

**Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF):  
Evaluation of Special Agent Promotion Process**

**Intended Results**

ATF's Goals:

- Evaluation of Special Agent promotion process, including assessment centers and process used to make final promotion decisions.
- Evaluation plan for ATF to use in order to conduct periodic program reviews of its system.
- Benchmarking study of promotion procedures used by other Federal agencies for GS-1811 Special Agents.
- Analysis of factors outside the promotion process that impact the sufficiency of candidates to fill vacant positions.

**Achieved Results**

PDRI achieved the following results:

- Technical evaluation conducted of the development, implementation, and analysis of the Special Agent promotion process and its adherence to legal and professional guidelines, including validity, measurement properties, standardization, objectivity, and bias.
- Evaluation plan developed for ATF to conduct periodic program reviews of its system in the future, including evaluating the assessment centers and the quality of employees promoted under the new promotion process.
- Benchmarking study conducted of Special Agent promotion processes from the Drug Enforcement Administration, Marshals Service, Secret Service, and Federal Bureau of Investigation to identify potential options for improving ATF's promotion process.
- Interviews and focus groups conducted with executives and supervisors to obtain their feedback on strengths and areas for improvement of the promotion process.
- Survey developed and administered to all GS-13, GS-14, and GS-15 ATF Special Agents to obtain information on the reasons for their decisions to participate in the promotion process.
- Data from interviews, focus groups, and survey analyzed to identify most important strengths and areas for improvement within promotion process.
- Options developed for addressing most important areas for improvement, including analysis of advantages and disadvantages.
- Briefing delivered to ATF's Senior Leadership Team on key results and recommendations.
- All products and services delivered on schedule and within budget.

**Management Process**

*PDRI successfully utilized its standard project management process to perform this work. Specific challenges related to the current project included:*

- The need to satisfy both ATF and a committee of assessment experts appointed to oversee the work.
- Use of customer personnel. Developed a breakdown of requirements and schedule to facilitate coordination with customer personnel.