

Los Alamos National Laboratory Ombuds Program

FY08 Annual Report



Confidential
Neutral
Independent
Informal



www.lanl.gov/ombuds/

Fostering institutional effectiveness through innovative problem resolution

**Los Alamos National Laboratory
Ombuds Program Annual Report
October 1, 2007 – September 30, 2008**

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Introduction

The Ombuds Office was established in 1996 to provide assistance to employees seeking to resolve work-related concerns that could not readily be addressed through other Laboratory venues. Ombuds served over 700 visitors in FY08, as a confidential, neutral, and independent resource to help visitors resolve disputes, identify options, and solve problems.

Standards of Ombuds Practice

The International Ombudsman Association Code of Ethics provides the foundation for Ombuds work at LANL:

- 1) Independence:** Ombuds operates independently in structure, function, and appearance to the highest degree possible within the Laboratory setting. The Office reports to the Laboratory Director.
- 2) Confidentiality:** Ombuds holds in strict confidence all communications with those seeking assistance and does not disclose confidential communications unless given permission to do so. Ombuds protects the identity of visitors and their issues. The only exception is when there appears to be an imminent risk of serious harm. Ombuds is the resource of choice for employees seeking a confidential venue, without which they would not bring forward their problem or concern.
- 3) Neutrality:** Ombuds, as a designated neutral, remains unaligned and impartial at the Laboratory, and does not engage in any situation that would create a conflict of interest.
- 4) Informality:** As an informal resource, Ombuds does not participate in any formal procedure related to concerns brought to Ombuds' attention. Ombuds services compliment the Laboratory's formal processes by providing a broad range of options in an informal setting. All involvement with the Ombuds Office is strictly voluntary.

More information about Ombuds' ethical guidelines, standards of practice, contact information, and office location is available at the Ombuds Web site: www.lanl.gov/ombuds.

Ombuds FY08 Highlights

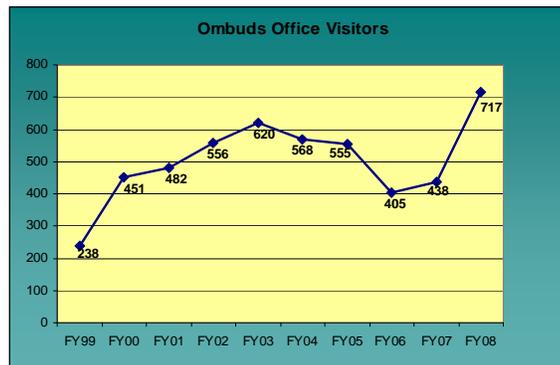
The Ombuds Program had the most productive year in its history, serving over 700 visitors -- an increase of more than 60% from FY 2007.

Ombuds staff:

- Assisted more than 200 individuals who called in response to a notice that their personally identifiable information on Laboratory systems may have been compromised. Ombuds served as the primary Laboratory contact for these individuals and provided a human voice to an otherwise bureaucratic and impersonal situation;
- Developed and presented a new training course in “Crucial Conversations” – a seminar that focuses on practical communication skills;
- Developed and presented a technology partnership Ombuds skills and intellectual property workshop for the DOE Complex;
- While protecting confidentiality, began using the Laboratory Requirements System for quarterly reporting;
- Continued collaborations with other internal employee services such as Employee Relations, Occupational Medicine, Equal Opportunity and Diversity, Legal Counsel, Community Programs, Science and Technology Base Programs, Ethics & Audits, and Technology Transfer;
- Expanded external collaborations with DOE/NNSA, other DOE/NNSA and DOD Laboratories, and the Federal Executive Board Shared Neutrals;
- Made numerous outreach presentations about Ombuds services;
- Installed sound soak panels in the office to further enhance visitor confidentiality.

