

## Combined Specific Feedback and Ideas on the Five Goals Outlined in the Strategic Plan

IOA State of the Association  
Annual Meeting, Miami  
April, 2013

To help protect anonymity, tables as set up at the State of the Association are not specifically identified.

### **Goal 1: Further IOA's Vision, Mission and Values**

Comment on Initiative #1 which is: "Deliver high quality Organizational Ombuds training programs that incorporate and utilize the state of the art delivery models."

- In regards to the Foundations class, the format might have to be reviewed, given that some people came in with some field experience, and others have little experience. We found that the Foundations course offered lots of overview, but that the interactive part is not as engaging. Some portions lost attention of audience. However, the small break-out groups, (role-playing) was a good experience as it kept everyone actively participating.

Comment on Initiative #2 which is: "Conduct a high quality annual IOA Conference."

- We think it would be helpful for the board to set a mission for the conference itself. Ask: why are we holding this conference? Is it for Ombudsmen looking for new information? (Pushing the envelope on theory) Networking? Professional camaraderie? Hearing from people in other fields but who share philosophies? Welcoming newcomers -- both experience-wise and the introduction of international brethren? Better define the purpose of a conference.

Comments on both initiatives #1 and #2:

- "High quality" we use that phrase in initiatives #1 and 2 in this goal, but it is not measurable.
- Initiatives: need more specific language for items #1 and 2--high quality is not measurable or descriptive. Perhaps set some parameters for the conference such as "at least one concurrent session per conference on each SOP"; each conference will include a legal update from LLAC for US, Canada, Europe, etc.

Comment on Initiative #3 which is: "Explore options for holding an IOA conference outside of North America within the next five years."

- Cost differential would be high, could we do a virtual conference, where global attendees could join in conversation? Other ways to make it more accessible, perhaps through YouTube, might be able to make it possible. Through university settings, more inclusion can be possible with technology already made available to students.

Comment on Initiative #5 which is: “Continue to support, promote and reinforce the Standards of Practice, Code of Ethics and best practices; provide tools to support Organizational Ombudsman practitioners in their daily practice.”

- As an organization the IOA's unique value is in the Code of Ethics. This profession is growing globally, and it will grow on its own if we don't stay on top of all the newcomers and current practitioners. The COE is THE product of the IOA, and we must do more to aggressively expand outreach efforts around the world to explain both the profession and its Code of Ethics as well as why they are necessary. It is our belief that the IOA should be actively sending people to mediator conferences, HR conferences, etc. We should have a table at those conferences, spreading the word. We must ensure we have a clear vision: where do we want to be five or even 10 years from now? How are we working towards reaching that goal? Solidify ourselves as the Gold Standard across the industry and around the world.

Comment on Initiatives #6 and #7 which are: (#6) “Support the Board of Certified Organizational Ombudsman Practitioners (CO-OP) certification process and efforts to become accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA).” (#7) “Evaluate potential for an organizational ombudsman office accreditation program.”

- Clarify how this will be done / what type of support on the part of the IOA. What is the actual commitment? The overarching philosophy? What is meant by "support"? Financial support? Advertising and promotion? Board member on COOP Board?”

A miscellaneous comment for Goal #1: Consider an ethics group (a group a member could call...a calling tree) for members who need immediate assistance/colleagues to talk to; this could be a service to members.

## **Goal 2: Assess and Improve IOA Operational Effectiveness**

Comments on Initiative #1 which is: “Hire a consultant to evaluate the current state of IOA.”

- Evaluate the effectiveness of the administrative support services provided to the organization
- Factors for the consultant to include in evaluating admin support services:
  - Identify the needs of the organization
  - Determine the best company to meet the needs of the organization
  - Identify and compare how comparable organizations meet their administrative needs (including what percentage of the organization’s budget is spent on administration
- Join the Center for Association Leadership (ASAE). ASAE is the largest organization of

its kind and works to make associations more successful.

Comment on #1 b which is: “Evaluate and make a recommendation regarding hiring an Executive Director.”

- Experience in working with/managing international organizations should be articulated as a desired quality for ED.

Comments on #1 c which is: “Evaluate the structure of the organization, including the Board, to determine whether there is a better model and approach to sustaining the organization. Factors to review include how other like-organizations structure their board, roles, terms and responsibilities, and improving coordination and collaboration between the Committees and succession planning. This review will include ensuring that the importance of and requirement for financial stewardship is integrated into all IOA policies and practices.”

