respect Bureau has identified and used different data and statistics since its inception to develop reports and dashboards that are provided to departmental decision makers. Some examples include the production of 2 published annual reports, as well as informal dashboards that were prepared to support discussions with Branch Heads and partners.

Furthermore, the Respect Bureau is currently leveraging data through an internal in-house database, capturing selected information including symptoms, sources and issues affecting the overall health of the Department while maintaining individual confidentiality. The Respect Bureau is also in the process of moving to a more robust, integrated system that will allow for the management of individual cases and the generation of reports and dashboards.

Visitor satisfaction forms

The Respect Bureau uses different evaluation forms to gauge the level of visitor satisfaction with the services received. The review team analyzed over 300 evaluation forms (See [Appendix C](#)). Our analysis revealed that the feedback was positive and aligned with our all-staff survey results. In general, we observed a visitor satisfaction rate well above 80% in areas such as helping visitors explore options, visitor perception of being listened to and treated respectfully, timeliness, understanding perspectives and meeting expectations. The areas where satisfaction was between 60 and 80% included confidence about contacting the Respect Bureau, confidence in self-managing conflict situations or difficult conversations and knowledge of the Bureau's processes.

It should be noted, however, that the client satisfaction forms between the services (Ombuds, Informal Conflict Management and Training) are not standardized, making challenging to compare visitor satisfaction across services. Moreover, while this data provides valuable information, there was no evidence that the data collected was being used to inform service delivery improvements.

Reporting to branch heads and governance bodies

We reviewed the information that the Respect Bureau shared with some branch heads and noted the integration of data from other sources to inform its analysis (for example, Public Service Employee Survey and Association of professional executives of the Public Service of Canada's (APEX) State of Executive and Workplace Health Results). We also looked at reports presented to the Departmental Audit Committee and the Executive Management Committee. We noted that these reports did not follow a consistent format (such as narrative rather than infographics), which could lead to a lack of context related to trends and systemic issues.

Branch Heads and partners indicated that the information provided is seen as reliable, although the timeliness of the information presented varied. Some respondents noted that the information shared by the Respect Bureau supplements or complements information that they are already know. It is their view that Respect Bureau reporting could be timelier to support decision-making.

Furthermore, 4 of the 8 partners interviewed indicated that the frequency of reporting could be increased, since there is an appetite for more timely information about the state of the Department's employee health and well-being. Partners indicated that there is a need to receive timelier information and data to support a better understanding of trends and systemic issues in the decision-making processes. Based on our analysis, consistent and standardized Respect Bureau reporting would be beneficial for management, partners and employees.

Our benchmarking exercise identified a number of ways that Ombuds offices in other organizations are thinking of evaluating their performance.

- An increased uptake of Ombuds services among employees and, at the same time, a decrease in the number of complaints about the same systemic issue can indicate an effective Ombuds office. These opposing forces indicate that people are more aware of, and more comfortable using, Ombuds services, while the organization is learning from the Ombuds' support and is better able to adapt to address systemic concerns.
- Senior management referrals are a good indication of the successful establishment and value of an Ombuds office within an organization.
- The International Ombuds Association suggests a healthy organization should have about 2% of employees seeking Ombuds services. However, the Ombuds interviewed as part of benchmarking suggested that there is no set number. Practitioners in multiple departments suggested that a healthy workplace encourages people to be open and

willing to discuss their concerns. As such, an increased uptake of Ombuds services might be a sign of a healthy workplace, rather than an unhealthy one.

Regardless of the performance metrics used, identifying ways to measure progress systematically and consistently over time can also help inform both the strategic plan and the program framework and communications plan. Collecting, analyzing and incorporating this data over time can help the Respect Bureau adopt a practice of continuous learning and improvement. By reviewing its performance against set criteria and data that are in line with a performance strategy, the Respect Bureau will strengthen its performance and its role as an agent of positive change in the Department. Some examples of potential effectiveness, relevance and managerial indicators are shared in [Appendix B](#).

Recommendation 2
The Respect Bureau should refine its performance indicators and strengthen reporting on activities and trends, to ensure that it has the information needed to determine whether it is operating as efficiently as possible and has the required resources to meet its mandate and provide timely information to key partners in the Department.
Management response
The Ombuds and Director, Respect Bureau agrees with the recommendation. The Respect Bureau will review and refine its performance indicators to strengthen how we measure operational efficiency, including resource allocation. In reviewing our current approach, we will ensure that our performance management strategy demonstrates how our resources and activities are aligned to our mandate. We will also review our reporting approach on activities and trends to support the provision of more regular and timely feedback to our partners. This will help ensure that resources and efforts are effectively aligned and help us determine whether we have the required resources to meet our mandate.

