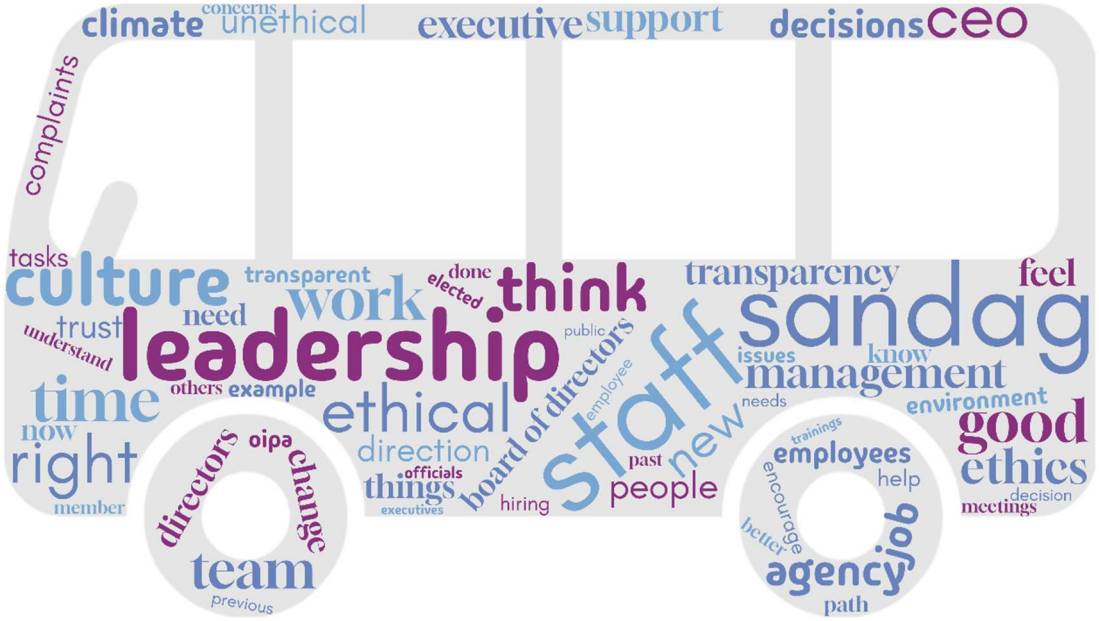
SANDAG

OIPA | Office of the Independent Performance Auditor

2026 SANDAG Ethical Climate Survey

Beyond the Baseline



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Message from the Independent Performance Auditor

I am pleased to present the results of SANDAG's second Ethical Climate Survey (ECS) – Beyond the Baseline. This year's survey was designed to assist SANDAG in gauging whether the ethical climate is doing better, remained the same, or declined since the baseline survey in 2024. The ECS records employees' perceptions of SANDAG's ethical climate[1] at a point in time.

About the Survey

The ECS, designed by the Institute for Local Government, is broken into three areas (Section One: Employees, Section Two: Management, and Section Three: Elected Officials) to gather an employee's perspective on the organization's ethical culture[2] through the employee's day-to-day experiences, working with management, and interactions with elected officials. Each section has 10 multiple choice questions to evaluate the **accountability, responsiveness, integrity, trust, fairness, communication, and leadership** present at SANDAG. It tells us the degree to which ethical standards influence organizational and individual decision-making and helps identify ethical blind spots or provide reassurance that SANDAG's ethical house is in order. In short, this survey is SANDAG's ethical report card.

The survey also invited employees to rate the agency's direction and included two questions to openly share their thoughts on SANDAG's ethical culture.

2024 Survey Results – The Baseline

The results of the initial ECS, released in January 2025, indicated SANDAG's ethical climate was in a **good place**, with room for improvement. While it was in the early stages of a leadership transition, employees believed SANDAG was headed in the right direction. The survey included employees' comments organized into seven themes. Positive outcomes from the survey included SANDAG's Board of Directors (Board) improving their interactions with staff, and OIPA initiating an audit of Human Resources (HR) hiring and promotion practices.

2026 Survey Results – Beyond the Baseline

The 2026 ECS was released to employees in late spring 2026 to determine whether SANDAG's ethical climate has stayed the same, improved, or declined since 2024.

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[1] Ethical climate is employees' perception of the organization's ethics: the shared sense of what's right and how ethical issues get resolved.
[2] Ethical culture is the system that shapes behavior: the formal or informal mechanisms that push people toward or away from ethical conduct.

Like the 2024 ECS, common themes from employee comments are included in this report.

In summary:

This year's ECS, consistent with 2024, revealed SANDAG has room to improve. Overall, survey participants gave SANDAG an ethical climate score of 183 out of 300, almost identical (181 out of 300) to 2024. The ILG categorizes scores between 150 and 224 as a "Medium" score. According to the ILG, this means SANDAG is in a **good place but has room to improve**.

Employees rated their own ethics higher than they rated management and elected officials. Participants of all levels scored their own ethics much higher than they scored the ethics of executive and elected leadership as a whole. The agencywide score for elected officials was "Low" and is consistent with last year.

Employees' perceptions do not differ across staff roles and years of service with the organization. Participant groups scored SANDAG's ethical climate for each section similarly.

A significant number of employees reported "not knowing" enough to answer survey questions related to management and elected officials. This demonstrates a gap in an organization's overall ethical climate. Such responses could mean staff are organizationally disconnected, disengaged, or are choosing not to be engaged with management and elected officials.

Employees have myriad opinions about SANDAG. Fifty-eight (58) percent of the participants who completed the survey in its entirety provided comments on how to enhance SANDAG's ethical climate and/or what they would change at SANDAG. Participants' statements were diverse and revealed participants' opinions about the direction of the Agency, HR practices, the Agency's ethical culture, reporting channels, internal processes, feeling disconnected, and accountability.

