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# Army Audit Agency named among best places to work in 2015

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## Story Highlights

- Army Audit Agency selected third best federal agency to work for.



Surrounded by co-workers, Army Auditor General Randy Exley holds a plaque awarded to the Army Audit Agency from Partnership for Public Service for being selected the the third best agency to work for out of 320 federal subcomponent agencies. From left, Lisa Bryan, auditor; Karl F. Schneider, deputy assistant secretary of the Army (manpower and Reserve affairs); Exley; Joe Bentz, principal deputy Army auditor general; and Dennis DeVore, auditor.

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WASHINGTON (Army News Service, Dec. 21, 2015) -- For the sixth straight year, the U.S. Army Audit Agency, or USAAA, has placed among the top five subcomponent agencies in the rankings of the best places to work in the federal government.

In the 2015 Partnership for Public Service's annual rankings, USAAA placed 3rd among 320 subcomponent organizations based upon overall employee satisfaction and commitment, as well as workplace issues such as teamwork and work-life balance.

The rankings reflect the views of more than 433,000 civil servants throughout the federal government and offer a comprehensive assessment of how workers view their jobs and workplace.

Headquartered on Fort Belvoir, Virginia, the audit agency employs about 530 civilians in 21 offices scattered throughout the continental United States, Hawaii, Korea and Germany. The agency oversees the Army's entire budget of roughly \$125 billion, including \$70 million for its own internal payroll, but the auditor general says his workforce is typically able to save \$1.5 to \$2 billion annually from the overall Army budget in cost-avoidance savings.

USAAA is no stranger to receiving top recognition from the Partnership for Public Service. The first year in which it entered the competition in 2010, it came in 2nd of 224 subcomponent organizations; in 2011, it placed 2nd among 240 subcomponents; in 2012, 1st of 392 subcomponents; in 2013, 3rd of 300 subcomponents and in 2014, USAAA placed 5th of 315 subcomponents. According to a Partnership representative, no subcomponent organization has ever placed in the top five for six years straight.

"This award says a lot of things about USAAA," said Auditor General Randy Exley, who has more than 44 years of audit experience, including two years as an Army enlisted auditor.

"First, we have a really great mission of taking care of Soldiers, civilians and Families and doing what we do benefits them all and protects the freedom of the nation," Exley said.

"It also says that the leadership and the organization from the top all the way down cares about its people, so we like to say that we pay as much attention to our workforce as we do our clients, because we know the workforce is the people who make our clients happy or unhappy," he added.

Exley says USAAA is very intentional about trying to ensure it's an organization where people want to work and it's no secret that great work environments foster productivity and help draw the best talent into the workforce.

"We have a very robust communications effort that has been going on for five years - it's a big effort on developing leadership skills in our leaders and a continued focus on making sure we're doing important work, the highest impact work that we can identify [through] written assessment

processes and through very close collaboration with our clients while making sure we're doing the right audits that bring the highest impact back and provide the greatest support to the Army, Soldiers, civilians and Families," he said.

"How we have moved to where we are is because of the importance of connecting folks with the mission and how their contributions are valued - we do a lot and solicit feedback from our force in various ways and then we act on that feedback which is critically important," said Deputy Auditor General Joe Bentz. "Nothing will derail you more than when you ask folks what they'd like to see or do in making changes and leadership doesn't respond."

Bentz added that the agency has a continuously evolving focus on building leadership and accountability throughout the organization that develops trust in working relationships within and outside of USAAA.

"It's a focus on work-life balance that shows we treat our own folks as importantly as our clients," Bentz said, noting that USAAA's primary clients are Headquarters, Department of the Army principals, senior leaders and the senior leaders in the Army commands throughout the world. That numbers some 45 leaders the agency travels to meet with - not to focus on financial statement-type audits, but to look at programs, projects and the operational effectiveness and efficiency of those programs.

In 2011, USAAA conducted a communication principles workshop for team leaders and supervisors all the way up to the Senior Executive Service, or SES, level. They brought in 240 workers, in groups of 20 at a time and taught communication principles, then did a data call to the entire field asking for the communications issues that concerned them most.

"Then in 2012, we called back the same group and put on a Partnering to Lead program and in that, we brought all the supervisors and team leaders who work together every day and had them in pairs where they shared their expectations of each other regarding job performance standards and the phases of an audit," Exley said.

"So that really allowed them to have conversations about what each was expecting of one another, which they never had before," he continued. "I think that really improved in a huge way the way in which they worked together in leading their teams."

In 2014 and into 2015, the agency put together a program called "True Colors" in which the entire workforce was brought in and participated in a test much like a Myer-Briggs personality assessment which places people into categories of preferences and tendencies.

"Through exercises they learned how to interact and respond and the best way to communicate with that individual considering their traits, tendencies and preferences," Exley said. "And, right now we're going through a 360-degree assessment process for the same 240 people, all GS-13 through SES where we're all learning how we can better lead and what we can do for each other to be more effective and productive."

Bentz says that when USAAA leaders visit their clients throughout the world, they also perform

town hall discussions and hold sensing sessions with the workforce. Additionally, the auditor general makes a few random calls to the field weekly to get feedback on initiatives the agency is working.

While USAAA is proud and honored to receive the award, it's really a by-product of how the agency works at being the best it can be as a federal employer, Bentz said.

"And, you know how the saying goes - once on top, stay on top," he said. "We're just trying to be the best we can be for our folks and to be as productive as we can be for the Army, Soldiers, civilians and their Families."