

OBSI Strategic Plan 2017-2021



OMBUDSMAN

for Banking Services | des Services Bancaires
and Investments | et d'Investissement



1996•2016



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1. BUILDING OBSI'S STRATEGIC PLAN

1.1 *Strategic Plan Development*

The strategic plan presented in this document is the cumulative work of the entire OBSI organization, the knowledge and experience of its people, the strategic focus of its management, and the vision of its Board of Directors. OBSI's strategic plan was sponsored by its senior management team (SMT) and approved by the Board of Directors.

The planning process for this five-year strategic road map involved staff at every level of the organization. In addition, the Ombudsman and her team over the past year have been actively soliciting feedback from a broad cross-section of stakeholders including investor and consumer advocates, participating firms and industry associations to inform its strategy and operational planning. The process dovetailed with a five-year external review of our investment mandate and was informed by key strategic recommendations of that review.

Through the successful execution of the strategic plan, OBSI will strive to strengthen its important public service role within Canada's financial service industry and provide thought leadership in building the fundamental relationships among financial services regulators, firms and consumers.

1.2 *Context and Strategic Response*

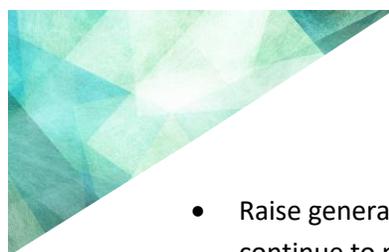
This strategic plan is reflective of OBSI's strengths and weaknesses as an organization and is a response to the opportunities and challenges in the external environment that are shaping its role within the financial services industry.

OBSI's goal is to further build its reputation as Canada's trusted, independent financial ombudsman, acting as an impartial and fair investigator of banking and investment related complaints. Reaching this goal will require the organization to leverage its core organizational strengths which include its:

- Independence and reputation for fairness
- Strong governance and operational processes
- Ability to divert disputes from costly legal proceedings to broaden and deepen its relationships with key stakeholders

OBSI also aspires to enhance and reinforce the role that it plays in strengthening the foundations of Canada's financial services industry. To do this, the organization, through implementation of this strategic plan, will pursue opportunities that are available to:

- Play a greater thought leadership role in the industry by using its experiences in resolving disputes between firms and consumers to identify and share trends and emerging issues with government, regulators, firms and consumers to inform public policy and regulatory responses
- Expand its service offering where and when appropriate within the financial services industry to meet its public service mandate

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- Raise general firm and consumer awareness of the value of its offering as the costs of the legal system continue to put judicial resolution out of reach for most consumers and investors.

Pursuing these opportunities will need to be balanced by efforts to monitor and mitigate risks to OBSI operations in the external environment, such as the potential for an adverse economic shock that significantly drives up complaint volumes, or the reputational impact that could be caused by a significant data breach or cyber-attack.

To achieve its objectives of further building its value and reputation as Canada's trusted, independent financial ombudsman and reinforce its role in strengthening the foundations of Canada's financial services industry, OBSI will be focused on the following four core strategic directions over the next five years:

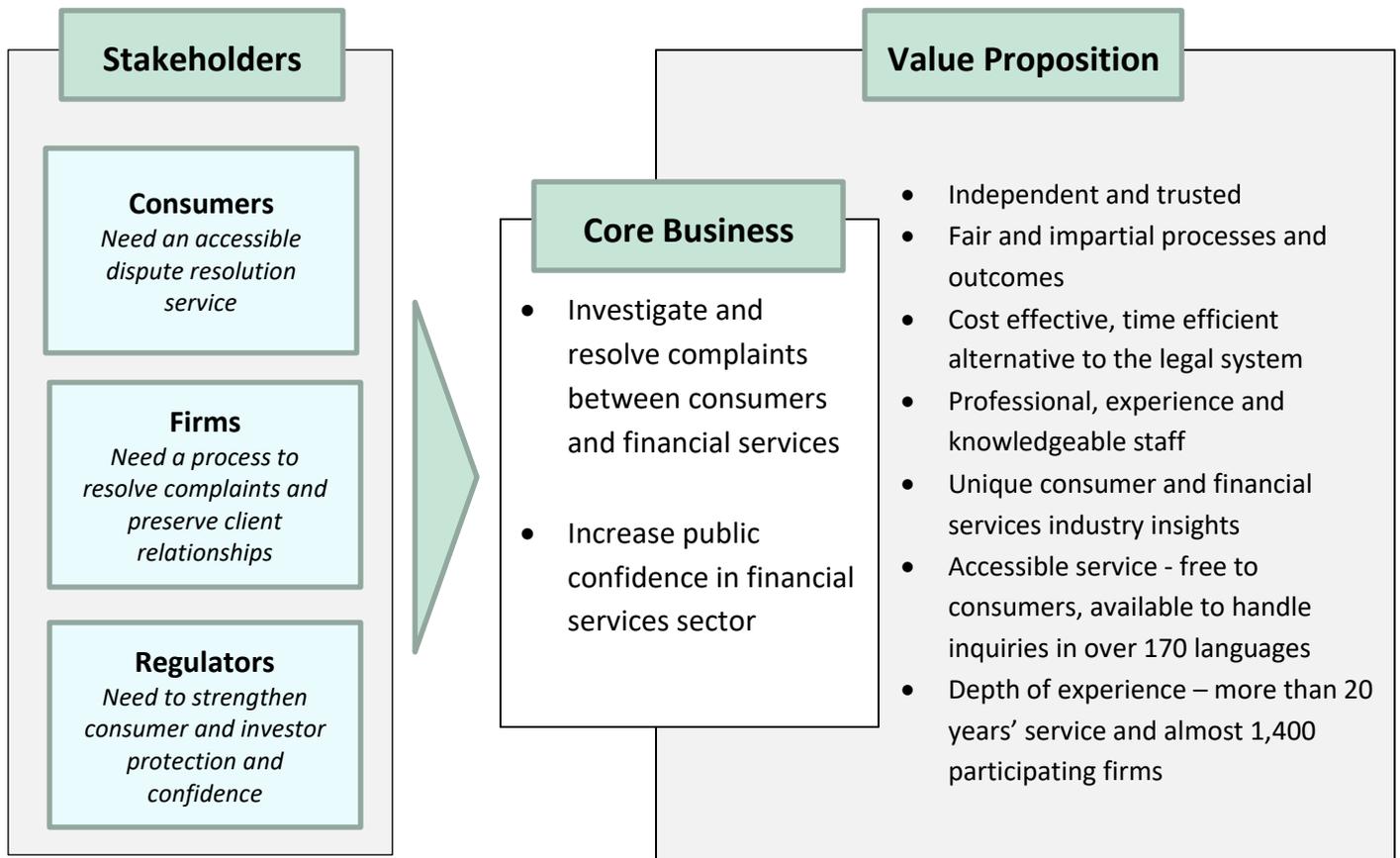
1. **Deliver a high value service and be the dispute resolution provider of choice:** OBSI will continue to deliver quality and accessible service to consumers and participating firms by leveraging its expertise and knowledge to increase insights to stakeholders and expand service offerings.
2. **Build enduring relationships through stakeholder awareness of the value of the OBSI service:** OBSI will strengthen regulator, firm and consumer trust, value and brand awareness through clear demonstrations of value and service effectiveness.
3. **Drive continuous improvement and organizational resiliency:** OBSI will maintain and increase service excellence by standardizing and improving processes and service times.
4. **Invest in OBSI's people:** OBSI will focus on staff and management collaboration and dialogue, succession planning and professional development, and continue to enhance internal knowledge management capabilities. These efforts will help to strengthen employee engagement in the workplace and support improved service levels.

2. THE STRATEGIC PLAN

OBSI has been providing dispute resolution services to Canada’s financial services firms and consumers for over 20 years. This is the first published strategic plan for the organization. The development of this plan provided the organization with an opportunity to formally articulate what it has always inherently understood to be its core business, value proposition, vision, mission and values.

2.1 OBSI’s Core Business and Value Proposition

OBSI works with three core groups of stakeholders - the consumers of services provided by the participating financial services firms, participating financial services firms themselves, and industry regulators. OBSI exists to investigate and resolve complaints between consumers and financial services firms for the purpose of increasing public confidence in the financial services sector.



Stakeholders realize value from OBSI because of the organization’s independence, fair and impartial dispute resolution processes, and the expertise, knowledge and professionalism of its people.

2.2 OBSI's Vision

OBSI's core business and value proposition to its key stakeholders is shaped by its vision for its role in Canada's financial services industry.

OBSI VISION
<i>Inspiring confidence in the Canadian financial services sector</i>

2.3 OBSI's Mission

OBSI's core business and value proposition is realized by its commitment to its mission that guides the organization's day to day operations.

OBSI MISSION
<i>We help resolve and reduce disputes between consumers and financial services firms by conducting fair and accessible investigations and by sharing our knowledge and expertise.</i>

2.4 OBSI's Values

OBSI's values are the principles that guide how the organization delivers its core business and effects its value proposition to stakeholders.

OBSI VALUES	
Fairness	Our process and approach is fair to consumers and firms
Impartiality	We are balanced and objective in our work
Independence	We are free from undue influence
Accessibility	Our services are affordable, straight-forward, and convenient
Integrity	We act in a way that is honest and principled
Professionalism	We respectfully listen, understand and engage with consumers and firms

These values inform the conduct of every OBSI staff member each and every day in delivering the organization's mandate.