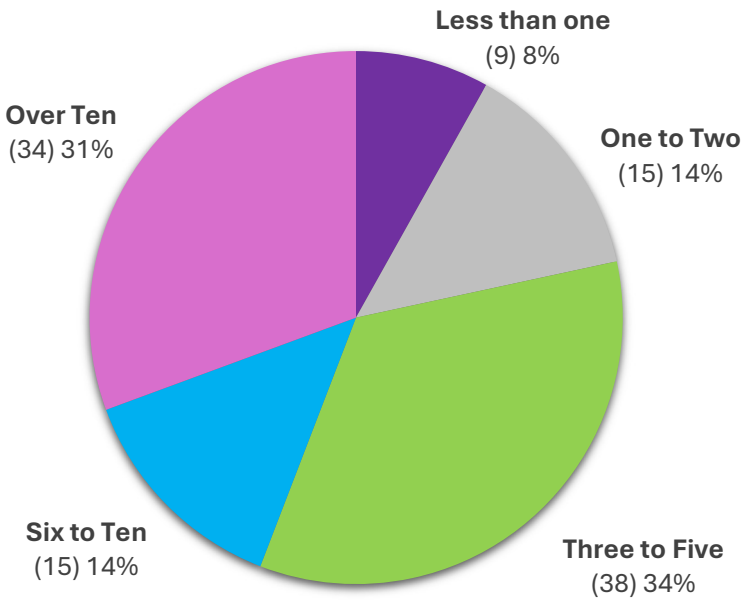
The following sections provide more details on the results of the 2026 Ethical Climate Survey including employees' comments organized into six themes.

I want to thank SANDAG's employees for participating in this year's ECS and answering the survey's open-ended questions openly and honestly.

Survey Participants

Participation in the survey was voluntary and completely anonymous. Approximately **111 employees** – **24 percent** of SANDAG's total workforce – participated in the survey and completed the identifying questions related to participant's length of employment and staffing role. Of the 111, 100 employees (22 percent) went on to complete the survey in its entirety compared to the previous survey where 41 percent[3] completed the survey in its entirety. This is a 43 percent decline in participation from the baseline survey and could be attributed to employee survey fatigue, anonymity concerns, and/or a perception that their feedback will not make a difference.

Total Number of Survey Participants by Years of Service with SANDAG[4]



[3] This has been recalculated to include only those participants who completed the survey in its entirety.
[4] Due to rounding, percentages may not add up to 100%.

Participants identifying themselves as employees of SANDAG for less than one year gave higher scores in Section 1 for themselves and Section 2 for management compared to those employed longer.

Participant Scores by Years of Service

Years of Service	Section 1 **Employees**	Section 2 **Management**	Section 3 **Elected Officials**	Survey **TOTAL**
Less than one (>1)	91 **High**	70 **Medium**	37[5] **Low** ↓	197 **Medium**
One to two (1 - 2)	84 **High**	62 **Medium**	42 **Low**	188 **Medium**
Three to five (3 - 5)	84 **High**	66 **Medium**	35 **Low**	185 **Medium**
Six to ten (6 - 10)	80 **High**	56 **Medium**	40 **Low**	176 **Medium**
Over ten (10+)	78 **High**	63 **Medium**	37 **Low**	177 **Medium**
All Participants	82 **High**	64 **Medium**	38 **Low**	183 **Medium**

Change From the 2024 Baseline Survey
(reference for pages 7, 9, 11)

↑ Score increased to **High**

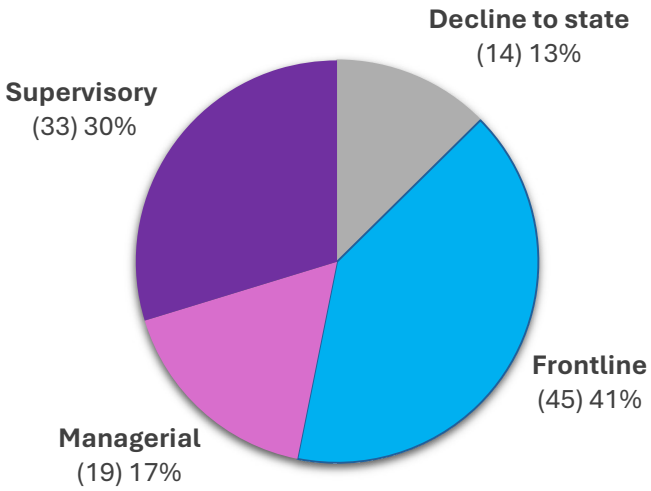
↑ Score increased to **Medium**

↓ Score dropped to **Low**

[5] In the current survey, new employees (less than one year) ranked elected officials "Low" while the baseline survey was ranked "Medium," representing a negative shift in employee perception.

Frontline employees made up 41 percent of all participants, with supervisors and managers comprising 30 percent and 17 percent of respondents, respectively. 13 percent of respondents declined to provide their staffing role. **Survey participation from the baseline survey is comparable.**

Total Number of Survey Participants by Staffing Role[6]



Trends were consistent across staffing roles, within the overall category of "High", "Medium" or "Low." Participants who identified themselves as management notably scored Section 2 significantly higher (eight to sixteen points). Participants who declined to state their staffing role gave scores below the average for Sections 1 and 2. **These results are consistent with the baseline survey.**

[6] Due to rounding, percentages may not add up to 100%.

Participant Scores by Staffing Role

Staffing Role	Section 1 **Employees**	Section 2 **Management**	Section 3 **Elected Officials**	Survey **TOTAL**
Frontline (Intern / I / II / Associate)	88 **High**	66 **Medium**	37 **Low**	191 **Medium**
Supervisory (Senior, Principal)	76 **High**	60 **Medium**	38 **Low**	173 **Medium**
Management (Manager, Director)	89 **High**	74 **Medium**	42 **Low**	204 **Medium**
Decline to state	72 **Medium**	58 **Low**	37 **Low**	166 **Medium**
All Participants	82 **High**	64 **Medium**	38 **Low**	183 **Medium**

Section One Results: Employees

Participants gave an overall score of **82** in this section, signaling a "High" ethics score. This section, relating to an employee's expectations and personal responsibilities, was the **highest scoring of the survey** by far.

