

**Action Learning Scenario #1
Room 151A IW**

**Evaluating and Maintaining the Health of the Workforce
in a Stressful Budget Environment**

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Issue/Challenges:

The USGS scientific workforce is stressed. Annual budget plans swing from major cuts to late-in-the-FY flat funding or, in some cases, increases with correspondingly increases expectations and workloads. Budget constraints over the years have shrunk our workforce from a high of 10,400 in 2002 to about 8000 today but the scientific and technological challenges we face are becoming more complex. We know that:

- work life balance is challenging, with shrinking budgets comes more work for everyone since many jobs are not being back-filled (note: another group will be addressing succession planning);
- employees are feeling stressed because they no longer have time to devote to tasks, analysis, and training;
- time for collaboration and creativity is lessened;
- lack of support from supervisors occurs as the supervisors are pushed to do more;
- there are conflicting demands and sometimes unclear goals;
- meanwhile, science and technology are advancing, and USGS would like to remain on the cutting-edge of science in our mission areas.

For the benefit of our staff members and our mission:

How can we better support each other?

How can we be proactive and address these stressors before they become problems?

How can supervisors be aware of these stressors and discern challenging (but appropriate) work expectations?

How do we identify and hire the best talent in emerging science areas?

How do we make sure they want to stay and build a career here?

As you consider this large challenge, think about the following:

- Volunteer Workforce: should we make better use of emeriti and other volunteers by expanding both who we engage and how we use them?
- Types of Hires: Are we using student, apprenticeship, term, and temp hires in ways that are appropriate for the long-term and that support the USGS mission?
- How do we maintain a healthy and productive workforce for the future?
- New Frontiers: Should there be a specific effort to watch for and identify emerging fields that USGS will want to engage in to stay at the forefront of science and reduce stresses related to changing science and technology environments?

Background material/resources:

The USGS wrote a 5-year workforce plan in 2015:

<https://www2.usgs.gov/humancapital/sw/workforceplanning/documents/USGSBureauWorkforcePlan15-20.pdf>

FEVS results:

FEVS QUESTION		Year of survey administration (YEAR)					
		2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Q9) I have sufficient resources (for example, people, materials, budget) to get my job done. (Q9_3pt)	Positive	45.00%	38.10%	42.90%	45.30%	47.80%	47.10%
	Neutral	18.30%	18.80%	17.10%	18.70%	18.10%	17.00%
	Negative	36.70%	43.10%	40.00%	36.00%	34.20%	35.90%
Q10) My workload is reasonable. (Q10_3pt)	Positive	54.70%	52.50%	51.10%	53.40%	54.70%	55.70%
	Neutral	18.70%	20.00%	20.30%	19.70%	19.40%	18.20%
	Negative	26.60%	27.50%	28.50%	26.80%	25.90%	26.00%
Q21) My work unit is able to recruit people with the right skills. (Q21_3pt)	Positive	43.00%	32.80%	36.20%	37.60%	41.80%	40.80%
	Neutral	26.60%	26.50%	27.50%	27.10%	26.20%	22.20%
	Negative	30.40%	40.70%	36.20%	35.40%	32.00%	37.00%
Q30) Employees have a feeling of personal empowerment with respect to work processes. (Q30_3pt)	Positive	51.30%	51.30%	49.90%	52.10%	53.50%	57.50%
	Neutral	26.70%	25.50%	26.80%	25.30%	24.30%	22.20%
	Negative	22.00%	23.20%	23.30%	22.60%	22.20%	20.30%
Q42) My	Positive	83.80%	84.70%	83.50%	85.50%	85.00%	87.20%

supervisor supports my need to balance work and other life issues. (Q42_3pt)	Neutral	9.70%	8.70%	9.50%	7.90%	8.70%	7.30%
	Negative	6.50%	6.50%	7.00%	6.70%	6.20%	5.40%

Expectations:

You are not expected to tackle all of these points this week. Talk it through and propose solutions that you think will have the highest impact. Keep in mind that there are fiscal constraints, and there are hiring rules. Within those, propose one or more paradigm shift and/or action that will help lead USGS toward a healthy and thriving workforce for the next 20 years.