- Include (in the consultant’s tasks) making a recommendation regarding appropriate Board size.
- Include a recommendation regarding whether the current committees are the correct committees based on IOA’s needs. As part of that, evaluate the types of committees we want to see if a reorganization of responsibilities is needed. Including in the evaluation all aspects of IOA: the Board of Directors, committees, Task Force Groups, other Non-committee, non-Task Force groups such as the IOA Journal, and CO-OP (including the CO-OP Board). Factors to include are:
- Comparison to other like-organizations (structure of boards, roles, terms, responsibilities)
- Ways to improve coordination and collaboration between committees
- Incorporate method for Board to conduct regular self-assessment survey to evaluate and maximize Board effectiveness.

Comment on Initiative #2 which is: “Enhance IOA leaders’ (Directors, Representatives, and Committee Chairs) leadership skills and strengthen IOA governance.”

- Core leadership competencies should be identified and training be instituted for all IOA leaders.

Comment on Initiative #3a which is: “Enhance and develop the pool of volunteers who can contribute to the IOA in various roles; assist CO-OP in doing the same. (a) Articulate pathways to volunteer opportunities within IOA.”

- ID pathways to volunteering: using new member orientation and the Mentoring Program
- Consider enticements to IOA volunteers including CO-OP recertification credit.

### **Goal 3: Ensure Financial Sustainability and Growth of IOA**

Comments on Initiative #1c: “Consider the implications of providing broader course offerings and partnerships: (c) Determine whether there is an opportunity for additional audiences.”

- ...including other than Organizational Ombuds, such as considering a partnership with ADR professionals to provide conflict management development.
- Focus on providing development opportunities for new as well as experienced Ombuds.

Comments on Initiative #2 which is: “Explore the possibility and feasibility of IOA offering additional revenue-generating fee-based services, above and beyond the professional development, conferences and COOP.”

- Additional revenue-generation: such as consulting opportunities, and support services, secure e-mails, separate servers, and other options that support members and operation of their offices.

Comments on Initiative #3 which is: “Evaluate the structure of fees, services and benefits for IOA members.”

- Evaluate membership and training: appropriate levels for membership dues and fees structure; professional training fees, structure of fees and offerings; services and benefits.
- More structured approach to IOA courses to obtain CO-OP or certification;
- 3 minimum courses for foundation, then collaboration with other education groups for marketing and revenue sharing;
- Increase membership category opportunities for revenue;
  - e.g., multi-year membership break;
  - allow for membership transition for Ombuds from the same institution so that for example when an Ombuds retires, his or her successor would continue the membership until the expiration date.
- Increase fees for membership, training, etc.;
- IOA brand needs to be established more broadly (eg, ABA) for leverage;
- Exec Director vs. volunteer driven
- Offer to present at more meetings, leaders under 40, fortune 500 – will help with many aspects of these goals
- Offer further interaction, possibly through courses
- Increase and maintain membership levels by:

- Offering more IOA courses tailored to our profession (eg, Mediation for the Ombudsman, Conflict Theory for the Ombudsman)
- Offering new turnkey solutions/products for members (eg, how to make the case for your office's sustainability to your institution, also, packet to help make the case that the ombuds does not threaten HR – IOA should have a tool to distribute, and make it very clear that it is not a competition, there value in both)
- Seek (royalties for publications?); webinars; other resources
- Leverage increasing population and interest in internships by developing courses and services to suit their needs
- Perhaps develop textbooks for the field that can be used for courses
- Consider conference outside of the US every few years, even if we do an annual conference within the US during same year. Due diligence and careful planning needed before taking on conference outside of U.S., especially if not sufficient participation.
- Possibly offer “concierge insurance type benefits” to offer a la carte Ombuds services
- Develop a budgeting process and policies that are transparent, builds in financial accountability, and aligns expenditures with strategic priorities.
- In general we need specificity on how to be financially stable and grow; Be careful not to engage in too many small revenue-generating activities. Focus the revenue we receive on strategic priorities.

#### **Goal 4: Develop Stronger Presence and Outreach for IOA**

Comments on Initiative #1 which is: “Continue to assess needs of different geographic regions; define the strategy for supporting development and strengthening of Organizational Ombudsman programs in regions around the world; and, make use of the available knowledge of other Ombudsman associations around the world.”

- Assess global needs and define strategy:
  - Create chapters per continent.
  - IOA reach out to other Ombuds organizations throughout the world.
  - Fill the gaps where there are no other Ombuds organizations.
  - Support local initiative. Speaker's Bureau - have a list of able and willing OOs local offices/groups may reach out to when arranging workshops or mini conferences within one's organization.