At SANDAG, I am...	Average Score	Ethical Climate Rating [7]	Percent of Respondents Selecting "Don't Know"	Change from 2024
1. Encouraged to speak up about any agency practices and policies that are ethically questionable.	7.43	Medium	1%	
2. Expected to report questionable ethical behaviors of others.	8.29	High[8]	0%	↑
3. Clear about where to turn to for advice about ethical issues.	7.57	High[8]	1%	↑
4. Expected to follow the spirit as well as letter of the law in my work for the agency.	9.11	High	2%	
5. Expected to use ethical behaviors in getting results.	9.11	High	2%	
6. Expected to tell the complete truth in my work for the agency.	8.55	High	4%	
7. Expected to treat everyone who comes before the agency equally, regardless of personal or political connections.	8.59	High	4%	
8. Expected to follow stated policy of the governing body and not the desires of individual elected or appointed officials.	7.61	High	8%	
9. Surrounded by coworkers who know the difference between ethical and unethical behaviors and seem to care about the difference.	7.86	High	4%	
10. Working with one or more trusted confidantes with whom I can discuss ethical dilemmas at work.	7.92	High	3%	

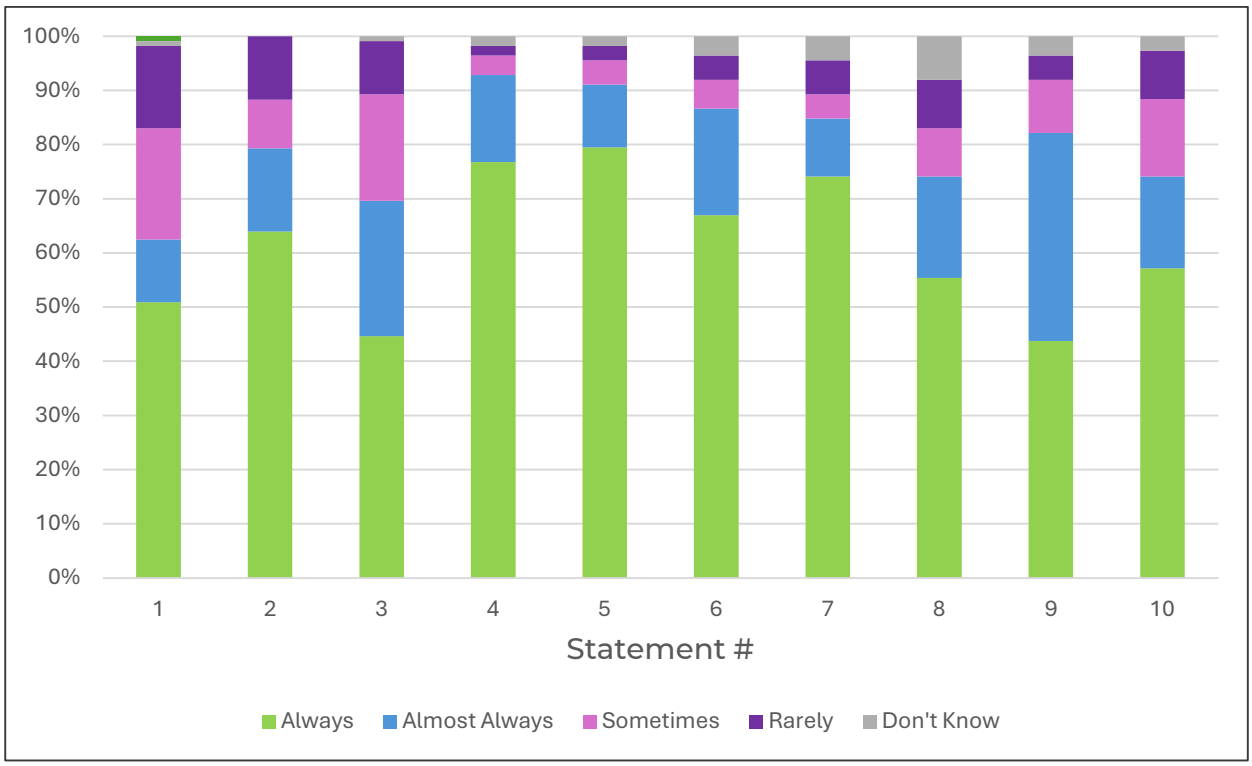
[7] Scores were calculated using the Institute for Local Government's Ethical Climate Survey rating system. High = 7.50 to 10, Medium = 5 to 7.49, Low = 0 to 4.99 (See Appendix A).

[8] Compared to the baseline survey, the score for reporting questionable behavior and knowing who to turn to for advice rose from "Medium" to "High" in this survey, noting an improvement.

Nine (9) of the 10 statements above scored 7.5 or more, suggesting a "High" perception of ethical standards. **These results are consistent with the baseline survey.**

Compared to the baseline survey, the score for reporting questionable behavior and knowing who to turn to for advice rose from "Medium" to "High" in this survey, noting an improvement. This is **good news** for SANDAG's ethical culture.

Distribution of Participant Responses to Statements About THEMSELVES[9]



[9] Respondents who indicated they "Don't Know" represent a gap in an organization's overall ethical climate and, therefore, factors negatively into the scoring. Sections left blank were not factored into the score.

Section Two Results: SANDAG Management

This section reflected a **"Medium"** ethics score, with participants scoring it **64**.