3.4 Diversity and inclusion

The Respect Bureau’s mandate is to provide a safe place where all ECCC employees can raise, discuss and address work-related concerns or issues, including harassment and violence, without fear of judgement and reprisal. In November 2021, the Clerk of the Privy Council issued a [Call to Action on Anti-Racism, Equity and Inclusion in the Federal Public Service](#), acknowledging “unjust treatment of Black people, other racialized groups, and Indigenous peoples in our society” and the “urgency of removing systemic racism from our institutions and from our culture.” The federal government has also acknowledged the need to support and understand the lived experiences of diverse employees within the federal public service.

To this end, Respect Bureau employees and other department Ombuds recognized in interviews the importance of having a diverse team of practitioners in their teams. ECCC’s Respect Bureau staff recognized in interviews the importance of relationship building and meeting with employees, unions, and employee networks. As noted previously, the Assistant Ombuds’ role is to focus on diversity and inclusion in the Department.

Ombuds from other departments noted that diverse teams can help encourage employees from Employment Equity groups to contact the Ombuds office, should the need arise. The review noted that the Respect Bureau has made an effort to promote diversity in its team, and has participated in both departmentally mandated and voluntary training to better understand the needs and experiences of diverse individuals. The Respect Bureau, and other Ombuds offices interviewed, recognized that it could be challenging to represent all diversity groups within a small organizational team.

As part of the all-staff survey, respondents were asked whether diversity representation amongst the staff of the Respect Bureau was important to them. The results showed that 43% neither agreed nor disagreed it was important, while 42% agreed it was important to them.

Gender-based analysis plus

Closely connected with diversity and inclusion is the government's efforts to promote Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus). In 1995, the Government of Canada committed to using GBA Plus to assess the systemic inequalities and the ways that diverse groups of women, men and gender diverse people may experience policies, programs and initiatives. The government encourages organizations, including internal services like the Respect Bureau, to consider whether GBA Plus considerations can be used to support decision-making.

The Respect Bureau collects data that could be used to support a GBA Plus analysis, for example, gender, region and classification, and in some cases, this information is presented in their annual reports. However, to see systemic trends, there is an opportunity to strengthen practices in this area and look beyond the data collected from visitors and compare data to broader trends.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, during the 4-year period covered in this report, ECCC's Respect Bureau activities have been implemented to foster and support the promotion of a respectful workplace. A governance structure has been established, with a terms of reference document and clear reporting relationship to the Deputy Ministers. In addition, partners are identified and being leveraged to support the delivery of the Respect Bureau's mandate. Officials are undertaking communication and outreach activities, which are important elements in supporting mandate achievement. The Respect Bureau is meeting its mandate, and the Ombuds Standards of practice and processes and tools are in place to support service delivery.

The review identified areas for improvement that, once addressed, will reinforce an already well-functioning Respect Bureau as it continues to achieve its mandate. These include:

- reviewing and updating the documentation on roles and responsibilities within the Respect Bureau
- enhancing strategic planning practices

- developing communications and outreach plans more strategically, based on identified systemic issues and emerging departmental needs
- refining performance indicators and strengthening reporting on activities and trends

There are 2 recommendations in the report that focus on the opportunities for improvement.

1. The Respect Bureau should review and update the documentation of roles and responsibilities and review its strategic and communication planning practices to ensure that work plans are linked to its mandate and priorities and adequately resourced, and that the communications materials provide the best information on its services and how it can help employees navigate workplace issues.
2. The Respect Bureau should refine its performance indicators and strengthen reporting on activities and trends, to ensure that it has the information needed to determine whether it is operating as efficiently as possible and has the required resources to meet its mandate and provide timely information to key partners in the Department.

Appendix A: Lines of enquiry and criteria

The following criteria were developed to conduct the engagement. The review team selected a hybrid approach to assess the selected criteria, that is key control areas for audit and effectiveness, efficiency and relevance questions for evaluation.

