

## Improving the Ability of USGS Managers to Engage and Lead Employees

**Issue:** The goal and purpose of the USGS Leadership Program is to create a leadership-centered culture throughout the USGS that emphasizes the importance of people in the USGS to ensure high quality science for the benefit of society. Mirroring that is the USGS' recently developed Model of Organizational Excellence (attachment 1) that shows leadership and management as the foundation that drives the people as well as the processes and structure of the USGS to achieve our science outcomes at the program, bureau and societal levels.

Yet, with all of this attention and focus on the importance of leadership and people in the USGS, results from both the **2004 Federal Human Capital Survey (FHCS)** (attachment 2) and the **2002 USGS Organizational Assessment Survey (OAS)** (attachment 3) show that employee satisfaction levels with USGS leadership are low:

### 2004 FHCS

| Question  | USGS               | DOI | Gov't Wide |
|---|--------------------|-----|------------|
|   | Positive Responses |     |            |
| My leaders generate high levels of motivation & commitment    | 29%                | 30% | 37%        |
| I'm satisfied with the policies & practices of senior leaders | 35%                | 34% | 40%        |
| I have a high level of respect for my senior leaders          | 41%                | 42% | 50%        |
| My leaders maintain high standards of honesty & integrity     | 45%                | 42% | 49%        |

### 2002 USGS OAS

| Question   | Positive Responses |
|--|--------------------|
| USGS has effectively overcome "turf issues" in working across disciplines          | 17%                |
| I value the leadership provided by the ELT/Senior Leaders                          | 22%                |
| Risk-taking is encouraged in the USGS without fear of punishment for mistakes      | 23%                |
| Senior leadership provides a compelling vision or direction to guide the bureau    | 27%                |
| I believe the USGS will take corrective action based on the results of this survey | 31%                |
| How effective is management with being & holding others accountable?               | 38%                |
| The USGS values leadership   | 40%                |

However, it should be noted that both surveys also show that there is a lot the USGS is doing well and can use to build on, especially in regards to how employees feel about their work. Despite employee perceptions regarding the leadership of the USGS, employees still have a good sense of how their work contributes to the success of the bureau, they are committed to their work, and the USGS mission. The Best Places to Work in the Federal Government Study states "the key drivers behind workplace satisfaction and engagement remain the same: effective leadership and a good match between employee skills and the mission of the organization."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 2005 Best Places to Work in the Federal Government Study Report was based on the results of the 2004 Federal Human Capital Survey. Study results and analyses are available at [www.bestplacestowork.org](http://www.bestplacestowork.org).

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## 2004 FHCS

| Question   | USGS               | DOI | Gov't Wide |
|--|--------------------|-----|------------|
|  | Positive Responses |     |            |
| The work I do is important                                   | 88%                | 90% | 91%        |
| I know how my job relates to the agency's goals & priorities | 82%                | 82% | 83%        |
| My work gives me a feeling of personal accomplishment        | 73%                | 72% | 71%        |
| I like the kind of work I do                                 | 71%                | 65% | 64%        |
| Considering everything, how satisfied are you with your job? | 71%                | 69% | 68%        |

## 2002 USGS OAS

| Question  | Positive Responses |
|---|--------------------|
| I understand how my work contributes directly to the USGS mission   | 82%                |
| How satisfied do you think your customers are with the products & services they receive?                            | 80%                |
| In the work that I do, I feel that I am directly contributing to the science mission accomplishments of the bureau. | 79%                |
| Overall, I find the USGS a rewarding place to work  | 63%                |
| Employees take pride in being part of the USGS & are strongly committed to the bureau's mission.                    | 58%                |

**Background:** There is an extensive amount research that shows the importance of effective leadership on organizational performance. However, more recently there has been a great deal of research done on employee commitment and engagement, how it is created and its role in driving both individual and organizational performance. To ensure we are focusing our efforts and energy on creating the optimal results, it becomes critical that these linkages and their drivers are understood. Attachment 4 provides a summary of various related research topics. Attachment 5 provides insights into the basic importance of employee engagement to employee performance. Then attachment 6 (pg. 16) takes it to the next step by making the connection between engagement and organizational performance.

**Challenge:** Leadership clearly has the responsibility to engage as much of the workforce as possible. To do that, the USGS needs effective leaders at all levels in the organization – but especially at the top. Drawing on the background information and research materials provided, your own experience, and your learnings from the Leadership Program, make recommendations on how leadership in the USGS can become more effective at engaging employees to improve organizational performance.

As part of your recommendations, please consider the following questions:

1. Are there leadership issues in the USGS? How do they manifest themselves? What do you see as the root cause of any issues identified?
2. What are the consequences of these leadership issues on employees and the organization?
3. What would leadership look like in a “Top 10” Best Places to Work organization where employees are highly committed and engaged?
4. Explain the difference between the “Top 10” level and where we are now? What is the gap? What barriers exist that prevent us from getting to our ideal state?

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### 5. What steps or actions do you recommend for closing this gap?

Your findings and recommendations in response to these questions will provide valuable insight and ideas that can help the USGS Director, Deputy Director, the ELT and other managers improve the leadership they provide and their ability to engage employees across the workforce.

#### **Attachments:**

1. USGS Organizational Excellence Model
2. 2004 Federal Human Capital Survey Results
3. 2002 USGS OAS Results
4. Summary of Relevant Research Topics
5. Corporate Leadership Council Research – *Driving Employee Performance and Retention Through Engagement: A Quantitative Analysis of the Effectiveness of Employee Engagement Strategies*
6. Corporate Leadership Council Teleconference Presentation – *Driving Employee Performance and Retention Through Employee Engagement: A Qualitative Analysis of Effective Engagement Strategies*

#### **Additional Background Material Provided:**

1. Corporate Leadership Council Research – *Coca-Cola Enterprises Great Britain, Limited: Building Leadership Capacity*
2. Office of Employee Development Leadership Program Evaluation Results 1999 – 2005 Fact Sheet, Walden Consulting.