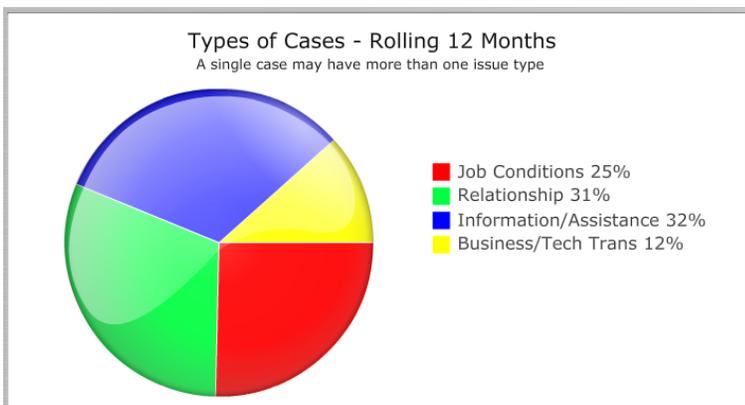
FY08 Statistical Trends

The Ombuds Office exceeded its goals for FY 2008 in numbers of mediations, technology transfer Ombuds matters, and overall cases. In fact, with reduced staff, Ombuds logged more visitors than any time in its history.

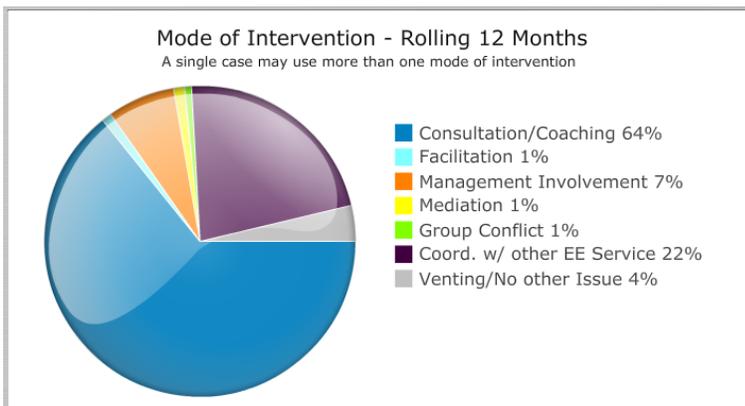




Ombuds tracks and reports detailed level of effort in the monthly Ombuds Dashboard. The averages include the full spectrum of Ombuds assistance, from anonymous helpline calls that may take 15 minutes through multi-party technology transfer cases which take weeks or months to resolve. The electronic version of the dashboard allows the reader to see more detail, including the components of averages: www.lanl.gov/orgs/ombuds/dashboard/index.shtml

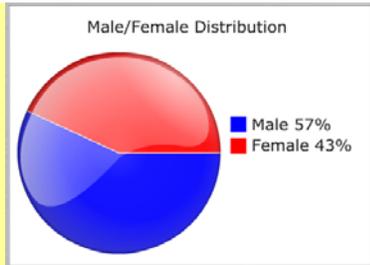


More than half of the Ombuds cases concern either Job Conditions (work environment, compensation, appraisals etc.) or Relationship (with supervisor, subordinate or peer).

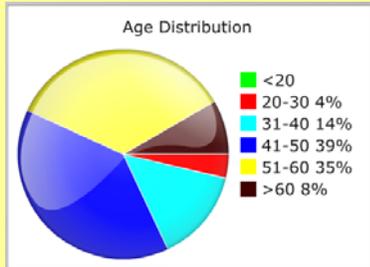


Consultation and/or coaching is the primary mode of intervention in 64 percent of the cases. This has not changed significantly from previous years.