2.5 Core Strategic Directions and Initiatives

Core Direction: Deliver a high value service and be the dispute resolution provider of choice

For OBSI to **deliver a high value service and be the dispute resolution provider of choice**, the Board, senior management team, and all staff will work together to:

1. *Continue to deliver quality and accessible service to consumers and participating firms.* OBSI will deliver initiatives to improve service delivery and accessibility through staff insights, stakeholder surveys and enhanced processes.

Short-term Initiatives (1-2 years)	Medium-term Initiatives (2-5 years)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explore and evaluate alternatives to name and shame 2. Conduct survey of participating firms on an annual basis 3. Conduct survey of participating consumers 4. Improve consumer demographic information collection and gathering 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Implement and monitor alternative to name and shame 2. Identify and execute initiatives and expand service offerings based on experience from case files and findings from firm and consumer surveys 3. Review and update OBSI's Terms of Reference 4. Analyze expanded demographic information to inform plans to enhance accessibility of OBSI service 5. Execute external review for banking and implement key recommendations

2. *Leverage expertise and knowledge to increase insights to stakeholders.* OBSI will deliver on initiatives to maximize value for clients by providing additional insight into market trends and issues.

Short-term Initiatives (1-2 years)	Medium-term Initiatives (2-5 years)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review available data and stakeholder needs and interests 2. Develop and implement enhanced staff training in the identification of trends and potential systemic issues 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve data gathering systems and communication to maximize value 2. Develop and implement procedures for recording the length of time between the genesis of a consumer problem, the consumer's recognizing the problem, and a complaint being filed 3. Collect and analyze data about cases ruled out of mandate for exceeding the six-year limitation period for the purposes of a strategic review of the six-year limitation period 4. Provide periodic trend and insight reporting to regulators, firms and other key stakeholders

3. *Leverage existing capabilities to expand offering of services.* OBSI will deliver on initiatives that use existing resources to expand OBSI’s service offerings and attract new participating firms and serve their clients.

Short-term Initiatives (1-2 years)	Medium-term Initiatives (2-5 years)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Demonstrate value of OBSI services by sharing complaint and restitution expertise to consumers and participating firms 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Demonstrate value to high potential sectors not currently using OBSI services 2. Expand to new sectors as practicable and consistent with public service mandate 3. Reengage firms not currently using OBSI service

Core Direction: Build enduring relationships through stakeholder awareness of the value of the OBSI service

For OBSI to **build enduring relationships through stakeholder awareness of the value of the OBSI service**, the Board, senior management and all staff will work together to:

1. *Strengthen firm trust and awareness of OBSI value.* OBSI will deliver on initiatives to bolster OBSI’s realized value and dependability.

Short-term Initiatives (1-2 years)	Medium-term Initiatives (2-5 years)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Implement industry relationship management and communications component of public affairs strategy 2. Develop an early advice¹ program for participating firms 3. Explore participating firm interest in OBSI training sessions on dispute resolution and approaches to different case scenarios 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pilot an early advice service for participating firms 2. Based on firm interest, develop and implement periodic firm training on OBSI dispute resolution and approaches to different case scenarios

¹ Early advice is a service that would answer questions from firms based on general factors OBSI considers when handling investigations.

2. *Increase consumer brand awareness.* OBSI will deliver on initiatives that will enhance OBSI’s name recognition among consumers.

Short-term Initiatives (1-2 years)	Medium-term Initiatives (2-5 years)
1. Implement consumer facing PR components of the public affairs strategy	1. Undertake a consumer facing public education campaign to build awareness for OBSI service

3. *Demonstrate value and service effectiveness to regulators.* OBSI will deliver on initiatives that will effectively enhance and raise value of OBSI to regulators.

Short-term Initiatives (1-2 years)	Medium-term Initiatives (2-5 years)
1. Implement government and regulator relations components of public affairs strategy 2. Build internal policy function within the stakeholder relations team to position OBSI to more effectively prepare formal submissions to government and regulators and to respond to requests for advice from regulators	1. Track and leverage opportunities to provide meaningful policy input to government and regulators

Core Direction: Drive continuous improvement and organizational resiliency

For OBSI to **drive continuous improvement and organizational resiliency**, the Board, senior management and all staff will work together to:

1. *Standardize and improve processes and timelines.* OBSI will deliver on initiatives that will create more streamlined operational practices that improve the firm and consumer experience.

