

## **Group #4: Working within the matrix at USGS**

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### **Team members:**

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### **Tools Used**

- Polarity Map
- Visual Explorer
- Whack Pack
- (Really) Forced Connections
- Thinking Hats
- Brainstorming (Yell-and-slap-it)
- Brainwriting for I's
- Caffeine

**Addressing the issue:** So, is it really possible to manage change in EMEH or any other program in the current USGS matrix model? The ultimate success or failure of the matrix structure is predicated on the ability to get work done at the center level, whether coordinated by RD's, program managers, or mission areas. We are a data-driven agency, but decisions are being made in the absence of data. Communication and collaboration are essential to effectively manage and use limited resources.

**Primary question:**

Can you manage change in EMEH in the current USGS matrix model?

**Working problem:**

Funding source and staffing decisions are not aligned

**Result:**

Inability to meet needs at different levels

**Assumptions:**

- We're dealing only with appropriated funding sources flowing from programs to regions and/or centers

**Conclusions and Recommendations**

*Note: Highlighted recommendations are those that we think could be implemented in the short term and that would yield maximal results at low cost.*

**Conclusion 1: Roles and responsibilities are poorly understood at various organizational levels**

*Recommendations:*

- a. Roles and responsibilities need to be defined at every level
- b. Disseminate roles and responsibilities
- c. Update or create 'user manuals' for Center Directors, Program Coordinators, and ELT members so as to avoid loss of institutional memory or role knowledge in an era of revolving doors and acting assignments (this also enhances efficacy of Continuity of Operations planning)

## **Conclusion 2: Ineffective communication among components of the matrix**

### *Recommendations:*

- a. Consider having AD's and RD's report to the same person (Director or Deputy Director); this maintains basic matrix structure at lower levels while closing communication loop and ensuring that one person at top is getting info from both sides of the shop.
- b. Assess communication efficacy across components of the matrix to identify missing links
- c. Consider implementing reciprocal details between programs and regions as a mechanism to better align matrix components

## **Conclusion 3: Staffing/hiring decisions are inconsistent across Centers and Regions, and opaque to the Programs**

### *Recommendations:*

- a. Develop workforce plans at centers and regions, then share with programs to ensure program priorities are met. Workforce plan should include:
  - i. Current capacity
  - ii. Gaps of expertise
  - iii. Future needs at Centers, Regions, and Programs
- b. Bring in dedicated program analysts at the mission level

## **Conclusion 4: Program-level organization and funding flow are not transparent or available**

### *Recommendations:*

- a. Provide org chart with contacts down to program level (currently hard to find)
- b. Assess funding flow through the matrix
  - a. Is the pipeline leaky or does it flow to the intended sources?
  - b. Is the linkage between funding and staffing transparent?

## **Conclusion 5: Programmatic vision and goals are often unknown at the level at which the vision will be executed**

### *Recommendations:*

- a. Institute annual production of concise guidance on short-term programmatic priorities and long-term programmatic vision. In other words, sell your program. Ensure that guidance gets to the PI level.

### **Personal takeaways**

JC: A group of 6 people went from a window and wall full of ideas down to a handful of tangible actions in a few short sessions

Jon: Brainwriting for I's allowed me to get to 3<sup>rd</sup> order derivatives of my original thoughts

Pam: Was helpful to think in terms of defining the problem, why is it a problem, and how do you fix it?

Andrea: Intense sharing of perspectives was insightful

Bob: Clearly distinguishing conclusions from recommendations allowed us to progress much faster

Jo-Ann: Defining the problem is the problem

### **Breakthrough Moments**

- Re-defining the problem statement in way that allowed us to develop our recommendations
- During our diverging stage, we had a breakthrough via use of the Brain Writing tool, allowing us to cross the desert and reach the promised land
- When we realized that all of our 'we need more information on this topic' lines could be re-phrased as conclusions and associated recommendations