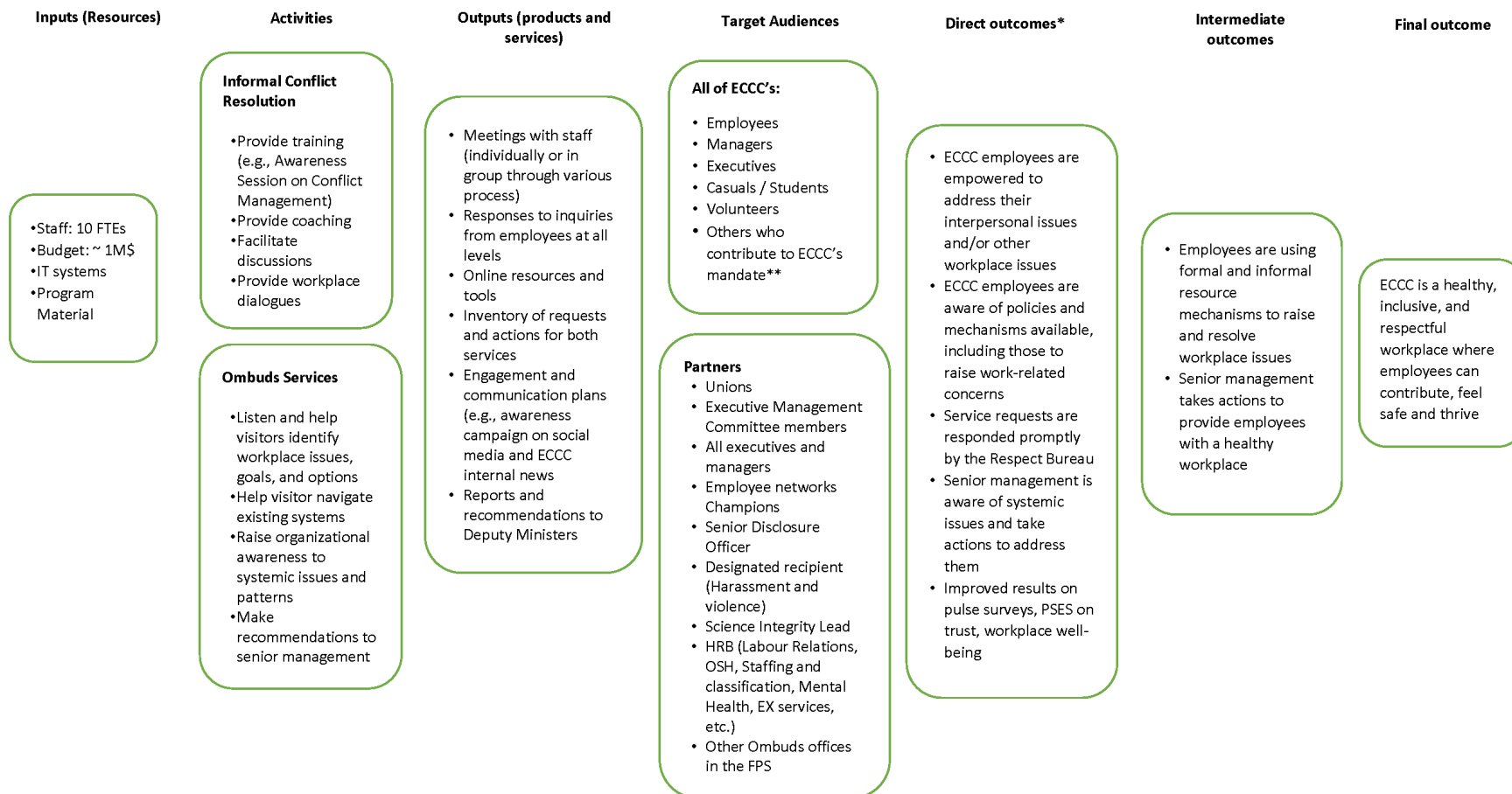
Themes	Criteria	Key Review Questions			
		Adequacy and Effectiveness of Controls	Effectiveness	Efficiency	Relevance
<p>Governance and strategic planning – A formal governance structure, enabled by clear responsibilities and strategic planning processes are in place and working as intended to support the administration of the Respect Bureau as it evolves.</p>	<p>1.1. Governance Assess the extent to which the governance structure in place is appropriate and working as intended to support the achievement of expected outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to what extent does the governance structure facilitate the achievement of objectives (for example, powers of the Bureau, reporting relationships, etc.)? to what extent has the management approach (direction and processes in the Bureau) been strategic and evolved over time to enable the Bureau to support the achievement of the Respect Bureau mandate? 	✓	✓	✓	✓

Themes	Criteria	Key Review Questions			
		Adequacy and Effectiveness of Controls	Effectiveness	Efficiency	Relevance
<p>Governance and strategic planning – A formal governance structure, enabled by clear responsibilities and strategic planning processes are in place and working as intended to support the administration of the Respect Bureau as it evolves.</p>	<p>1.2. Roles and Responsibilities The roles and responsibilities of the Respect Bureau are clearly defined, documented, understood and communicated.</p>	✓	✓		
<p>Governance and strategic planning – A formal governance structure, enabled by clear responsibilities and strategic planning processes are in place and working as intended to support the administration of the Respect Bureau as it evolves.</p>	<p>1.3. Strategic Planning Assess whether a strategic planning process exists to enable the Respect Bureau to evolve and influence positive change within the department. Elements of strategic planning include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operating objectives and priorities, documented and linked to strategic and communication objectives • Consideration for departmental priorities and client needs 	✓	✓	✓	