Short-term Initiatives (1-2 years)	Medium-term Initiatives (2-5 years)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish clear benchmarks/best practices/quality review for investigative processes 2. Develop and implement satisfaction and quality measurement regime to track firms' and consumers' views and impressions 3. Review delay data and identify process improvements to reduce delays 4. Develop policy for expedited resolutions 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Standardize processes across investment and banking investigations, including implementing process improvements identified from delay data review process 2. Develop mechanism for regular review and update of internal processes 3. Automate intake system for complaints 4. Implement expedited resolutions policy on a pilot basis and use learnings to guide full implementation 5. Design and implement quality improvement program that is responsive to results from firm and consumer surveys and prioritized satisfaction and quality measures

2. *Enhance information technology (IT) efficiency.* OBSI will deliver on initiatives that will enhance data security, support systems and improve data analytics for service improvement and knowledge sharing with stakeholders.

Short-term Initiatives (1-2 years)	Medium-term Initiatives (2-5 years)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct expert, independent IT infrastructure and security review 2. Complete change management associated with recent IT transformations 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Implement recommendations from the IT infrastructure and security review on a prioritized basis, including identifying, procuring and deploying updated IT infrastructure requirements 2. Develop and implement internal program for conducting advanced data analytics

3. *Effectively manage enterprise risk and prepare for external shocks.* OBSI will deliver on initiatives that will prepare the organization to protect its reputation, maintain service excellence, and engage and prepare its people for external shocks to its operations.

Short-term Initiatives (1-2 years)	Medium-term Initiatives (2-5 years)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop enterprise risk management (ERM) policy framework and implement on a prioritized basis across organization 2. Conduct staff training on ERM policy framework, risk register, and prioritized risk management activities 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop, and monitor on a quarterly basis, a specific ERM plan, processes and internal staff training to prepare for sudden changes in case volume and other internal and external shocks

Core Direction: Invest in OBSI’s people

For OBSI to **invest in its people**, the Board, senior management and all staff will work together to:

1. *Focus on staff retention and professional development.* OBSI will deliver on initiatives that will maintain strong staff retention and provide employees with meaningful professional development.

Short-term Initiatives (1-2 years)	Medium-term Initiatives (2-5 years)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop internal succession plan for key positions 2. Develop a professional development framework that includes a skills matrix and needs analysis 3. Acquire and assess compensation analysis 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Implement training to meet needs of the internal succession plan and professional development framework 2. Ensure OBSI performance objective setting and assessment aligns with corporate strategy and Board approved objectives

2. *Continue to develop knowledge management capabilities.* OBSI will deliver on initiatives that will further institutionalize knowledge of core policies, processes, and stakeholder relationships.

Short-term Initiatives (1-2 years)	Medium-term Initiatives (2-5 years)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase frequency of case debriefs at investigative meetings that enable all staff to share in the learnings from individual cases 2. Develop a strategy to capture the knowledge of OBSI’s people, including a communications framework to improve internal communications with staff 3. Develop business case for a knowledge management system 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Implement knowledge management strategy, including deployment of optimal knowledge management system

3. *Strengthen employee engagement.* OBSI will deliver on initiatives that will increase employee engagement and participation in delivering OBSI strategies and building a strong culture based on OBSI’s values.

Short-term Initiatives (1-2 years)	Medium-term Initiatives (2-5 years)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish employee engagement committee (EEC) to make recommendations to strengthen engagement and set framework for appropriate consultation and discussion between management and staff 2. Invest in technical and soft-skills training for managers 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Implement EEC recommendations, as practicable 2. Conduct follow-up engagement survey and analyse results



3. MEASURING SUCCESS

3.1 Core Strategic Directions and Initiatives

At the end of this five-year strategic plan, OBSI will be a stronger provider of trusted, independent complaint resolution services to the financial services industry and consumers, which will result in:

- Greater stakeholder satisfaction and deeper relationships
- An expanded participating firm base
- Greater consistency and enhanced efficiency and timeliness in case completion
- High levels of employee engagement and satisfaction

3.2 Putting Strategy into Action

In order to execute the path, set out this Strategic Plan, OBSI's Board and management team will undertake the following tasks and activities:

- Key activities associated with delivering on the Strategic Plan will be reported on a regular basis to the Board for review and comment and to the public on an annual basis
- OBSI management will maintain its operational plan that includes the activities and accountabilities necessary for executing the Strategic Plan
- The Board, with the support of management, will institute an annual strategic planning review and make adjustments to the plan as may be necessary to respond to internal and external events.

OBSI is a valuable Canadian institution. The successful implementation of this Strategic Plan will strengthen OBSI as Canada's trusted, independent financial ombudsman, acting as an impartial and fair investigator of banking and investments related complaints. In so doing, OBSI will be pursuing a vision, mission and mandate that will, ultimately, continue to benefit Canada's financial services industry and its customers.