
Strategic Plan

2020-2024

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

The PCAOB is committed to our mission to protect investors and further the public interest in the preparation of informative, accurate, and independent audit reports. To most efficiently and effectively advance our mission, we devoted our efforts throughout 2020 on executing against our five-year strategic plan. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic and the challenges it has brought, we feel confident that we are improving the effectiveness of our oversight, becoming more innovative, improving our engagement, and optimizing our processes and culture. We look forward to continuing that progress during 2021.

I. Effective Oversight

Inspections. We continue our multiyear effort to transform our inspections program. During the summer, we publicly released the inspection reports for the largest six U.S. firms in our transformed format. The reception has been positive, with most agreeing that the presentation and quality of information provided has significantly improved. We are now in the second year of increased procedures to evaluate firms' quality control systems. We have devoted substantial resources to understanding how the largest audit firms define their quality control objectives and manage the risks associated with achieving those objectives. We are also in the second year of operating our target team, which we have deployed to address areas of emerging or significant risks. Most recently, we have deployed that team to consider audit-related risks arising from COVID-19. We are also in the second year of operating our inspections quality group, which we use to ensure the consistency, quality, and effectiveness of our own inspections activities.

Enforcement. We continue to prioritize those enforcement matters likely to have the greatest benefit for investors, including substantive audit failure cases, and have pursued a number of new litigated and settled matters in 2020.

Standard-Setting. Our standard-setting efforts remain focused on those issues we believe are most important to our mission. To that end, in 2020 we updated our Standard-Setting Agenda and our Research Agenda to provide transparency about those projects where we expect to have a public milestone—whether it be a final standard, proposed standard, or staff guidance—in the next 12 to 18 months. We are focused at present on meeting key milestones on each of our projects, which include quality control, data and technology, audit evidence, other auditors, and auditor independence.

II. Innovation

We continue to place an increased focus on innovation, both within our organization and across the broader audit market. In 2020, we shared with the public insights we have gained from our data and technology research project, which includes meeting with our Data and Technology Task Force. We also continue to make progress in overhauling our own internal data through our Chief Data Officer function within our Office of Data, Security, and Technology.

III. Improved Engagement

Although we are operating remotely, we have continued to emphasize third-party engagement, particularly with investors, audit committees, and financial statement preparers.

- **Investors.** The direct outreach to investors that we began in 2019 has continued into 2020. Board members and staff participated throughout the year in conferences and events geared toward institutional investors, including the Council of Institutional Investors, CFA Institute, the International Corporate Governance Network, and the National Conference on Public Employee Retirement Systems, among others. In October, we hosted a virtual investor roundtable with representatives from

over 20 of the largest asset managers and asset owners including BlackRock, BNY Mellon, Florida State Board of Administration, Goldman Sachs, Morgan Stanley, Nuveen, Putnam, State Street, Vanguard, and Wellington. We also conducted a targeted survey of almost 100 investors to seek their input on their early experiences with, and reactions to, critical audit matters (CAMs).

- **Audit Committees.** In June, we hosted our first ever webinar for audit committees. We covered a number of topics related to our inspections and standard-setting efforts. Over 300 audit committee members attended, including from Apple, Chevron, Chipotle, GE, GM, Goldman Sachs, Home Depot, John Deere, J.P. Morgan, Kaiser Permanente, Palo Alto Networks, T. Rowe Price, Tyson Foods, Walmart, and Wells Fargo. In July, we published a Spotlight highlighting insights from ongoing discussions with audit committee members focused on COVID-19. We have also continued with our goal of connecting with the audit committee chairs of every U.S. issuer whose audit we inspect, resulting in our speaking directly with hundreds of individual audit committee chairs.
- **Financial Statement Preparers.** We have increased our outreach to financial statement preparers. In addition to one-on-one touchpoints with many preparers, in November we hosted a roundtable with nearly 30 controllers and others in financial reporting functions from tech companies including, Adobe, Amazon, Cisco, Dell, Facebook, Google, Intel, Netflix, Salesforce, Spotify, and Twitter. We also met twice this year with Financial Executives International (FEI)'s Committee on Corporate Reporting to hear thoughts on a variety of issues important to corporate controllers, including materiality, CAMs, COVID-19 observations, inspections, our standard-setting and research agendas, and technology, and we will meet with FEI again prior to the end of the year.

