



# Office of the Public Auditor

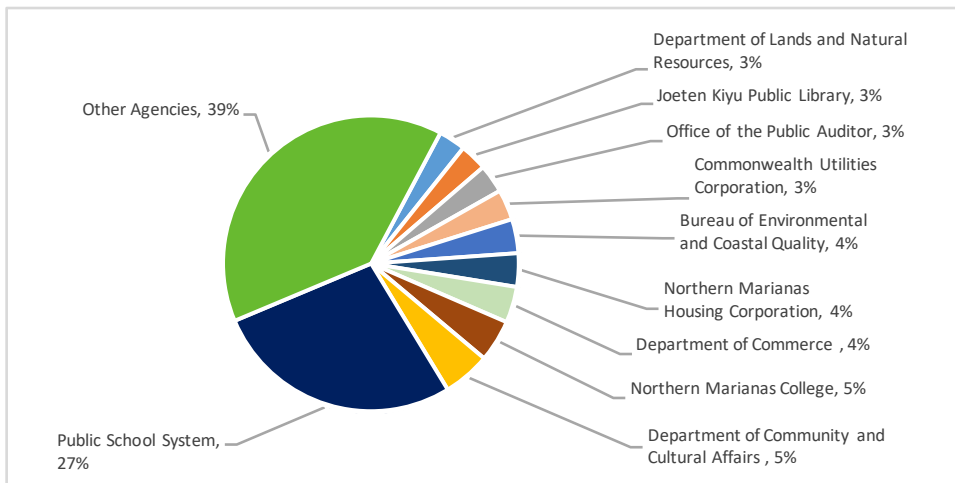
## Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI)

### Government Employee Survey Summary of Results

**The Office of the Public Auditor (OPA)** distributed an online survey between December 6–31, 2021 to CNMI government employees across Saipan, Tinian, and Rota to solicit concerns and issues in their workplace and other areas of interest for future audits and investigations within the government. OPA obtained employee E-Mail addresses through the cooperation of individual agencies, departments, and divisions as of December 31, 2021. OPA plans to utilize the results of the survey and future surveys for audit planning purposes. We encourage all recipients of the survey questionnaire to participate in the future so OPA can realize at least a 50% response rate. Thank you to those who participated in OPA’s initial government employee survey!

A total of **541** employees participated in the five question survey and the results are summarized herein.

#### Agency/Department of Employment:



#### List of Other Agencies, 39%

- Antonio C. Atalig Memorial Library
- Carolinian Affairs Office
- CNMI Board of Parole
- CNMI Judiciary Branch
- CNMI Legislative Bureau
- CNMI Legislature
- CNMI Scholarship Office
- Commonwealth Bureau of Military Affairs
- Commonwealth Cannabis Commission
- Commonwealth Casino Commission
- Commonwealth Economic Development Authority
- Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation / Medical Referral Services Office
- Commonwealth Justice Planning Agency
- Commonwealth Office of Transit Authority
- Commonwealth Ports Authority
- Commonwealth Zoning Board
- Department of Corrections
- Department of Finance
- Department of Fire and Emergency Medical Services
- Department of Labor
- Department of Public Lands
- Department of Public Safety
- Department of Public Works
- Hazard Grant Mitigation Program
- Homeland Security and Emergency Management
- Marianas Visitor's Authority
- Municipality of Saipan
- Northern Islands Mayor's Office
- Northern Marianas Technical Institute
- Office of Management and Budget
- Office of Personnel Management
- Office of the Attorney General
- Office of the Governor
- Office of the Lieutenant Governor
- Office of Vocational Rehabilitation
- Public Assistance Office
- Public Defender's Office
- Rota Finance Office
- Rota Mayor's Office
- Rota Municipal Council
- Saipan Higher Education Financial Assistance
- Saipan Mayor's Office
- State Medicaid Agency
- Substance Abuse Addiction Rehabilitation Program
- Tinian Municipal Council

*The agency/department for 6 survey participants could not be determined.*

#### Question 1: Are there areas or laws that OPA can provide more education or training on to increase awareness within the government?

To gain an understanding of the areas in which OPA can provide guidance and support to the employees of the CNMI government, respondents were asked in what topics they could benefit from through training.

Survey results indicated a wide range of areas and laws which employees expressed interests in receiving training from OPA. Approximately **21%** of respondents expressed interest in receiving ethics training. Topics of ethics included: conflicts of interest, unfair hiring practices, political activity in the workplace, gift giving or receiving, and the **“Do’s and Don’ts”** of working in a government agency in the CNMI. Other topics of interest across the agencies include information on OPA’s function in the government, proper methods of safely reporting fraud, waste, theft, and abuse in respective workplaces, and Citizen-Centric Reporting guidelines.

Specific training interests include: procurement and contract management, government vehicle and property use rules and regulations, human resources (employee/employer rights, salary rights, time and attendance policies, “double dipping” or working two jobs, etc.), public safety (COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 related), individual agency’s internal policies and organizational structure, customer service, official government travel rules and regulations, MUNIS system, sexual harassment, and drug abuse awareness.



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#### Question 2: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "I have the proper training, tools & equipment to do my job effectively."

To better understand the extent in which CNMI government employees feel they are properly equipped to successfully perform the duties for their job, respondents were asked to rate how much they agree or disagree with the statement above.

