

Contributions to Effective Continuity of Government

Ms. Oge's skill at recognizing and recruiting talented people to the public sector, and then inspiring and leading those people to accomplish great things for the American people, is among her greatest legacies. Under her leadership, her organization has developed an international reputation for its technical depth, dedication, agility, and ability to produce important results. This reputation is due to Ms. Oge's setting very high standards for herself and her entire team, recognizing and rewarding performance, and confronting and dealing with non-performance. Ms. Oge holds herself and her senior team accountable to the highest standards of performance and integrity. Ms. Oge has created a flexible, team-based organization, and created a climate in which talented people have an opportunity to work on a variety of projects and take on leadership responsibilities. She developed an Office-wide recognition program which is a model for other organizations, and which recognizes and rewards exceptional performance at the time of the achievement, rather than at an annual ceremony months or a year later.

Ms. Oge believes in hiring talented people who are diverse in every sense of the word – in thinking, in background, in life experience – and creating a climate for them to succeed and lead. And in this aspect, Ms. Oge has achieved remarkable success. Over the last 5 years, over 40 % of those hired to her organization were women or minorities. She has been particularly successful at diversifying the leadership ranks, an EPA focus area. Moreover, throughout her career she has mentored scores of young professionals and helped them advance in their careers, including becoming members of the Senior Executive Service.

Ms. Oge strongly believes in creating a sustainable, viable organization for the future, in which public service-minded people can continue to contribute important results for the American people. The team-oriented management approach she uses in her organization provides numerous opportunities for talented people to demonstrate their leadership skills, and many have advanced to greater leadership roles in the organization. She has utilized unconventional leadership development strategies to develop the next generation of EPA leaders. They have included an 18 month customized training program conceived with the Council for Excellence in Government, in which the entire management chain (36 managers) participated as a group, as well as a 2-day training program for all managers (emphasizing customer service) conducted by Zingerman's, a highly successful and nationally-known delicatessen and mail-order business in Ann Arbor, MI. Recently, Ms. Oge has designed and proposed a re-organization to better align her team with emerging priorities. A key part of her proposal is designed to provide a succession plan for a key executives nearing retirement.

Another example of Ms. Oge's contribution to the effective continuity of government is her work to ensure the sustainability of EPA's National Vehicle and Fuel Emissions Laboratory in Ann Arbor, MI. This facility is an important part of her organization, and is responsible for certifying that all vehicles and engines sold in the United States comply with national emissions standards. This work plays a crucial role in ensuring fair competition and a level economic playing field for domestic and foreign auto and engine

manufacturers. She has worked tirelessly to ensure that this vital national asset continues to be at the forefront of technology. The lab has been recognized by others for its leadership in quality, safety, and environmental and energy management initiatives. Despite very tight resource constraints, she has secured the necessary resources to modernize EPA's national laboratory so it can stay at the leading edge of measurement technology as advanced vehicles and alternative fuels enter the market in larger numbers.

Finally, Ms. Oge is a passionate and frequent advocate for how rewarding a career in public service can be. She seeks out opportunities to meet with young people to tell her personal story---as an 18 year old from Greece arriving in the United States with very little English, rising to the top of the career civil service through perseverance and hard work, and contributing to a better society. Margo Tsirigotis Oge is truly deserving of the Roger W. Jones Award for Executive Leadership.