The Executives at SANDAG...	Average Score	Ethical Climate Rating	Percent of Respondents Selecting "Don't Know"	Change from 2024
1. Create an environment in which staff are comfortable raising ethical concerns.	6.45	Medium	6%	
2. Appreciate staff bringing forward bad news and don't "shoot the messenger" for doing so.	6.14	Medium	10%	
3. Expect staff to use ethical practices in getting results - not "whatever it takes."	7.73	High[10]	9%	↑
4. Gear their decisions to the spirit as well as the letter of the law or policy.	6.93	Medium	16%	
5. Treat the public with civility and respect.	8.15	High	9%	
6. Use public resources only for agency purposes and not for their own personal or political uses (such as agency supplies, staff time, equipment)	7.26	Medium	24%	
7. Appoint and reward people on the basis of performance and contribution to the organization's goals and services.	5.14	Medium	19%	
8. Treat all members of the public equally, regardless of who has "connections."	4.83	Low[11]	35%	↓
9. Help elected officials work within their policy roles and stay out of the day-to-day work of the agency.	5.59	Medium[12]	42%	↑
10. Refuse to accept gifts and/or special treatment from those with business before the agency.	5.43	Medium	33%	

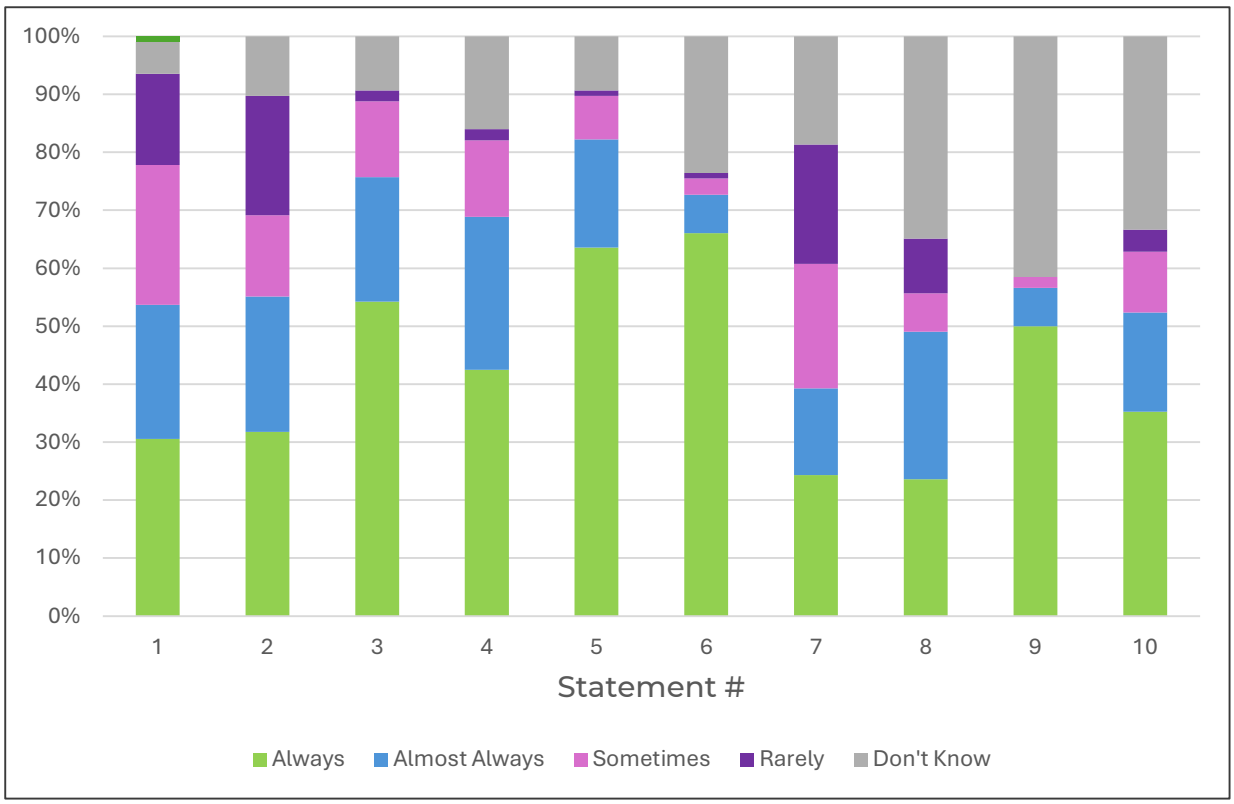
[10] Compared to the baseline survey, the score for staff being expected to use ethical practices in getting results rose from a "Medium" to a "High," noting an improvement.
[11] Compared to the baseline survey, a decline from "Medium" to "Low" in treating all members of the public equally.
[12] Shift from "Low" to "Medium" from the baseline survey, indicating an improvement in executive management helping elected officials work within their policy lane.

Overall, this section was scored significantly lower than Section 1, but still much higher than Section 3. **This is consistent with 2024**. Two statements reflected a "High" ethics score, relating to whether SANDAG executives expect staff to use ethical practices in getting results and whether they treat the public with civility and respect.

Compared to the baseline survey, the score for staff being expected to use ethical practices in getting results rose from a "Medium" to a "High," noting an improvement. This is **good news** for SANDAG's ethical culture.

Consistent with 2024, this section also received a large percentage of "Don't Know" responses, particularly in last three questions, contributing to the lower score.

