

Action Learning Scenario for Leadership 201 April 2006

Engaging Employees and Stakeholders in the Bureau Science Strategy

Champions: Linda Gundersen (Acting Associate Director for Geology) and Marty Goldhaber (Co-Chair of the Science Strategy Team)

Issue: The USGS has just commenced developing a Bureau Science Strategy. The failure or success of the strategy depends on many factors; most importantly that the organization's leadership, employees, and stakeholders are engaged in the development, communication, and implementation of the strategy. Creating this kind of employee engagement at several levels is an overwhelming logistical and philosophical challenge for an organization of this size that is stratified both geographically and by discipline. Also USGS stakeholders are incredibly diverse and from all levels of government, academia, the private sector, other non-governmental organizations and the public. The Science Strategy Team embarking on this task needs a focused and carefully thought out plan for engaging employees and stakeholders.

Background: In February, the Director announced to all employees the launch of the Bureau Science Strategy. In that memo, he said "USGS scientists and managers will use the new science strategy to set science priorities for the next decade, to guide the design of scientific investigations, and to help make important decisions concerning the investment of resources, such as budget initiatives and workforce development and deployment." The Director further stated that: "Developing a science strategy for our future is an ambitious undertaking that will require input and participation from everyone in the bureau.....As they go about this important task, the Science Strategy Team will be seeking your involvement in a variety of ways and will be having frequent and open communications with both you and our external partners and cooperators, especially other Department of the Interior bureaus." The Science Strategy Team has been given a limited amount of time (6 months) to accomplish this most critical task

Questions to Address:

Employees and stakeholders need to be engaged in all aspects of the Bureau Science Strategy – the development of the strategy itself, communication of the completed strategy, and finally implementation of the strategy to successfully meet its goals. The principal question posed in this Action Learning Scenario is: How do we engage employees and stakeholders in the Bureau Science Strategy in a way that energizes, provides realistic avenues for feedback and participation, and promotes integration of ideas from a diverse set of voices.

Question 1. Development

How should the Science Strategy Team receive input from USGS employees and stakeholders to aid in the development of the document? The Science Strategy Team has developed a basic conceptual model for the science strategy document that consists of the following hierarchy.

Major Societal Benefit Areas (for example: Human Health).

Grand Challenges within each Benefit Area.

Big Science Questions within each Grand Challenge.

Current and Future role of USGS in each Big Science Question

The Science Strategy Team will define the Major Benefit areas, Grand Challenges and Big Science Questions and have them initially reviewed by a group of employees and stakeholders that have been recommended to them by USGS managers. The team then wants to engage as many employees and external stakeholders as possible in further review and in defining the current and future roles of USGS under each Grand Challenge. Specific emphasis will be where USGS can make the greatest difference.

If the team asked everyone in the organization (and all our stakeholders) for feedback it could be nearly impossible to analyze. Should the Team use a select group for input? Is there a way to stratify the input (by discipline, subject matter expert, management, organization, etc.) Should the team use small focus groups representing a single area or a diverse group? Should they use mass input like an e-mail mailbox or interactive website? How should they go about analyzing mass input?

Question 2. Communication

Communication will take place to our employees and stakeholders during development and when the document is completed. What suggestions do you have for effective communication of the Bureau Science Strategy during and after development? USGS employees will be expected to communicate the strategy to others when it is completed. How do you suggest the best way to do this?

Question 3. Implementation

How should the USGS engage employees and stakeholders in implementing the Science Strategy? A series of workshops by Grand Challenge? General workshops on the whole strategy? Allow implementation to develop naturally from the planning process?

Outcome: The Science Strategy Team will meet via conference call with the leadership team developing the response to this Action Learning Scenario to hear and discuss their recommendations.