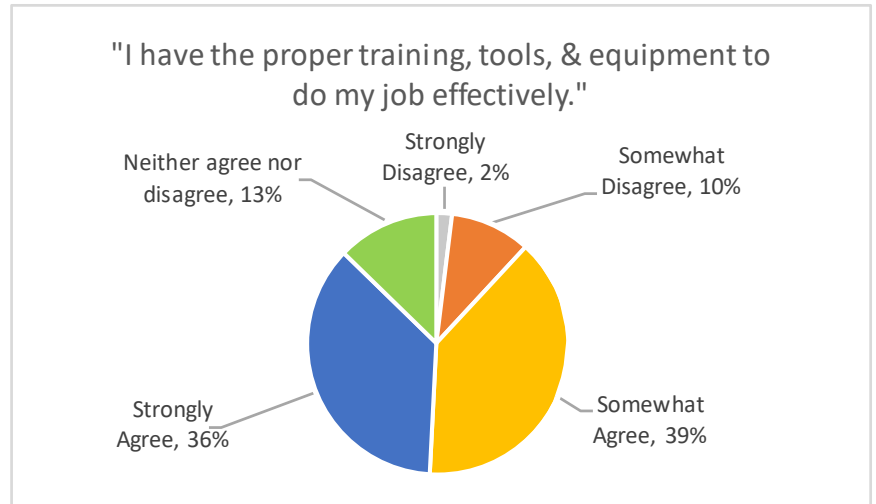
About **75%** of survey respondents agree that they have the proper training, tools, and equipment to execute their job functions effectively. Respondents were asked to explain their responses.

#### **Strongly Agree**

Respondents who selected "Strongly Agree" expressed that in general, they feel they have the training, tools, and equipment needed for their jobs. Many responses described the supportive atmosphere from management in providing adequate and appropriate training upon hire and continuous training to keep updated with new technology and evolving policies. While many respondents stated they had sufficient training, knowledge, tools, or equipment to perform their duties, there was a general consensus that additional training and updated equipment would definitely improve their effectiveness and efficiency in the workplace. One respondent shared, "Due to the pandemic, I've been able to do online or virtual training and attend conferences that would have required actual travel and expense."

#### **Strongly Disagree**

With 2% of survey respondents selecting "Strongly Disagree", a few respondents expressed frustration with the lack of proper training, while the remaining respondents discussed the lack of equipment or tools. One respondent shared that only certain individuals attended training regardless if other staff needed it more. Others discussed lack of office supplies, extra vehicles, classroom resources, and internet for the office.



#### **Somewhat Agree, Somewhat Disagree, and Neither Agree nor Disagree**

Respondents who selected "Somewhat Agree", "Somewhat Disagree", or "Neither Agree nor Disagree" expressed similar mixed opinions on the tools and training available to perform their jobs effectively and efficiently. Responses range from having sufficient tools, to others expressing frustration with the lack of training and equipment. Responses are generalized and summarized below:

- Received little to no training from management at the beginning of employment. Rather, training was self-taught through reviewing manuals and training materials.
- Initial training was sufficient, but continuous training would be helpful in adapting to new technologies and challenges onset by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.
- Does receive training, but there needs to be more time specifically allotted for training.
- There are resources available, but it is dependent on the employee to find and utilize them.
- Received proper training, but does not have sufficient equipment or tools.
- Has the proper tools, but insufficient training.

**"There is always room for improvement."**

- Survey Respondent



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#### Question 3: What areas within your agency or program do you believe merit an audit?

When asked to describe if there were any areas within the respondents' respective agencies that merit an audit, **215** respondents shared a wide range of responses. The three main areas discussed are summarized below:

##### *Accounting of Funds*

14% of respondents were interested to know how funds were and are being spent within their agency as it pertains to the annual budget. Issues of transparency were discussed along with the concerns that funds are not being utilized in the agency's best interests.

##### *Human Resource Issues: Time, Attendance, and Timesheets*

9% of respondents voiced concerns with timekeeping practices ranging from time theft and preferential treatment from timekeepers to a desire for updated policies for flex-time, telework, various types of leave, and other similar concerns.

##### *Procurement and Bidding*

9% of respondents indicated an interest in the procurement and bidding processes; however, most respondents did not elaborate on which aspects should be audited. Procurement and bidding was discussed in several aspects of the survey.

##### *Other Areas of Interest*

- Human resource issues regarding compensation;
- Desk audits;
- Official government travel practices;
- Contract management;
- Ethics regarding hiring practices;
- Preferential treatment towards friends and/or family;
- Misuse of government time;
- Misconduct or abuse of power from administrators or management;
- Capital items and inventory management; and
- Agency specific standard operating procedures.

#### Question 4: What areas within your agency or program do you believe merit an investigation?

When asked to describe if there were any areas within the respondents' respective agencies that merit an investigation, **154** respondents shared a wide range of responses. However, most responses did not contain enough information to be considered an investigative tip. Areas of concern include:

- Misuse of government vehicles;
- Subsistence allowance of legislative members;
- Equal opportunity education;
- Misconduct in the office;
- Potential abuse of federal funds;
- Misuse of government time;
- Concerns over falsifying information with regards to federal programs;
- Unfair hiring practices; and
- Abuse of authority.

#### Question 5: What areas within your agency or program are you most concerned about?

Respondents were able to select multiple categories and/or specify any areas of concerns that were not included in the provided list. A total of **312** respondents indicated they were most concerned with the following:

- Misuse of government time (29%);
- Procurement and bidding (28%);
- Preferential treatment towards family members (26%);
- Use of government supplies and/or resources (25%);
- Contract management (24%);
- Misuse of government vehicles (20%);
- Official government travel practices (18%); and
- Cash collection/handling process (11%)

Other areas of concern include: The use of fleet or corporate cards, abuse of authority, employee compensation, and issues specific to their agency.