Additionally, we expect to deploy in the coming weeks an updated website that, we believe, will significantly increase accessibility to relevant information for our stakeholders. Earlier this fall, we launched a new PCAOB brand to modernize the look and feel of all PCAOB materials.

IV. Process and Culture Optimization

During 2020, we have significantly advanced our work towards optimizing our business processes and culture. For example, we have continued to mature our activities related to enterprise risk management after launching the program in 2019. In 2020, we created and implemented a risk event program, which included identifying a risk liaison in all PCAOB divisions and offices. We also created business continuity plans for each of our divisions and offices, developed and implemented a pandemic plan, and executed an organization-wide security awareness and training program.

We have also revamped and vastly improved our compensation and performance management approaches, and our HR staff has developed plans to implement changes over the coming months. We have designed a new short-term incentive program, updated performance ratings, and revised our guidelines for the distribution of performance ratings. Importantly, our compensation framework includes a new compensation transparency strategy. Our goal is for all PCAOB employees to understand how compensation decisions are determined and, by the end Q1 2021, we will roll out training for all people leaders and educational presentations for our entire workforce.

Our HR staff has also been actively engaging with staff regarding the recent unrest in our country and has been hosting a series of small group discussions we call "PCAOB Voices." Following the conclusion of these sessions, we expect to receive recommendations from HR on advancing our ongoing diversity and inclusion efforts. We have also broadly offered an unconscious bias training to our employees, and many have participated to date.

This spring, we rolled out a new operating model for our Office of Data, Security, and Technology (ODST). We expect this new model to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the services this group provides

to the organization. Our data team also recently drafted a standard for classifying PCAOB data and information based on their sensitivity, which is an important milestone in the Board's data strategy.

These are just some of the highlights of our priorities and accomplishments in 2020. During 2021, we intend to continue to advance these and related efforts as we seek to become a trusted leader that promotes high quality auditing through forward-looking, responsive, and innovative oversight.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "William D. Duhnke III". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent "W" and "D".

Chairman William D. Duhnke III

ABOUT THE PCAOB

The PCAOB was established by the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 to oversee the audits of public companies in order to protect the interests of investors and further the public interest in the preparation of informative, accurate, and independent audit reports.

Since 2010, the PCAOB's mission has also included overseeing the audits of brokers and dealers registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).

The PCAOB has four primary duties:

- Register public accounting firms that prepare audit reports for issuers, brokers, and dealers.
- Establish or adopt auditing and related attestation, quality control, ethics, and independence standards.
- Inspect registered firms' audits and quality control systems.
- Investigate and discipline registered public accounting firms and their associated persons for violations of specified laws, rules, or professional standards.

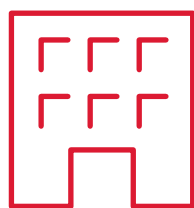
In support of our mission, we also conduct economic research and risk analysis, engage with our stakeholders and other domestic and international regulators, and manage a talented workforce and the technology and resources we need to perform our duties.

The Board of the PCAOB is comprised of five members, including a chairman, who are appointed to staggered five-year terms by the SEC, after consultation with the chair of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System and the secretary of the Treasury. The SEC has oversight authority over the PCAOB, including the approval of the Board's rules, standards, and budget.

The PCAOB has approximately 800 staff members.¹ We maintain our headquarters in Washington, D.C., and have nine regional offices across the United States. More than 1,700 public accounting firms located in 92 jurisdictions across the globe are currently registered with us. About 560 of those registered firms audit more than 12,000 issuers that file financial statements with the SEC or otherwise play a substantial role in those audits.