Comments on Initiative #2 which is: “Be the premier source for information and professional development on Organizational Ombudsman matters globally.”

- Put FAQs, standards of practice, ethics, etc. in website in six UN languages.
- Survey International members. What do they want/need?

Comments on Initiative #3 which is: “Promote existing and new research regarding the Organizational Ombuds field.”

- Promote research – consider offering grants. Even just a few thousand dollars. Use corporate sponsorship for grants.
- Internal research - how long have places had ombuds, what systemic things are going on, why did a program fail.
- ABO has carried out 2 or 3 studies that would be of interest to other ombudsmen – they have a tool to gather data. They suggested putting a link on the IOA website to the ABO website and vice-versa so that more people get access to this data.

Comments on Initiative #6 which is: “Build relationships with external audiences and organizations; foster an understanding of the role and value of the Organizational Ombudsman among key stakeholders, including professional associations, regulatory bodies, organizational decision makers, and the general public.”

- get a list of all associations of ombudsmen that exist around the world (UN apparently has that)
- Target professions that are aligned with Ombuds work – attorneys, mediators, HR, counselors, psychologists, etc.
- Write articles for newsletters/journals, make presentations, do workshops/trainings/attend other conferences. Teach in schools.

Comments on Initiative #7 which is: “Review the possibility of adding a standing committee or a sub-committee to strengthen the IOA’s external relations capability and encourage synergy between the existing committees in their external relations efforts.”

- Goal #4 initiative #7 is crucial! Please consider making a clear statement about intent to strengthen external relations, etc. "review the possibility of a standing committee or sub-committee" is a tactic--one way this initiative might be approached. Would like to add a statement to description of Goal #4 about building presence locally.

## **Goal 5: Influence Policy Making**

Comments on Initiative #1 which is: “Support statutory protections for Organizational Ombuds.”

- Statutory support is essential but it is a challenge as we work in various settings and countries. One standard is not applicable across our different settings. The certification test is English oriented and does not meet the needs of Spanish, French or other languages. Also association implies uniformity – maybe change name to Federation of International Ombuds.

Comments on Initiative #2 which is: “Determine the role of the Legal and Legislative Affairs Committee (LLAC) evaluating the current structure and purpose.”

- Communicate real time status of legal initiatives domestically and internationally, along with feedback loop to get input on these initiatives (LLAC?)
- Regarding Initiative #2, IOA could have a committee with international members to work on policies, discuss particular policy-related issues. Perhaps the LLAC could do this in collaboration with the IC and regional committees.

Comments on Initiative #4 which is: “Encourage and educate organizations, partners and other stakeholders to advocate on behalf of the Organizational Ombudsman profession.”

- Political action committee for IOA? Lobbyist?
- Identify partners with whom there is natural friction (eg, trial lawyers) and work to determine areas for collaboration / mutual gain. Focus should be both on encouraging supporters to advocate as well as turning those who are skeptical / unsure into supporters
- For future IOA conference sessions, invite legal counsel, for CEOs, could be for continuing ed credits, informing them about role of Ombuds and its benefits, the benefit of privilege, etc. IOA could also attend their conferences, with table, booths.

Comments on Initiative #5 which is: “Assess research needed to support and influence policy-making.”

- If we can’t develop new statutory protections, research the utilization of existing statutes, such as the Uniform Mediation Act that protects conversations for mediation purposes.
- Develop resources or training to help Ombuds who might be asked to testify or be deposed. Achieve consistency in messages, independent counsel, etc.
- Discuss with associate members regarding how lack of privilege harms practice, put together statement or position paper that could be used to change policy or convince management.

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Additional broader comments received from members during the State of the Association:

- Vision: a stronger purpose is needed. Mission is about IOA as a professional association, not OO as a profession. Consider the mission of the American Academy of Pediatrics--their purpose is to the health of all children (i.e., those served by pediatricians), rather than the health of the American Academy of Pediatrics (their professional association). The ABO: their focus is on who their members serve; their president’s talk was about their broader focus as a profession.” Perhaps instead of having

an OO office in all organizations as a vision, we should consider "OO services available to all" which is a focus on who we, as organizational ombuds professionals, serve."

- In response to question is there anything missing from SP goals? "Continued expression of concern for the two different cultures within IOA--that needs to be resolved."
- The majority at a table expressed a desire to de-emphasize "international." The nature of OO in US and in other countries remain too divergent for our current structure.