Distribution of Participant Responses to Statements About MANAGEMENT



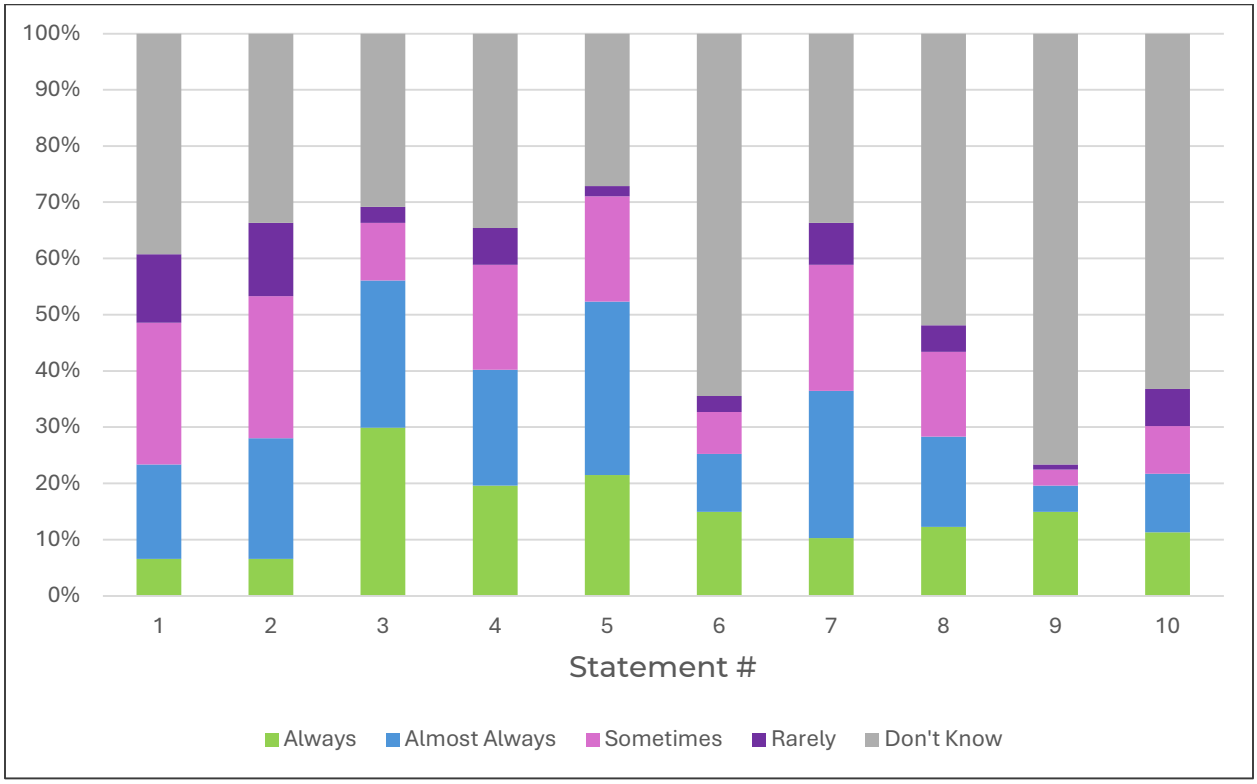
Section Three Results: Elected Officials at SANDAG

The overall participant score for this section was **38**, reflecting a **"Low"** perception of ethical behavior. This section scored the lowest of the three sections **and is identical in its ratings with the baseline survey**, with only two statements receiving a score of "Medium" and none rated "High."

The Elected Officials at SANDAG...	Average Score	Ethical Climate Rating	Percent of Respondents Selecting "Don't Know"	Change from 2024
1. Create an environment in which staff are comfortable raising ethical concerns.	3.48	Low	39%	
2. Appreciate staff bringing forward bad news and don't "shoot the messenger" for doing so.	3.86	Low	34%	
3. Expect staff to use ethical practices in getting results - not "whatever it takes."	5.54	Medium	31%	
4. Gear their decisions to the spirit as well as the letter of the law or policy.	4.60	Low	35%	
5. Treat the public with civility and respect.	5.44	Medium	27%	
6. Use public resources only for agency purposes and not for their own personal or political uses (such as agency supplies, staff time, equipment).	2.71	Low	64%	
7. Allow the staff to handle day-to-day management issues and don't try to get involved.	4.30	Low	34%	
8. Treat all members of the public equally, regardless of who has people or political connections.	3.30	Low	52%	
9. Exclude themselves from decisions when reasonable members of the public might question their ability to make a fair decision.	2.01	Low	77%	
10. Refuse to accept gifts and/or special treatment from those with business before the agency.	2.50	Low	63%	

This section also received the highest percentage of "Don't Know" responses, particularly in questions 6 and 8 through 10, contributing to the lower score. These questions require working knowledge of elected officials actions; as such, unless the employees work or interact with elected officials, many participants may not know.

Distribution of Participant Responses to Statements About ELECTED OFFICIALS



Insights

The *2026 Beyond the Baseline Survey* is an opportunity for management and elected leadership to reflect upon any shifts in employee perceptions, as well as noting any areas that have not changed. From this, they can determine their course of action, if any, to impact the current state of SANDAG's ethical environment.

The survey results revealed 3 out of the 5 areas represented in 2024 remain as areas for SANDAG leadership to focus their attention. For example, in this year's survey, participants reported lower scores[13] for SANDAG Management in:

- ✓ appointing and rewarding people based on their performance.
- ✓ refusing special treatment from those doing business with SANDAG.
- ✓ helping elected officials stay out of day-to-day operations.

And a new "Low" score for SANDAG Management was revealed in:

- ✓ treating all members of the public equally.

However, there were also improvements noted in some areas of the employee and management sections that appear to be a positive shift in ethical culture.

Elected officials were again ranked "low" in all but two of ten survey statements; however, a significant number of survey participants responded as not knowing enough to score the statements. This occurred in the management section as well – but to a lesser extent.

The elected official **section remained consistent with the baseline survey**, not demonstrating a difference for better or worse. On a positive note, compared to 2024, in the employee comments for 2026, there was no theme related to repairing trust between the Board and staff, potentially demonstrating a positive shift in perception and could be related to the Board's work to improve relations with staff.

