

## Action Learning Scenario – Leadership 201 – March 2011

### Strengthening the Bonds between USGS Diversity Sub-councils and USGS Employees

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**Issue:** The USGS has 4 Diversity Sub-councils, three regional and one representing headquarters, which have been active for the last 4 years. In this regard the USGS has been a leader in emphasizing diversity-related issues in the Department of the Interior. Recently Secretary Salazar has taken a number of important steps to re-emphasize and re-frame what diversity means in the workplace. In order for the USGS to retain its leadership role, it is time to think anew about what these sub-councils do, and how they interact with USGS staff.

**Background:** In recent years diversity discussions and actions have gone through a significant evolutionary change. While it remains critically important to bring underrepresented groups into the workforce, it is also important that every employee is recognized for their unique characteristics, experiences and skills. As all DOI agencies try to become the inclusive workplace that Secretary Salazar envisions, USGS has the advantage of having 4 Diversity Sub-councils comprised of individuals dedicated to that proposition. In the first few years, the sub-councils focused on training so that the concepts of diversity were better understood by the USGS workforce. In addition, they established Diversity Awards that give recognition to those individuals or groups who were doing excellent work in the broad diversity area for the bureau. While the sub-councils can be proud of these accomplishments, they are presently struggling to define “What’s next?”

**Challenge:** Secretary Salazar has taken a number of important actions in the past year. He has issued diversity policy memos that call for making the workplace an inclusive environment that gets 100% out of 100% of its workforce. He wants his employees to understand that there is a solid business case that can be made for diversity, and to achieve true diversity in the workforce, a number of strategies must be employed. “Supervisors and managers are expected to be role models who exhibit behaviors of inclusion, acceptance, and accountability. All employees are expected to adhere to our guiding principles of integrity, fairness, trust, ethical and legal behavior, and zero tolerance for discrimination,” the Secretary told employees. “Please join me in making the Department the best place to work in America.” Several important first steps have been taken to implement Secretary Salazar’s vision: 1) he has appointed John Burden as the first DOI Chief Diversity Officer, and 2) John Burden and his team have started to train Diversity Change Agents from across the department. At this time, most of the Change Agents come from the ranks of middle to upper level managers, but eventually they hope that it will become a part of every employee’s ethos. In addition, the Secretary has put a major emphasis on Youth in the Great Outdoors, an initiative that engages students of varying ages in the important work that DOI agencies conduct.

The Diversity Sub-councils consist of dedicated individuals who want to make a difference at USGS. Each council has 5 members, so they clearly need help and buy in from all USGS staff in order to be effective. Please consider the following questions as you develop a plan that could raise the profile of diversity-related work at USGS:

1. How can the sub-councils help you and your science center in achieving the Secretary’s vision of inclusion? Are you presently aware of their work? Has your cost center done diversity work that the Sub-councils are unaware of?

2. How do the sub-councils best engage in Secretarial initiatives such as Youth in the Great Outdoors in ways that make a practical difference? Should the Sub-councils be working closely with Human Capital or your cost center in recruitment and retention issues?
3. The USGS adopted Guiding Principals years ago which if fully embraced would go a long way in achieving Secretary Salazar's grand ambition. Members of the Sub-councils, like any other USGS staff, are trying to define concrete steps that will move us in the right direction. What do your values look like in action?
4. How can we sell the imperative of managing diversity in a way that makes managers sit up, take notice, and actually put some energy behind it? John Burden's idea of creating a cadre of Diversity Change Agents is a great start, but what else needs to be done?
5. How can you help the Diversity Sub-councils build and communicate the business case for diversity in a way that everyone realizes it is necessary for our success. It is not only the right thing to do, it might be the most important thing we do to thrive as a bureau.

**Resources:**

- Secretary Salazar Memo to All Employees—Department of the Interior Workplace Statement
- Secretary Salazar Memo to Assistant Secretaries/Bureau Directors—Inclusive Workplace Strategy
- Assistant Secretary Suh Memo to Solicitor/Special Trustee/Assistant Secretaries/Bureau Directors—Diversity Advocacy Performance Statement for Senior Executives
- Inclusive Workplace Plan
  - Memo from Rhea Suh, Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget
  - Memo from Marcia McNutt, USGS Director
  - U.S. Geological Survey Diversity and Inclusion Plan, Fiscal Year 2010-2015
- Department of the Interior—Diversity Change Agent Program
- The Washington Post—Interior Department still has a way to go on the diversity front
- U.S. Geological Survey Guiding Principles (1 page)
- Deputy Director Kimball's Memo: U.S. Geological Survey Diversity Statement  
<http://internal.usgs.gov/diversity/>
- USGS Diversity Council Members
- Business Case for Diversity with Inclusion  
[http://www.workforcediversitynetwork.com/docs/Business\\_Case\\_3.pdf](http://www.workforcediversitynetwork.com/docs/Business_Case_3.pdf)
- The Business Case for Diversity: Starting the Dialogue (1 page)  
<http://diversity.gsfc.nasa.gov/Documents/BusCaseDialogue.pdf>
- GAO Report 05-90: Diversity Management