

Action Learning Scenario #1
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Becoming a smaller more nimble organization

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Issue:

The President has required an executive order for every Federal agency to look at their structure and reorganize to create more efficiencies across the Federal Government.

In these uncertain times when our budget is shrinking, we need to operate with the same excellence, efficiency and effectiveness as we have done over time. We have a rich history since 1879, the foundation of providing relevant, unbiased science to our cooperators, partners, other agencies and the American public, sanctions us as proud to serve along with our colleagues. Over time, we have experienced ebbs and flows with the budget climates and priorities. The USGS stands on our legacy to be a valued bureau in the DOI, and we need to continue to work to ensure we do the best we can for the American people.

*The approach to reorganize will be on a broad scale, but has nothing to do with the value of USGS. Our job is to figure out how we can make the value that we have very readily visible to the American public and to Congress and to the folks that decide our budgets. This is our focus. **Bill Werkheiser, Town Hall, May 23, 2017***

The Leadership Challenge:

As stewards of the USGS, we must take bold steps and not remain status quo; actually, we cannot afford to take that approach. We must achieve more than a short term logistical fix. As we change the shape of our organization; we must become more nimble and better able to respond to meet the demands and needs of our customers.

In the spirit of the impending budget reductions, we too must set aside our own "partisan" preferences for mission areas or geographic areas if we are to achieve the change necessary to position the USGS to take on the science issues of the future. This will require a cultural shift and shared sacrifice. The option of continuing to shrink in place is not sustainable and therefore we must confront the reality of changing fundamentally how we do business.

A solution or set of solutions will require the dedication, commitment, and ideas of all of our employees. We must begin a Bureau-wide dialogue about choices and options and engage all the best minds in USGS as to how to meet budget constraints, maintain or improve the quality of our science, and position ourselves to address tomorrow's scientific challenges.

It is imperative that we have a plan in place if we are to chart our own destiny rather than have direction imposed on us. While the budget pressures are a catalyst, they also offer us an opportunity to take a hard look at how we conduct the business of our science and look for efficiencies and opportunities to improve the quality of our science.

Questions leaders must ask and take action include:

- How should we do this? What are our options? Do we reduce our physical footprint? Do we eliminate programs and projects (and by necessity employees)?
- Do we contract more of our work in an effort to have more flexibility in the event of cuts?
- How do we ensure we have the necessary skill set to address societally relevant and big science questions? And equally importantly, how in this climate of cuts do we plan for the future and ensure that we have the right skills and abilities to tackle the next generation of science questions and maintain societally relevant science?
- What do we need to do to maintain productivity, continue to perform relevant science, and boost morale within the budget constraints we are currently facing?
- What can we do to share resources, e.g., equipment, knowledge, facilities, etc.
- What systems, tools and innovation can help us achieve our goals?
- What behaviors and tools can we bring back to our centers to increase morale and performance effectiveness?

As we plan for what we will undertake in FY 2018, I am not asking our scientists to do more with less, but we do need to ensure that the work we undertake and deliver does not represent a lesser effort. What we do, we must do well. That means focusing on accomplishing our mission and producing a body of prioritized work that meets the high standards of quality and integrity that the public expects from us. Bill Werkheiser, USGS Director's Annual Bureau Guidance for Fiscal Year 2018, June 9, 2017