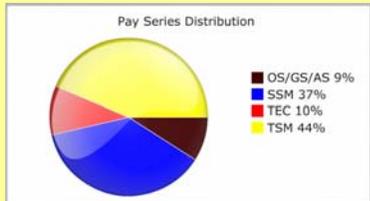
Comparison to LANL Data



Ombuds Visitors



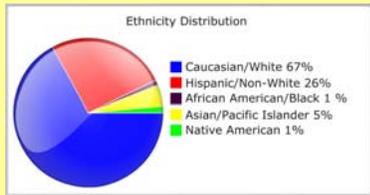
Ombuds Visitors



Ombuds Visitors



Ombuds Visitors



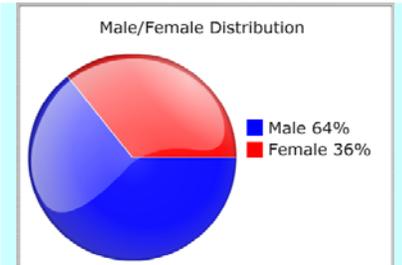
43 percent of Ombuds' visitors are female. This is 7 percent more females than found in the Laboratory population overall.

Employees above 40 years of age are more likely to use Ombuds than employees below 40 years of age. Hence, Ombuds has fewer visitors below 40 and more visitors above 40 than the Laboratory distribution would suggest.

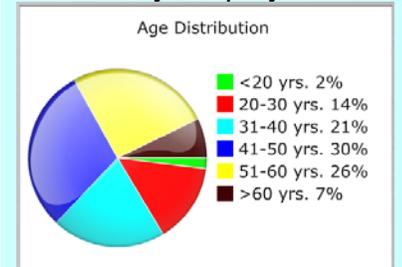
SSMs were more likely to seek Ombuds assistance, relative to their representation in the Laboratory, whereas the opposite was true for TECs. (This data goes only through May 30, 2008 due to the Compensation Program Design rollout in June 2008.)

The percentage of Ombuds visitors who are managers has steadily increased over the years, representing 20 percent of the visitors in FY08.

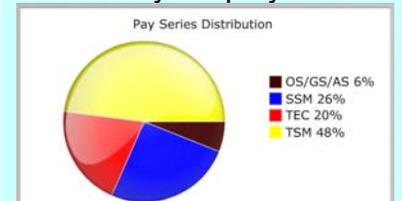
The ethnicity distribution of Ombuds' visitors is close to what the Laboratory distribution would suggest.



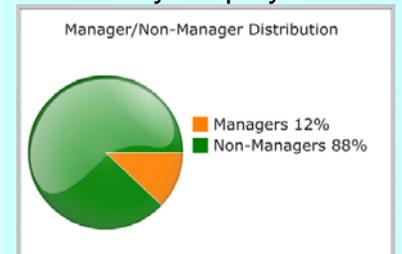
Laboratory Employees



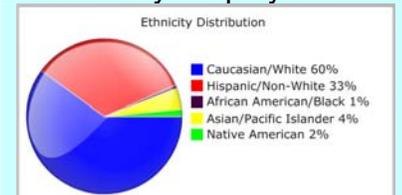
Laboratory Employees



Laboratory Employees



Laboratory Employees



Additional Ombuds Services

Technology Partnership Ombudsman (TPO)

The Technology Partnership Ombudsman Program is an important component of the Laboratory's overall technology transfer mission. Under the TPO program, the Ombuds Office helps resolve complaints by outside organizations regarding technology partnerships (including CRADAs), patents, and technology licensing concerns at the Laboratory. In this capacity Ombuds:

1. Serves as a focal point for assisting the public and industry in resolving complaints with the Laboratory;
2. Promotes the use of collaborative alternative dispute resolution techniques such as mediation to facilitate the speedy and low cost resolution of complaints and disputes, when appropriate; and
3. Provides quarterly reports to the DOE/NNSA, concerning the number and nature of complaints and disputes raised, along with the Ombudsman's assessment of their resolution, consistent with the protection of confidential and sensitive information.

In FY 2008, the Ombuds Office handled thirteen new TPO matters, and used a variety of alternative dispute resolution approaches to resolve concerns. To enhance accountability, Ombuds began using the Laboratory Requirements Management System to track and communicate quarterly reporting of TPO activities.