Those issuers, which include 7,396 public companies, represent about \$46.74 trillion in global market capitalization. In addition, approximately 360 registered firms perform audits of almost 3,500 SEC-registered broker-dealers or otherwise play a substantial role in those audits. Of those broker-dealers, 172 carry customer assets of approximately \$3.8 trillion.

PCAOB-Registered Firms by the Numbers



563 registered firms audit
12,416 issuers.



364 firms perform audits of
3,498 SEC-registered broker-dealers.

¹ The data presented in this section is as of September 30, 2020.

OUR MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES

Mission

The PCAOB oversees the audits of public companies and SEC-registered brokers and dealers in order to protect investors and further the public interest in the preparation of informative, accurate, and independent audit reports.

Vision

The PCAOB will be a trusted leader that promotes high quality auditing through forward-looking, responsive, and innovative oversight. At all times, we will act with integrity, pursue excellence, operate with effectiveness, embrace collaboration, and demand accountability.

Values



Integrity

We adhere to the highest standards of ethical and professional conduct. We engage internally and externally in a manner that is consistent, honest, and fair.



Excellence

We pursue excellence in all we do. We are committed to further developing the many talents of our people so that we can improve our oversight and operations.



Effectiveness

We manage our resources effectively and efficiently. We respond to a changing environment by implementing relevant, timely, and innovative solutions to achieve our mission.



Collaboration

We are dedicated to a culture of collaboration and inclusiveness, which we foster by encouraging openness, accessibility, trust, and respect. We embrace a diverse set of experiences, skills, perspectives, and backgrounds, which enriches our work and enhances the effectiveness of our efforts.



Accountability

We depend on the diligence and dedication of our people to accomplish our mission and implement our vision. We owe each other our very best effort and expect to be held accountable. We recognize and reward outstanding performance.

KEY FACTORS AFFECTING OUR STRATEGIC OUTLOOK

In connection with our 2021 budgeting effort, we carefully considered whether to make changes to our recently issued strategic plan. In doing so, we revisited the key factors affecting our strategic outlook over the next five years. Based on our ongoing internal review and feedback from external outreach, we continue to believe that the same key factors identified in last year's strategic plan are the correct factors to direct our strategic planning. We reaffirm those factors and the previously articulated goals and objectives, and will continue to execute against our strategic plan throughout 2021. The key factors guiding our efforts include the following:

- **First**, the quality of audit services has improved substantially since the formation of the PCAOB, but more remains to be done. To make further progress, we must regularly assess our oversight activities and the operations that support them and adjust accordingly in response to current and emerging risks and opportunities.
- **Second**, advancements in technology and data collection and analytics are rapidly disrupting the broader financial reporting system. Both the pace and direction of change will have significant implications for the audit profession. We must anticipate and respond appropriately to those changes.
- **Third**, substantial opportunities exist for us to engage more effectively with investors, audit committees, preparers, and our other stakeholders and to provide them with more timely and relevant information regarding our oversight activities.

Need for Further Improvement in the Quality of Audit Services

There is broad consensus that the quality of audit services has improved since the PCAOB first opened its doors in 2003. To drive additional improvements, however, we must regularly reassess our approach to oversight and seek the most efficient and effective means to accomplish our mission. As we revisit our oversight activities, we also must take advantage of opportunities to improve our internal operations while reinforcing a culture that supports our values in pursuit of our goals.

Disruptive Technological Change

Technological innovations will alter the timing, nature, and amount of information available to auditors, the judgments auditors make in critical areas of their audits, and the skill sets used to perform audit engagements. While these advancements present great promise, they also present significant risks. As an organization, we must ensure that our oversight programs anticipate and respond appropriately to the risks and opportunities that these changes present.

Stakeholder Engagement and Communications

Investors, audit committees, preparers, and our other stakeholders require timely, relevant, and usable information. By engaging in consistent dialogue and publishing responsive and timely information regarding our oversight activities, consistent with the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002, we can more effectively accomplish our mission. Therefore, we must improve our engagement and communication with investors, audit committees, preparers, and our other stakeholders.

