



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Findings of 2016 ethics questionnaire administered to City of Miami Beach employees

Introduction

During a seven-month period during 2013, the Miami-Dade Ethics Commission Staff presented an intensive ethics training program to approximately 250 City of Miami Beach employees, consisting of nine steps and more than twelve hours of classroom presentations and interaction. This unusual “bootcamp” approach to ethics training for public employees was arranged through an interlocal agreement between the City of Miami Beach and Miami-Dade County, paid for by the City. The employees were from “regulatory” departments dealing directly with the public regarding enforcement and related issues, including the Building, Code Compliance, Finance, Fire Prevention, Parking, Planning, and Procurement.

The program was prompted by a request from former City Manager Jorge Gonzalez, due to significant problems generated by a number of individuals from among those departments who had been prosecuted for corruption-related crimes, as well as by his assessment of the ethics and corruption risks to the City from those departments. The program, conducted during the first year of the administration of City Manager Jimmy Morales, was provided explicit approval and support by Manager Morales as well as the Mayor and City Commission. The program was also video-recorded by employees of the City for its continued use in the training of new employees in those departments, which has been done on a regular basis since 2013.

The final step of the program consisted of personal interviews by Ethics Commission staff with 203 of the employees from those departments, and the administration of a questionnaire to those employees, which included an assessment of their attitudes on a number of ethics and corruption-related issues in the City government. The results of the questionnaire were included in a Final Report issued by the Ethics Commission staff to Manager Morales, in February 2014.

During December, 2016, Miami-Dade Ethics Commission staff, with the cooperation of City Manager Morales and his staff, re-administered two sections of the original questionnaire to 218 current City of Miami Beach employees within the same departments that had been the subject of the original ethics training. This group included many of those who personally participated in the original program, as well as a substantial number of employees hired in those departments since 2013, who received the video-recorded version of the training as part of their orientation.

The purpose of the second questionnaire was to provide a basis for assessing whether the attitudes of the employees in the participating departments had measurably changed during the three years since the completion of the original program. The questions selected were identical to questions from the original questionnaire administered in December 2013. The methodology used to administer and record the answers was identical to that used in 2013—personal interviews of City employees by Ethics Commission staff.

The results are summarized below through a comparison of the average responses to those questions included on both questionnaires. The tabulation of the responses was done by COE Forensic Accountant/Investigator Karl Ross. Attached to this summary are copies of the original program outline as proposed and conducted in 2013, as well as the questionnaires used in both 2013 and 2016.

Comparison of 2013 results to 2016 results: Part I

- In response to Question #1, overall job satisfaction was slightly higher in 2016 at 8.2 on a scale of 1 to 10, compared to 8 for the survey conducted in December 2013.
- In response to Question #2, employees said working conditions improved from 7.4 in 2013 to a rating of 8.1 in 2016 – a nearly 10 percent increase.
- In response to Question #3, employees rated the quality of their supervision at 8.3 in 2016 as compared to 7.7 in 2013 – an increase of 8 percent.
- In response to Question #4, employees rated the quality of their training in 2016 as 7.5 versus 7 in 2013 – a 7 percent improvement.
- In response to Question #5, employees rated the morale of their fellow co-workers as 7.1 in 2016, registering a 16 percent improvement over the 6.1 assigned in 2013.
- In response to Question #6, employees again gave their supervisors higher marks in 2016, rating their ethical standards at 8.6 compared to 8.1 in 2013.
- In response to Question #7, employees also reported a more favorable view of their co-workers' ethics in 2016 at 8.6 when compared to 2013 at 8.2.
- In response to Question #8, employees rated the City's overall ethical standards at 8 in 2016 as opposed to 7.1 in 2013 – or a 13 percent increase over that period.

Comparison of 2013 results to 2016 results: Part II

- In response to Question #9, 22 percent of employees reported having been offered a bribe at some point in their careers – down from 27 percent in 2013.
- In response to Question #10, 13 percent of employees said they were aware of bribery or corruption in CMB government. The percentage is unchanged over 2013.
- In response to Question #11, 90 percent of employees said they felt they received enough training to identify and avoid ethical pitfalls – slightly lower than the 92 percent that expressed having received adequate training in 2013.
- In response to Question #12, 77 percent of employees said they felt adequate safeguards were in place to thwart corruption compared to just 60 percent in 2013.
- In response to Question #13, 80 percent of employees expressed that adequate measures were in place to report corruption – up significantly from the 64 percent in 2013.
- In response to Question #14, 81 percent of employees viewed CMB Government to be ethical compared to 65 percent in 2013 – an overall improvement of 25 percent.
- In response to Question #15, 67 percent of employees said they felt there were adequate protections against retaliation for reporting ethical misconduct. This is more than double the 33 percent of employees who responded affirmatively in 2013.

Other findings and highlights among departments:

- Based on the 2016 results, Procurement showed the highest level of job satisfaction at 9.3 out of 10 and co-worker morale, also 9.3 out of 10, while Parking seemed to be the most problematic department with job satisfaction of 7.4 and co-worker morale of 4.4.
- The departments with the highest percentage of employees stating they had been offered bribes were Fire Prevention at 36 percent followed by Parking at 35 percent and Code Compliance at 30 percent. Finance

and Procurement employees reported no such overtures while Planning reported 8 percent affirmative response.

- The reduction in the percent of employees offered a bribe from 27 to 22 percent is likely more significant than it may seem. 30 percent of employees taking the survey in 2013 reported having been offered a bribe at some point. This contrasts with just 9.4 percent of employees joining the regulatory ranks since that time. This suggests that the incidence of bribery may be declining due to increased awareness by regulatory employees as well as reduced expectations of the receptivity of employees to bribes by potential bribers.

Conclusion

Overall, the above findings suggest that City of Miami Beach employees from the regulatory departments surveyed are more satisfied with the City's ethical standards than they were at the time of the initial ethics survey in 2013. The recent questionnaires highlighted a number of positive trends, such as double-digit improvements with respect to the City's overall ethics and ethical standards, as well as co-worker morale. The findings further signal that management is doing a better job at finding ways to report and prevent corruption while making employees who report misconduct feel safer against retaliation.

The favorable trend in employee attitudes documented in this comparison cannot be attributed to any single factor, but is likely related to both the intensive ethics training that the employees have received over the past three years, as well as appropriate follow-up actions by administrators, supervisors and the employees themselves.

The original questionnaire was administered at the end of the 2013 live version of the ethics training. Because the employees were not interviewed prior to the commencement of that training, we are unable to determine the impact of the original training apart from the follow-up video training. Assuming that the original live presentation would have left a positive impact on those attitudes following that seven-month program and prior to the first survey, it is probable that the impact of the original training, plus the continued use of the video version of that training, would have shown an even greater improvement in attitudes toward ethics than what was concluded from the available data.

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