



What is an Organisational Ombuds?

Enabling people and organisations to reach their full potential.

Private companies, professional associations, and organisations worldwide are experiencing the disruption of global events, and the power of rapid social, political, and technological change. Today, many institutions and individuals are turning to Organisational Ombuds [Ombuds] as a source of insight and guidance. At a time of dynamic change, Ombuds help manage risk and assist people at all levels of an organisation with navigating complex relationships, policies, and work environments – while working to instil respect and civility and promote equity for the communities they serve.

Ombuds code of ethics and standards of practice.

An Ombuds acts as a no-barrier, first stop for employees, executives, managers, and others seeking guidance, information and insight from a trusted advisor who is:

INDEPENDENT. An Ombuds is not part of the management of an organisation and does not represent the individuals they work with.

IMPARTIAL. An Ombuds does not take sides and instead works to develop options to address or surface issues that support empowerment and fair process for those seeking assistance and for the organisation.

CONFIDENTIAL. An Ombuds will protect your identity and the confidential information you share unless the Ombuds determines there is an imminent threat of serious harm.

INFORMAL. Visiting an Ombuds doesn't trigger a formal investigation often typical of HR or legal processes. Speaking with an Ombuds is always off the record. Ombuds do not retain permanent records of confidential communications.

What do Ombuds do?

Ombuds empower individuals and organisations to overcome disputes, conflicts and barriers that stand in the way of reaching their full potential.

FOR ORGANIZATIONS:

Ombuds help public and private sector organisations anticipate and avoid risk, litigation and costly damage to brands and reputations. Common activities include:

- Conduct training, education, coaching, and facilitation.
- Build employee loyalty and a culture of engagement that can save costs and improve workplaces.

- Identify systemic trends and risks that help leaders make informed business, policy, and management decisions.
- Build and strengthen productive and effective relationships between organisational departments, partners, and professionals.
- Perform outreach to diverse constituencies and stakeholders about alternatives to traditional conflict resolution.
- A listening post and sounding board for new ideas, initiatives, and proposed actions of large, complex, and high-stakes organisations.

FOR INDIVIDUALS:

Ombuds offer a safe place that permits confidential communications and discusses options and strategies before they act. The Ombuds also offer a mechanism to discuss options for reporting misconduct or managing and resolving conflicts. They also conduct coaching, mediation, and dispute resolution. Ombuds help individuals who:

- Experience a conflict with a co-worker, peer, or supervisor.
- Have compliance, ethical, legal or policy concerns about the workplace.
- Experience sexual harassment or workplace misconduct.
- Need a safe place to go for information and confidential guidance.

What ombuds don't do:

- Receive notice of claims against an organisation.
- Conduct investigations.
- Make management decisions or policies.
- Advocate or take sides.
- Substitute for formal channels.
- Testify or produce documents in legal proceedings.

The International Ombuds Association (IOA) is a member-led professional association committed to supporting Ombuds worldwide. IOA members are the heart and the heartbeat of our association. Membership is important to us, and we strive to foster meaningful member engagement throughout the association.