Also in FY 2008, the DOE Technology Transfer Policy Board approved an Execution Plan for the planning, management, and oversight of technology transfer activities throughout the DOE complex. A critical milestone in that plan was the delivery of a Technology Partnership Ombuds Skills and IP Training workshop. LANL Ombuds was involved in the planning and development of the workshop, established a team to provide Ombuds 101 skills training, participated in a panel discussion on Ombuds practice, and gave a session on lessons learned from TPO case studies.

Mediation

Mediation is a structured, informal process in which neutral third parties help individuals resolve conflicts and rebuild relationships. At the Laboratory, mediation is supervised by the Ombuds Office and conducted by trained employee volunteers. Our roster of mediators includes employees from all job series and directorates, as well as several Laboratory retirees. Many of our volunteers apply their mediation skills outside of the Laboratory as well, donating time and skill to conflict resolution programs in neighboring communities. The community involvement leverages the skills and knowledge obtained

in Ombuds and mediation work, capitalizing on the Laboratory's investment in these individuals.

Members of the mediator pool are also part of the Federal Executive Board's (FEB) Shared Neutrals Program. They support FEB efforts to provide mediation services to participating Federal & State Agencies throughout New Mexico, contributing to FEB's avoidance of litigation costs.

All Laboratory mediators adhere to the Model Standards of Conduct for Mediators, as approved by the American Bar Association, American Arbitration Association, and the Association for Conflict Resolution.

The mediation program processed 14 new mediations in FY08. As always, interpersonal conflict between and among individuals – peers, subordinate, and supervisors - was the type of concern most often addressed through mediation. Several employees also settled in mediation issues which would otherwise have been reviewed through a formal complaint process.

Community and Institutional Involvement

Ombuds staff and volunteer mediators continue to be a resource for important institutional initiatives within the Laboratory.

Examples include:

- Facilitation of several meetings convened by AD-level managers.
- Active participation in Lab-wide initiatives, such as the Critical Incident Stress Management team, Student Programs Advisory Committee (SPAC), Worker Safeguards & Security Team (WSST) and executive coaching.
- Presentations during the weekly New Hire Orientation and at student orientations.
- Mentoring for new ombudsmen through the International Ombudsman Association.

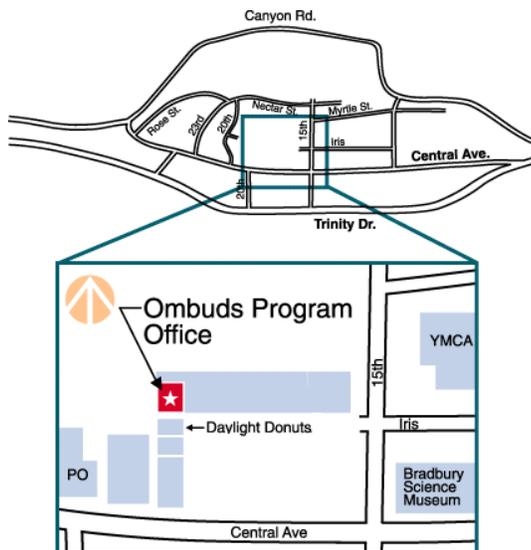
Conclusion

In the Ombuds Office's 12-year existence, it has earned the trust of the workforce and is perceived as a valued employee benefit. During most years, Ombuds facilitates the resolution of a handful of potentially high-profile cases that could have resulted in litigation and/or national press coverage had they not been resolved informally. Helping employees resolve conflict enables them to stay focused on the job and contributes to a safe, secure, and productive workplace.

Acknowledgement

Special thanks to former Ombuds Director Camilla S. Lopez.

Contact Information



The Ombuds office is located at
114 Central Park Square
in downtown Los Alamos



Phone: 505-665-2837

Anonymous Help Line: 505-667-9370

Ombuds Staff:

John L. Armijo, Acting Laboratory Ombudsman

Mary Beth Stevens, Sr. Associate Ombuds

Evelyn Martinez, Ombuds Specialist