

Action Learning Scenario #4 Room 153 IW

Creating a culture of collaboration and inclusion at the local level

ELT Champion: Regina Neal-Mujahid, Chief, Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity (ODEO)

Champions: Ashley Cannady, Program Analyst (FEVS), Office of Organizational and Employee Development, and
Ulysees Gilbert II, PhD, Special Emphasis Program Manager, ODEO

Coach: Bill Werkheiser

Action Learning Team

Kyle Blasch, Hydrologist, Northwest Region

Michelle Charles, Supv. IT Specialist, Southeast Region

Doug Howard, Principal Research Advisor, Land Use

Ken Leib, Office Chief, Southwest Region

Jack Monti, Hydrologist, Northeast Region

Doug Schnoebelen, Associate Director, South Texas Program, Southwest Region

Issue/Challenge

Creating a culture of collaboration and inclusion at the USGS local level signals a paradigm shift in preferred behaviors. In scientific and technical communities where the culture of innovation breeds competition, employees may feel protective of their research and technological advances and continue to work in a siloed way. Breaking out of these silos can create low-cost opportunities to broaden the knowledge of individuals and integrate skills and expertise across teams. While there is a drive for creativity and innovativeness, the USGS must sustain its talent and fitness in “science for a changing world” by moving toward collaboration and by being more inclusive. We must fundamentally change our approach to innovative and creative thinking, and move in pursuit of the collective by working together, welcoming and valuing diversity in thought and experience, and engaging all employees.

Background

Collaborative Management illustrates the importance of a management style that promotes and supports collaborative communication and teamwork in completing projects and accomplishing goals/objectives. According to an analysis conducted by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), collaborative management is identified to be the second most influential driver of employee engagement governmentwide, at the Department, and at USGS. The USGS is committed to cultivating and sustaining a highly [engaging work environment](#), and research has proven that the benefits of an engaging work environment include increased productivity, less absenteeism, higher intent to stay, **more innovation**, and higher agency performance. These benefits are critical as they impact USGS’s ability to achieve its overall mission.

OPM defines **inclusion** as a set of behaviors (culture) that encourages employees to feel valued for their unique qualities and experience a sense of belonging. In an inclusive work environment, every employee’s ideas, knowledge, perspective, approach, and style are actively involved to maximize the organization’s success (Schawbel). When employees feel valued and included, they are likely to be more dedicated, have a stronger emotional commitment to their organization, its goals and objectives, and put forth discretionary effort. They are likely to be

more engaged. In workforces with high levels of employee engagement, employees go the extra mile, push themselves harder to achieve their goals, and do just about anything that betters the organization. The collective impact of these bursts of discretionary efforts lead to notable increases in productivity, performance and achievable outcomes. Therefore, it is important that we understand the value that the behaviors of collaboration, inclusion, and engagement bring to the USGS local workplace environment.

Questions to Consider

1. Considering the structure of your organizations, what practices could be implemented to increase and/or improve collaboration and inclusion at the local level?
2. Given the data at the bureau level, what can be done USGS-wide to increase or improve collaboration or inclusion across mission areas, regions or center levels?
3. From your perspective where should the change start? Top down, bottom up or laterally, and Why?
4. Should optimum performance from all employees be the goal? Why or Why not?
5. If the scientific research and data demonstrate that collaborative management has proven to be the utmost preferred method in ensuring employee engagement, why is that model not used more often?
6. Can inclusion be implemented in stages? If so how do you think it can affect the (culture) of a team or organization?

Expectations

We want to pursue avenues and promising practices for high engagement at the USGS local levels. We are seeking fresh approaches toward creating a workplace environment of collaboration and inclusion at the local level. We are looking for ways and means (practices) that leaders can implement to seek all employee's input and make it part of their decision-making processes. We want to pursue proven mechanisms to effectively work well with others, involve others and value others and we want to create environments where we share knowledge and resources.

Resources

Video: [What is sinking your boat?](#): This 4 -minute video goes over the importance and ROI of employee engagement.

<http://www.sciencemag.org/careers/2009/01/opportunities-career-advantages-collaboration>

Schawbel, D. (2012, May). *How Companies Can Benefit from Inclusion*. Retrieved from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/danschawbel/2012/05/13/how-companies-can-benefit-from-inclusion/#6c6c36cc223d>

Employee Engagement at the USGS- 2017 FEVS Overview

<https://internal.usgs.gov/thecore/leaders/2018/02/20/employee-engagement-at-the-usgs-2017-fevs-overview/>

Video: [The "X" model of employee engagement: Maximum Satisfaction meets Maximum Contribution](#). This video describe the benefit of employee engagement and what it mean to the individual and the organization they work for.

Video: [The New IQ](#), Dr. Bruce Stewart. Shows the relationship of Employee Satisfaction and Unconscious Habits and the impact of Diversity and Inclusion in the workplace.