Undertaking a High-Level, Strategic Assessment of Workforce Integrity for a Major U.S. Federal Government Program

Client's Challenge

For many of the senior public administrators responsible for the short list of the largest U.S. federal agencies, one of the most difficult challenges in meeting their agency’s mission is ensuring that the integrity of their workforce is continually championed, appropriately supported by policies, processes and practices, and sustained at high levels over time.

Several factors can make this challenge even more difficult for some agencies. These include, for example, the size of the workforce; whether the work occurs under difficult circumstances or in dangerous environments vulnerable to corruption; and whether these acts of corruption are mission compromising and even a threat to national security. One of these agencies elected to conduct a strategic assessment of its workforce integrity by engaging a joint team composed of a top Washington-based think tank and Hillard Heintze.

The Hillard Heintze Solution

The Hillard Heintze component of this joint team included several of the firm's senior leaders as well as members of the Hillard Heintze Senior Leadership Council, an independent panel of retired major city police chiefs and senior federal, state and local law enforcement leaders. The six-month project included three phases – (1) operational and organizational analysis based on high-level discussions with the agency’s leadership and rank and file, as well as site assessments and data analysis; (2) vulnerability analysis of internal processes related to employee recruitment and vetting, integrity training, prevention, detection, monitoring and investigation, and metrics and information sharing; and (3) identification of best practices in all areas.

Impact on the Client

The preliminary findings of this assessment have already captured the attention of this agency’s leadership as well as the heads of other related agencies. Preliminary recommendations are already being implemented across the agency. As this continues, the integrity of the workforce is expected to rise – measured by stronger anti-corruption policies, coordination of internal investigations, the use of discipline metrics, and both deeper background screening of new recruits and more frequent screening of existing employees, among many other specific impacts and milestones.