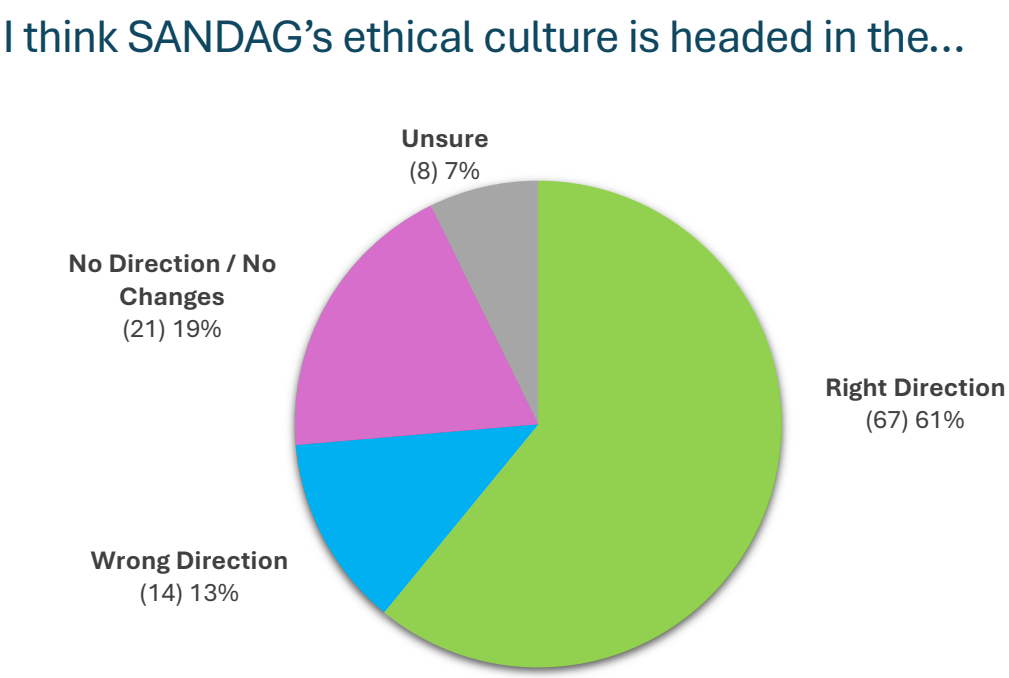
Lastly, perceptions regarding HR practices remain troubling, as illustrated in the survey comments presented in the next section. OIPA's HR hiring and promotion practices audit assessing whether SANDAG is efficiently and effectively hiring and promoting employees in an open, competitive, and objective manner, is expected to be released in early 2027. This audit was initiated in response to the 2024 survey results.

[13] Participants scored these statements between 5.14-5.59, the low range of a "Medium" ethics score (5 to 7.49).

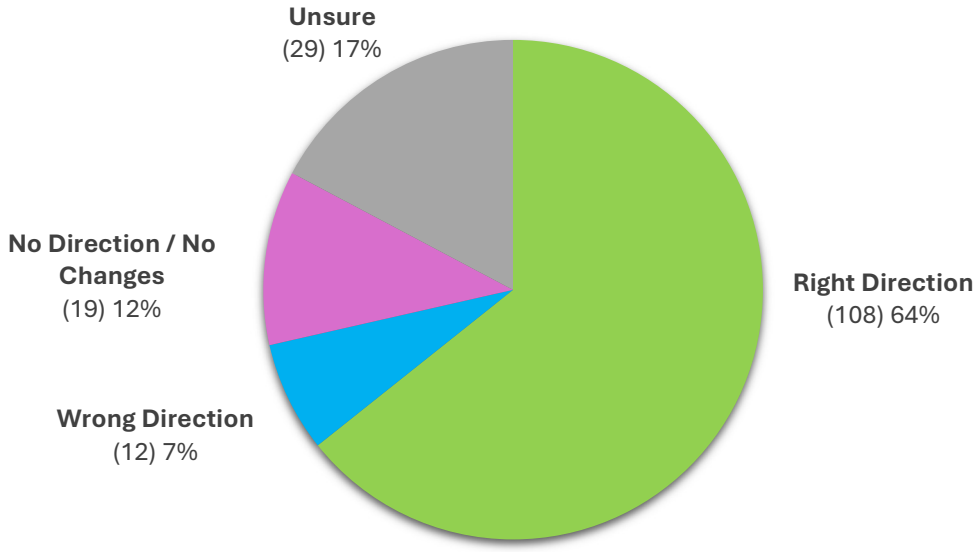
Common themes from the participants' responses to two open-ended questions are summarized in the following section to provide greater insight into employee perceptions and concerns. On the next page, the employees share their thoughts on the direction of SANDAG's ethical culture.

Direction of Ethical Culture

The 2026 survey included the following question:



And here is where SANDAG was in 2024:



When participants were asked to respond about the current direction of SANDAG's ethical culture, 61 percent of the participants stated the Agency was headed in the right direction. The employees' perceptions were slightly lower than the 64 percent in 2024. Notably, the "Unsure" category declined by 10% – this appears reasonable considering the last survey occurred at the beginning of a leadership transition. All this combined is **very positive**.

Here are some participant comments regarding SANDAG's direction:

> *"I think it's better than it was under the previous executive team. We are still dealing with mistakes that the previous leadership team made, though."*
>
> *"Little seems to be improving. The workplace climate grows harsher every day..."*
>
> *"...continue with the direction and vision of Mario and senior leadership to implement clear, comprehensive, well-understood processes and procedures, and most importantly, to appropriately fund and staff their development and maintenance..."*
>
> *"Almost every person at SANDAG has always maintained high ethical standards. A few bad decisions marred the agency which was amplified by politics. Those people that made bad decisions are gone but the staff is still dealing with the ramifications."*
>
> *"We are a work in progress but we are headed in the right direction."*

Key Themes

Survey participants were asked to comment on the following open-ended questions:

> ***In your own opinion, please describe how you would <u>enhance</u> SANDAG's ethical climate and culture.***
>
> ***If I could <u>change</u> one thing about SANDAG, I would change…***

The participants' comments centered around six themes based upon 58 participants providing comments, or 58 percent of those who completed the entire survey. Two prominent themes focused on HR and SANDAG's ethical culture, receiving 50 percent and 31 percent, respectively, of participants comments. HR was a prominent theme in the 2024 survey as well. Additionally, most of the 2026 themes are repeated from 2024 – between 9-12 percent of the participants' comments culminated around these themes.

Theme 1: HR needs to improve troubling hiring and promotion practices (repeat theme from 2024) and recognize employee for their efforts.

Seventy-two (72) percent of the participants' comments noted concerns with hiring and promotion practices, and lack of merit-based salary increases (evenly split between the two). Other comments included establishing ways to recognize employees and providing viable options for advancement.