In developing the strategic plan that follows, we have taken these three main factors into consideration. The goals and objectives expressed in this plan are designed to take advantage of the opportunities presented to us by using our strengths, and recognizing and addressing our weaknesses with the goal of minimizing or mitigating any threats to our success.

OUR STRATEGIC GOALS

GOAL ONE

Drive improvement in the quality of audit services through a combination of prevention, detection, deterrence, and remediation.

We are successful when our oversight promotes continuous improvement in the quality of audit services. To drive such improvement, we must focus on not only detecting audit deficiencies, but also preventing them from occurring in the first place. This requires a forward-looking approach to the design and conduct of our oversight of registered firms. We will regularly assess our oversight activities and the processes and technology that support them to ensure their ongoing effectiveness in improving the quality of audit services.

In support of this goal, we have identified four objectives to guide our efforts.

OBJECTIVE ONE

Conduct inspection activities to facilitate more timely and relevant feedback to our stakeholders.

We will plan, conduct, and report on our inspections activities so that we can provide more timely and relevant feedback. We will scope and conduct our inspection activities using robust economic, risk, and data analysis. Our efforts will help registered firms to better prevent and remediate deficiencies and other weaknesses in their audits and audit practices. We will communicate, as soon as practicable, the nature and significance of our inspection results, and we will tailor our inspection reporting to meet more effectively the needs of investors, audit committees, and our other stakeholders.

OBJECTIVE TWO

Better leverage economic and risk analysis to more effectively set standards, rules, and guidance.

Our standards, rules, and guidance provide a framework for the conduct of audits. We will regularly evaluate and refine our framework to ensure that it remains effective. Our evaluation will include robust economic and risk analysis, including post-implementation reviews of new or amended standards, and will better leverage data from our oversight activities.

OBJECTIVE THREE

Enforce accountability and deter improper conduct by addressing violations of PCAOB standards and rules, and related federal securities laws.

When registered firms and their associated persons engage in improper conduct, we will take prompt action to hold them accountable. We will prioritize our enforcement efforts to address those issues that pose the greatest risk to investors and are most likely to deter improper conduct, and we will collaborate with the SEC as we do so.

OBJECTIVE FOUR

Determine, develop, and communicate indicators of audit quality.

Our oversight activities—and our inspections in particular—yield a significant amount of data. We will more effectively analyze this data to further identify and communicate factors that correlate with the quality of audit services. We will work collaboratively with others who collect data and conduct research on the quality of audit services.

GOAL TWO

Anticipate and respond to the changing environment, including emerging technologies and related risks and opportunities.

Advancements in technology are affecting the timing, nature, preparation, and use of financial information. Auditors are rapidly expanding their use of technology to plan and perform audits. Our oversight activities must anticipate and respond to these innovations and their corresponding risks and opportunities.

We have identified three objectives to support our achievement of this goal.

OBJECTIVE ONE

Assess and address the impact of emerging technologies on the quality of audit services.

Innovations in data analytics and technology have great potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of financial reporting and the audit process. We will monitor the development and implementation of emerging technologies to analyze their implications for the quality of audit services and respond accordingly. We will ensure that our oversight activities do not impede innovations that support informative, accurate, and independent audit reports.

OBJECTIVE TWO

Understand and consider investors' audit expectations.

As investors request and preparers provide financial information in different forms, the expectations of an audit are evolving. Through external engagement, and in coordination with the SEC, we will seek to better understand investors' expectations and will consider the related risks and opportunities for our oversight activities.

OBJECTIVE THREE

Assess the changing information security environment and understand the related risks.

Unauthorized access to information systems and data can result in the manipulation of data, the loss of proprietary and sensitive information, the destruction of systems, or reputational damage. As cyber- and information-security risks evolve, we will monitor those risks and assess their impact on our oversight activities.

GOAL THREE

Enhance transparency and accessibility through proactive stakeholder engagement.