Themes	Criteria	Key Review Questions			
		Adequacy and Effectiveness of Controls	Effectiveness	Efficiency	Relevance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involvement of all key partners in the establishment and implementation of the objectives and in the informal conflict management system, as appropriate 				
Communication and outreach – The Respect Bureau - Adequate communication and outreach activities are in place and enable the Respect Bureau to achieve its intended outcomes	2.1 The Respect Bureau Communication Plan and outreach activities are planned strategically and implemented to address the Department and employees needs	✓	✓	✓	
Management and Performance of the Respect Bureau – The Respect Bureau operates effectively and efficiently, in accordance with its mandate and the Ombuds Standards of practice.	3.1 Effective administration Processes, tools, training and guidance are in place and are being followed to enable the Respect Bureau to operate efficiently, effectively and in accordance with the Ombuds standards of practice: confidentiality, independence, impartiality, informality.	✓	✓	✓	

Themes	Criteria	Key Review Questions			
		Adequacy and Effectiveness of Controls	Effectiveness	Efficiency	Relevance
	Informal conflict management processes are in place, documented and followed				
Management and Performance of the Respect Bureau – The Respect Bureau operates effectively and efficiently, in accordance with its mandate and the Ombuds Standards of practice.	<p>3.2 Performance measurement and reporting</p> <p>Assess the extent to which the Respect Bureau is informed by timely, relevant and comprehensive inputs to enable informed decision making and continuous improvement, including whether:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A performance measurement strategy has been developed and implemented, and performance information is reported and used in decision making • Reliable, timely and valid performance data is produced by the organization • Best practices and lessons learned are captured and used to support continuous improvement 	✓	✓	✓	✓

Appendix B: Logic model and examples of potential indicators



* The Respect Bureau does not have Departmental Results Indicators

** Excluded: Contractors, external stakeholders, family members and the public.

Indicators of relevance: awareness, accessibility, visibility

- Number of meetings with partners
- Variation in the number of people reached during the year by awareness-raising activities
- Number of publications per month in the newsletter or other mediums
- Number of information sessions conducted in each region per year
- Number of national events conducted per year
- Proportion of blacks, Asians and other ethnic minorities who use the services
- Rate of visitors who use the services and who have disabilities
- Methods of receiving requests

Indicators of effectiveness

- Rate of complaints/requests for services (breakdown by category of employees, branches, ethnicity, sex, age, types of requests, etc.)
- Percentage of employees using Respect Bureau services

Indicators of efficiency

- Request processing rate
- Processing time per service

Indicators of program management, processes, structure

- Existence and quality of planning
- Annual report and consistency of reporting structure
- Description of the Respect Bureau intervention approach
- Description of quality of service criteria
- Existence of a mechanism for identifying systemic problems
- Training of staff in the case management system
- Rate of distribution of personnel according to gender
- Presentation of the vision, mission, values of the Respect Bureau to branches and Executive Management Committee

Appendix C : Respect Bureau evaluation forms analysis and survey results comparison

Assessment	Themes	RB Evaluation forms analysis N = about 320	All Staff survey N = about 320	
Assessing compliance with ombuds principles	Confidentiality and impartiality	94%	From your perspective, while dealing with you, did the Respect Bureau act in line with its foundational principles (answers regarding confidentiality and impartiality only for comparison purposes)	84%
Assessing the Respect Bureau process	Timely response	91%	I was able to speak to a representative of the Respect Bureau in a reasonable amount of time	85%
Assessing user's satisfaction	Helped explore/evaluate options	90%	The Respect Bureau helped to identify and evaluate options to address my workplace issues	69%
Assessing user's satisfaction	Would contact the RB again/recommend to others	87%	I would use the Respect Bureau again if the need arises	76%
Assessing user's satisfaction	Privacy of space	70% (30% N/A)	The Respect Bureau was accessible (e.g., location, office, hours, technology)	84%
Assessing user's satisfaction	Met the visitor's expectations	86%	The Respect Bureau was able to help me resolve my workplace issue/concern	49%

The comparison of the evaluation forms and survey results demonstrates that results follow the same trends that is, overall positive. The survey results are perhaps lower due to the time elapsed between the moment when the services were received and survey was administered.