> *"Ensuring hiring and promotion decisions are based on qualifications, experience, and merit rather than personal relationships. While having prior professional relationships is not inherently inappropriate, it raises concerns when employees perceive that these relationships may be receiving greater consideration than qualifications, relevant experience, or demonstrated expertise."*
>
> *"Create a more transparent and merit-based process for promotions and creation of positions, especially at the manager level and above."*
>
> *"If I could change one thing about SANDAG, it would be the way staff are selected for managerial positions. For example, the recently posted CFO vacancy does not require a CPA license, which is very surprising for a position of that level and responsibility. This issue was specifically mentioned in the Finance Department assessment…"*

"Trying to build and improve the staff it has and stop hiring external candidates specifically from Caltrans."

"Under the current practices, high achievers get the same general salary increase as someone who is under performing. This does not in any way cultivate a culture of ethical and high achievement."

"Value the employees more. SANDAG doesn't have consistent merit increases or a pay scale within classifications. Without changes to salary, there will be retention issues and turnover."

"A strong organization should encourage innovation, reward excellence, and create opportunities for employees to grow and contribute. When employees no longer see a connection between performance, recognition, and advancement, it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain the level of engagement and commitment necessary for long-term organizational success."

"... provide the employees an opportunity to be appreciated, and to build trust between management and employees."

"The lower tiers get minimal to no chance for advancement or approval to advance their skills through new projects."

"Experienced employees are not being given opportunities for advancement, and leadership attempts to mask this by assigning additional responsibilities without providing the appropriate classifications or compensation."

Theme 2: In their own words, participants have some clear ideas for SANDAG's leadership on how to improve SANDAG's ethical climate and culture.

These comments include transparency, accountability, consistency, building trust, and engaging in open dialogues. Many of these comments overlap with other themes but are captured here to represent the employee's comprehensive thought related to impacting the overall ethical culture.

"I encourage leadership to strengthen merit-based hiring practices, increase accountability for major organizational decisions, conduct objective evaluations of consultant performance, and create meaningful opportunities to recognize and retain high-performing employees. Addressing these concerns would help rebuild trust, improve organizational effectiveness, and reinforce the ethical standards expected of a public agency."

"An ethical and effective organization should encourage open discussion of risks, seriously consider input from subject matter experts, and conduct transparent evaluations of project outcomes to ensure mistakes are not repeated."

"To enhance our ethical climate, I would advocate for clearer delegation of decision-making authority, so that technical and programmatic decisions are grounded in expertise and evidence rather than routed entirely upward for approval. I would also support developing a more structured process for integrating board and stakeholder input, one that honors governance responsibilities while protecting the integrity of staff recommendations and professional standards. A strong ethical climate is built transparency, trust, and informed decision-making. There is genuine opportunity to strengthen all three."

"I would have the Executive leadership to communicate the importance of doing work in transparent and ethical manner. As well as creating an open environment (maybe an anonymous suggestion type email) where staff can freely bring up potential issues or bring forth ideas to improve upon our ethical standards of practice."

"The key is consistency. Ethical culture builds when leadership actions, policies, training, and accountability mechanisms all reinforce the same values over time."

"If I could change one thing about SANDAG, I would strengthen trust in internal subject matter experts and improve alignment between leadership and program staff who manage and operate specialized programs on a day-to-day basis. Leveraging the institutional knowledge and technical expertise of experienced staff, while fostering collaborative and informed decision-making, would help improve efficiency, consistency, and overall program effectiveness."

"There is a perception that the "real" work of the agency is done in Planning and Capital departments, and that all the rest is supporting and "less important." This long-standing perception has created a situation where the focus and funding is on those departments with a lack of focus and funding to critical functions of the agency such as contracts, finance, public communications, internal controls. Because of a reluctance and lack of commitment to identify the true costs and needs to create and maintain

processes and procedures, and a lack of acknowledgement that it is going to take more than we have ever budgeted in the past, the agency has had repeated problematic audit findings, inefficiencies, and mistakes. If I could change one thing, I would like to change the idea that the project delivery is an engineering and construction responsibility and have everyone recognize there is no delivery without contracts, outreach, accounting, etc., and that this is not support, but essential to the core project delivery."

Theme 3: Management must establish clear processes.

Employees want clear direction and practical processes to help them do their jobs.

"Where are the actual processes that are supposed to get us on the right track? They don't need to be perfect from day one. We can improve them over time by gathering regular feedback through surveys and open discussions."

"Establish clearer processes for documenting and communicating leadership direction before projects begin. When guidance shifts mid-project due to unplanned requests, it results in inefficient use of staff time and public resources. Suggest – written direction reduce reactive work cycles and improve morale, more efficient use of staff time and public resources."

"Introduce the new processes in a timely manner."

"More clarity of process across departments and less reorganizing, reshuffling, and changes to process that create confusion."

Theme 4: Ethics is an inside job and SANDAG's leadership must lead by example (repeat theme from 2024).

Employees want more practical ethics training, and a safe and encouraging environment for SANDAG employees to report wrongdoing.

"I think the ethical climate starts with executive management and I see differences between departments in the approach to ethics. It would help if executive management was all on the same page and led ethical climate with the same approach and policies."

"Staff should be able to comfortably report ethical concerns to management. SANDAG should work to be a place where staff feel free to voice concerns and alternative ideas and it is not."

"invest in staff training and conversations about what ethical behavior looks like in our day-to-day work. Across all depts. This would help employees feel at ease when concerns are reported, they will be taken seriously, reviewed appropriately, and not ignored."

"Employees are encouraged to speak up and report concerns. However, there is a perception among some staff that doing so can lead to negative consequences or retaliation. I am not always clear on where employees can turn for objective advice regarding ethical concerns. There is a perception that Human Resources primarily serves to protect the agency, and employees may not always feel comfortable raising concerns through management channels if they believe those concerns will not be addressed"

"OIPA feels like the only place for many employees to voice real concerns. I am submitting this with a real fear."

