
**CORPS OF ENGINEERS
CORPORATE OUTREACH
PROGRAM**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

28 JANUARY 1993

I. INTRODUCTION

The Corporate Outreach Project Development Team was chartered by the LEAD Team on 1 November 1991. It drew together efforts sponsored by the Office of Strategic Initiatives and the Human Resources Directorate designed to explore how the Corps might improve its recruiting posture in the 1990's; support the improvement of education in math, science, and engineering; and develop a more externally focused culture emphasizing strong, honest relationships with our customers and partners.

II. BACKGROUND

The team conducted extensive research on these issues which included numerous interviews with Corps' employees, other government agencies, and some private sector companies. The team's findings suggest that the Corps needs to devote additional energy and resources to address problems in these areas. A preliminary issue that should be considered is: Why be concerned about outreach recruiting... to influencing elementary school math and science curriculums... during a period of reorganization and rightsizing? The most important reasons for pursuing an aggressive outreach strategy now are:

- The Corps will encounter a more competitive labor market for engineers, scientists, and educated professionals in the 1990's. We need to establish the capability and develop relationships to deal with that labor market now;
 - There is an immediate and direct need to be responsive to the changing demographics of our society and to reflect that diversity in the workforce;
 - There is a need to enhance professionalism and improve networking within our recruiting infrastructure to address the challenges implicit in rightsizing and reorganization;
 - There is a need to insure that recruiting is supportive of changing mission needs and complements other Human Resource and Public Affairs programs.
 - There is a need to excite students to pursue technical careers which support our mission accomplishment; student interest in technical fields (e.g., math and science) is falling off.
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III. RECRUITMENT MODERNIZATION

Without a corporate focus, the ability to forecast future needs, and adequate resources, the Corps is not prepared to effectively address the challenge of recruiting a high quality and diverse workforce to meet changing mission requirements.

BACKGROUND

The level of recruitment activity varies widely throughout the Corps of Engineers. Some Divisions and Districts have maintained active recruiting programs, including regular college visits. Managers and subject matter experts serve on recruitment teams with HR specialists. At other locations, declining workloads and reduced FTE allocations have significantly curtailed recruitment activities. Large numbers of voluntary applicants and changes in OPM hiring authorities have resulted in a trend toward internal placement rather than active recruitment from outside sources. Recruitment activities which do take place focus on local needs. There is little contact among recruiters and few referrals of candidates to other Corps activities. Recruitment is a part-time job for personnel staffing specialists and managers. Despite the fact that no formal standardized training has been provided, there are some enthusiastic, highly effective recruiters in the Corps. Recruitment materials furnished by HQUSACE are out of date and out of print. Some Corps activities have developed locally focused recruitment materials. Policy guidance and direction from HQUSACE has been limited due to loss of staff and lack of resources. No oversight or coordination of recruitment activities has been provided for several years. Lacking resources and HQ's policy direction, Districts and Divisions have limited recruitment to activities necessary to meet immediate local needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Corps of Engineers must adopt a corporate recruitment strategy to meet staffing requirements of the 1990's and beyond. Quality and diversity must be primary objectives. Top managers' support for and involvement in recruitment activities is essential. We must identify those sources (college/university, professional associations, minority/women's organizations, etc) which are most likely to yield high quality candidates and build and maintain relationships with these sources. HQUSACE

(CEHR) must provide policy, direction and coordinate recruitment efforts. Consideration should be given to the establishment of a small unit (2-3) of full time recruiters who would focus on recruiting high quality, diverse candidates for some career intern as well as mid and senior level career program positions. Beyond recruitment, attention must be given to the orientation, development and mentoring of employees in order to retain a high quality work force.

IV. EDUCATIONAL AFFAIRS

The problems of the American educational system have been well documented in the national press. The president and the nation's governors have challenged business and government at all levels to help meet the educational goals of AMERICA 2000 to make our students highly competitive internationally. As a significant employer of scientists and engineers, the Corps has a direct interest in promoting good scholarship, especially in math, science and engineering. We also have an exciting story to tell about our missions and contributions to stimulate students' academic interest in technical disciplines and public service careers.

BACKGROUND

Once again, some Corps organizations have active programs with schools and avail community resources while others have much more limited efforts. There is little consistency among the programs surveyed. Policy guidance in this area lacks specificity, both in terms of expectations and accountability. We have a number of legal restrictions or else diverse authorities across our functional areas (e.g., laboratories, districts, recreational and project sites), which limits our flexibility to contribute time or equipment for educational causes across organizations. We tend not to publicize educational outreach successes widely. We lack a system (common database) to provide meaningful and efficient assistance to organizations requesting information about Corps-wide educational activities. There is limited coordination or sharing of information inasmuch as there is no programmatic focal point. Educational initiatives can help a wide audience learn about the Corps and public service careers as they

learn to appreciate math and science applications.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations in this area focus on building strong partnerships with school officials at the level where the greatest impact can be made and on sharing educational program ideas and products more effectively throughout the Corps. Robust partnerships with educational and community resources will allow Corps personnel to expand their activities to help make systemic educational improvements beyond single classrooms. We believe that we should draw upon successful programs from such organizations as Motorola, the Departments of Energy and Agriculture, and NASA--who have explicit educational missions--for valuable lessons, materials, and training.

A coordinator should be appointed to develop more comprehensive policy in this area, to promote effective coordination and information sharing, and to develop evaluation standards. The program needs a common organizational focal point for reporting and coordinating information exchanges so as to save time, energy, steps and money in educational program and product development. We need to leverage the capabilities and authorities of Corps laboratories and Natural Resources interpretive programs to support sensible Corps-wide efforts. We need to explore the contributions of volunteers, to include retirees, to save resources. Finally, the Corps needs to be a full partner with other Army, DOD, and federal agencies, as well as appropriate non-governmental organizations, to support national educational goals.

V. COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Involvement with school districts, professional associations, colleges and universities serves the interest of promoting the Corps' image. We also believe that these activities provide a positive rallying point for Corps' employees and serve to enlarge their understanding of their communities and how they may assist them. This type of partnering forms a basis for increased attention to community relations. Our studies

indicate that, with more diverse and demanding customers and stakeholders, we need to make additional efforts to promote partnering and relationship building. The promotional component of this project is directed at encouraging members of the Corps' team to internalize Corps' values and philosophy and tell the Corps' story more effectively; to stimulate greater sensitivity and understanding of the needs of our partners and stakeholders; and to reduce parochialism at activity levels while encouraging broader perspectives on issues.

BACKGROUND

Discussions with senior executives within the Corps show there is a keenly felt need to address these objectives. As change becomes more rapid and the demand for greater organizational flexibility more important, we must adapt our organizational systems accordingly. The Public Affairs Office is a vital part of this program and in many areas the lead organization.

RECOMMENDATION

This effort should include the development of a Community Relations/ External Affairs Action Plan in partnership with the Public Affairs Office and Information Management Directorate to focus attention on the importance of external relationships. Expand on contacts developed in the other outreach programs. Continue to encourage involvement in professional associations, speakers' bureaus, adjunct faculty appointments, school boards, volunteer programs, public service boards, Federal Executive Boards, Intergovernmental Personnel Assignments, and community activities.