Continuous and interactive engagement with investors, audit committees, preparers, registered audit firms, other audit regulators, standard-setting organizations, and other stakeholders enhances our ability to improve the quality of audit services.

To achieve this goal, we have set two objectives.

OBJECTIVE ONE

Improve the timeliness, usefulness, and clarity of PCAOB information.

Investors, audit committees, and our other stakeholders overwhelmingly desire more timely, accessible, and useable information about our oversight activities, the quality of audit services, and our operations. We will regularly assess when, how, and what we communicate. Where appropriate, we will publish relevant data and analyses for use by researchers and the broader public.

OBJECTIVE TWO

Cultivate effective and dynamic dialogue with stakeholders.

We value the input of those who, like us, are committed to continuously improving the quality of audit services. We likewise value the opportunity to share what we have learned through our oversight activities. We will expand our outreach efforts and seek to engage our stakeholders in a dynamic exchange of views. We also will reassess our use of advisory groups to ensure that we are receiving timely, relevant and useful advice. Finally, we will expand our engagement with other audit regulators around the globe—to share perspectives on the risks and benefits of differing approaches to addressing the quality of audit services—and with other standard-setting organizations, both domestically and abroad.

GOAL FOUR

Pursue operational excellence through efficient and effective use of our resources, information, and technology.

Investors and the public interest are best served by an efficient and effective PCAOB.

We will be guided by the following four objectives to achieve this goal.

OBJECTIVE ONE

Enhance our risk management and operational processes and capabilities.

We will develop and implement an enterprise risk management program. We will enhance our budgeting and financial management capabilities while improving our monitoring of internal processes. We will improve our operations and embrace the principles of effective change management.

OBJECTIVE TWO

Collect, manage, and use data to improve our internal processes and better inform our decision-making.

Data can provide powerful insights that inform better decision-making. We will integrate data analysis into our management processes. We also will identify new or enhanced ways to measure the effectiveness of our own processes and hold ourselves accountable to achieving effective results.

OBJECTIVE THREE

Increase and optimize our information technology investments to strengthen our capabilities.

We will reassess and optimize our information technology capabilities. Doing so will require significant investment in our infrastructure, workforce competencies, and operations. We will transform our information technology operations and the business processes and programs they support. Where feasible, we will seek to consolidate and automate our processes.

OBJECTIVE FOUR

Strengthen protection of our sensitive and proprietary data.

The information security landscape is constantly changing. To protect our systems and sensitive and proprietary data, we will mature our information security program, emphasizing our risk management and data loss prevention capabilities, while adhering to relevant data privacy rules and regulations.

GOAL FIVE

Develop, empower, and reward our people to achieve our shared goals.

Our employees are deeply committed to our mission. We will collectively reinforce a culture that expects integrity, pursues excellence, operates with effectiveness, embraces collaboration, and demands accountability.

We will seek to accomplish three objectives in support of this goal.

OBJECTIVE ONE

Cultivate a high performing workforce through effective recruitment, retention, training, performance management, and leadership development.

Our people are our most important asset. We will encourage and reward employees for demonstrating each of our values, emphasizing our commitment to integrity and ethical professional conduct. We will strengthen our human capital by developing, training, and empowering the next generation of leaders within our organization. We also will focus on developing and implementing a human capital strategic plan that aligns our talent management strategy with our organizational priorities.

OBJECTIVE TWO


Reward teamwork and eliminate organizational barriers to collaboration, transparency, and engagement.

We will promote a culture that values transparency and collaboration. We are at our best when we share information within and across disciplines. We will empower our people to take prudent risks that drive our mission forward and will recognize them for their efforts to improve our organization and its results.

OBJECTIVE THREE

Create a culture of inclusion that leverages the diversity of experience and perspectives of our people.

It is imperative that our people know that they are valued members of a team. We value diverse perspectives and backgrounds, and we will leverage each individual's unique skills, knowledge, and experience, while empowering them to challenge the status quo.

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