"Ways to anonymously express concerns, without quite escalating it to the whistleblower hotline"

Theme 5: More transparency and open communications regarding SANDAG's decision-making processes, goals, objectives, and priorities are needed (repeat theme from 2024).

"Provide more general information about SANDAG staff/leadership decision-making as well as the Board of Directors decision making."

"I think we could use a little more straightforwardness from Executive Team on what and why something is happening at the agency. Less beating around the bush..."

"Since the agency wide briefings have been discontinued, it's been difficult to get face-time with executive level staff and ask questions/get answers about critical issues or needs. This has contributed, in my opinion, to a bigger disconnect between frontline staff and management, and fosters distrust and diminished transparency"

Theme 6: Greater accountability as a core principle (similar theme from 2024).

"effective leadership should inspire employees to perform at their highest level, create a culture of accountability, and demonstrate a commitment to the long-term success of the organization."

"I would advocate for a fundamental shift toward a trust-based model of leadership, one where staff expertise is genuinely respected, professional development is treated as a strategic priority, and accountability flows in both directions. The agency cannot expect exemplary outcomes while chronically under-investing in the people who produce them."

"Executives take accountability by being willing to be decisive and accountable for their decisions"

"While dedication and service are important, maintaining clear expectations and equitable standards across all levels of the organization is equally important."

"Holding employees, especially those who manage others, more accountable for their actions or inactions"

Recommendations

Recommendations for Board and Management:

1. Reflect on suggested ILG recommendations for “Medium” ethical climate rating found in Appendix A and determine what actions, if any, will be taken.

2. Consider funding ethics training focused on practical, everyday ethical decision-making for employees, occurring at least annually.

Appendix A: Scoring Methodology

The ILG ethical climate survey uses a 5-point Likert scale, which allows respondents to provide more nuanced feedback. Each response is assigned a point value:

Always	Almost Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Don't Know[14]
10	7.5	5	2.5	0

Responses are then totaled and divided by the number of participants. Each section receives a final score, as does the entirety of the survey. The ILG interprets those scores as follows:

Point Score	Ethical Climate Rating	What it Means / Recommendations
Per Section: **75 - 100** Entire Survey: **225 - 300**	**High**	**Your agency has a strong ethical environment. Keep up the good work, including such steps as:** • Incorporating ethics into the hiring and evaluation process for staff. • Conducting regular ethics-related learning opportunities, including examples of ethical dilemmas and ways to resolve them. • Going through specific items on the assessment to identify further opportunities for positive change. • Reinforcing the importance of ethical considerations in agency behaviors and decisions.
Per Section: **50 - 74** Entire Survey: **150 - 224**	**Medium**	**Take a moment to reflect. Your agency is in a good place but has room to improve by doing the following:** • Evaluating the areas of weakness indicated by the questionnaire and considering targeted remedial actions. • Analyzing the messages that staff and others receive and send about ethics. • Reviewing the agency's policies, including the criteria by which staff are evaluated. • Consider whether having a code of ethics would be helpful for the agency. • Following best practices indicated in the boxes above.
Per Section: **0 - 49** Entire Survey: **0 - 149**	**Low**	**Your agency's culture needs significant change. Suggested activities include:** • Identifying the aspects of the agency's culture that foster the problematic behaviors and analyze how to remediate them. • Consulting with your agency's attorney about potential violations of laws and agency regulations. • Following best practices indicated in the boxes above.

[14] Respondents indicating they "Don't Know" represent a gap in an organization's overall ethical climate and, therefore, factors negatively into the scoring.

Appendix B: About the Survey Tool

The Institute for Local Government (ILG) is a nonprofit organization that was founded in 1955 with the intention of promoting cooperation and information sharing among California's local public agencies. The ILG has become a leader in addressing urgent public policy issues through its research, publications, and training programs.

The ILG and the International City/County Management Association developed an assessment tool in 2006 to assist public managers in determining the ethical climate of their organizations. Employees are surveyed on their perception of ethical standards upheld by employees, managers, and elected officials within the organization. Those answers are then assigned point values and tabulated to provide a clear snapshot of the internal ethical culture of the agency.

The survey can provide assurance that an agency's ethical culture is in order, and/or highlight potential blind spots that may need to be addressed. This assessment is also used to track progress in the ethical climate of an organization.

Appendix C: OIPA's Independent Whistleblower Hotline

Purpose

The Whistleblower Hotline is a secure, confidential, and reliable way for employees, contracted parties, members of the public, or other stakeholders, to report allegations of fraud, waste, abuse, and gross mismanagement at SANDAG. Reports can be submitted by mail, email, or through a secure, third-party compliance hotline administrator by phone or a link available on OIPA's website. Individuals may choose to remain anonymous.

Authority

Per Assembly Bill 805 (2018), OIPA is the official independent oversight function of SANDAG to investigate allegations of potential fraud, waste, abuse, and gross mismanagement identified by SANDAG staff or other stakeholders.

The Investigation Process

OIPA conducts a preliminary analysis of each Report to determine if the matter warrants an investigation and enough information is available to initiate an investigation. We evaluate the following:

1. Does the Report involve SANDAG property, infrastructure, employees, officials, contractors, or does it otherwise fall within OIPA's jurisdiction?
2. Does it meet the criteria of fraud, waste, abuse, or gross mismanagement?
3. Did it occur within the last year? If not, does it impact current operations?
4. Was sufficient information provided to initiate an investigation?
5. Is the matter currently being litigated?

The investigation process is confidential; therefore, investigation details are not shared with anyone, including whistleblowers. The confidential process protects all parties involved and the integrity of the investigative process. Upon conclusion of an investigation, results are either published in a standalone investigation report or summarized in the *Annual Investigations Report*.

SANDAG
OIPA | Office of the Independent Performance Auditor

Whistleblower Hotline



Web:

www.SANDAGHotline.org



Phone:

(800) 644-9665



Email:

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