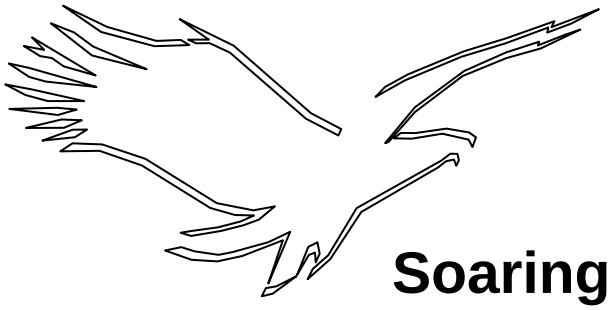
Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration

# Organizational Assessment Survey

# Federal Grain Inspection Service Supervision Action Planning Team Report 2006



**Soaring Ahead!**

**Federal Grain Inspection Service**

**Supervision Action Plan**
**(2006)**

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Action Planning Team Logo was created Ray Levine

## Overview

Early in 2006, GIPSA conducted an agency-wide Organizational Assessment Survey that was administered by the Office of Personnel Management. The survey had a 63% response rate (442 out of 701 employees). The largest response group was the New Orleans field office which consisted of 23% of the respondents. After the results of the survey came back, GIPSA's administrator Mr. Link invited employees to volunteer as members of two action planning teams that would address problem areas identified by employee feedback and survey data. The teams were charged with making recommendations to be considered by management and employees.

Two problem areas have been addressed: "Supervision" and "Innovation and Use of Resources". They are indicated in the diagram below.

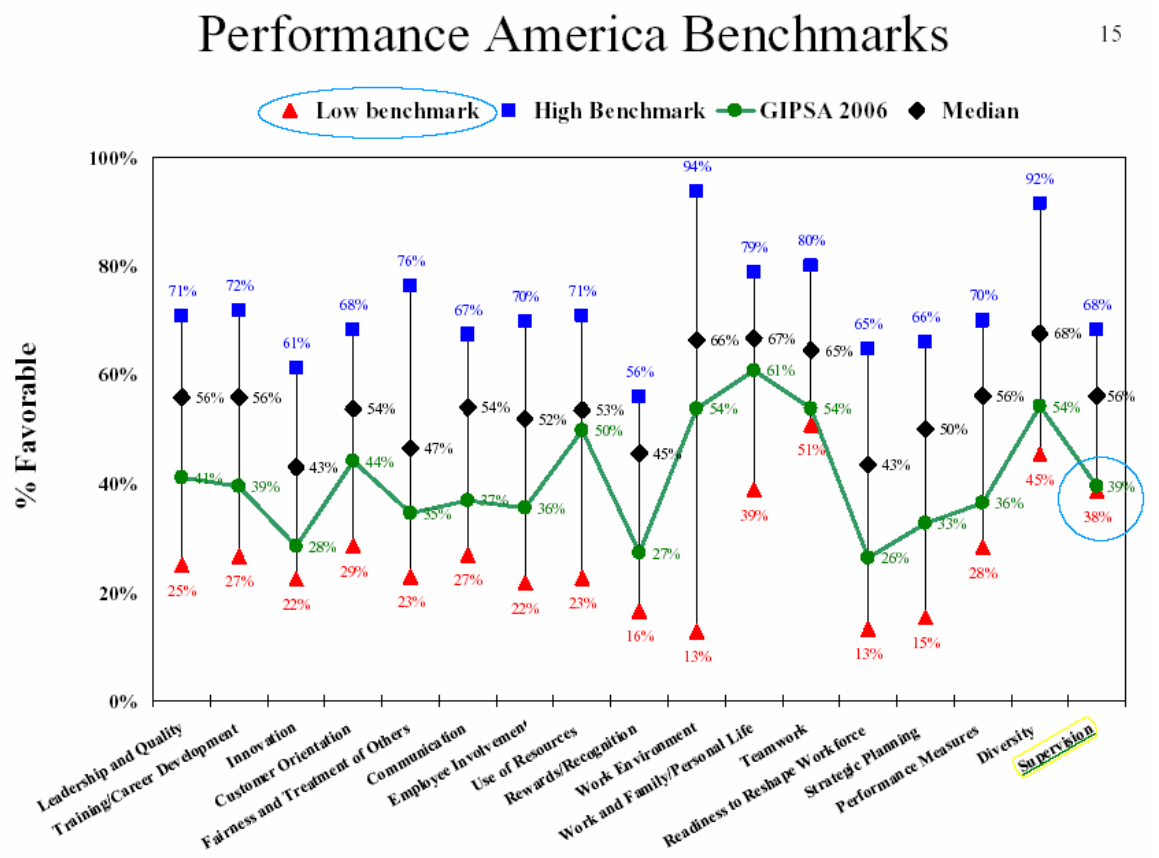


Diagram A - Taken from *Results of the 2006 Organizational Assessment Survey, USDA Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration*, May 2, 2006 and created by the Division for Human Resources Products & Services, US Office of Personnel Management.

The Federal Grain Inspection Service (FGIS) action planning team was asked to address the critical dimension of Supervision, which is defined as "supervisors clearly communicate goals, priorities, and standards, provide constructive feedback and guidance, and give fair performance evaluations". In this proposal, the team

recommends a series of action plans with the goal of improving issues both directly and indirectly related to supervision..

The FGIS action planning team members reflected the diversity of occupation, grade level, gender, race, age, location, and number of service years found within FGIS at large. The team included six employees from export field offices; (Clarence Abrom, Ray Lavine, Ronald Hill, Angela Roper and Ray Kirkpatrick), one employee from a domestic field office; (Susan Fall), two Washington DC headquarter employees (Idelisse Rodriguez and Mai Ho), and one Kansas City headquarter employee (Dr. Tandace Scholdberg). Mr. Bob Lijewski, Chief of the Policies and Procedures Branch, was the team sponsor and management team liaison. Dr. Alexis Adams-Shorter and Dr. Kimberly Wells from OPM facilitated and guided the team throughout the more than 10-week process.

Team members participated in a two-day workshop with OPM on July 17–18, 2006 in Washington, DC. During the workshop, participants reviewed and increased their knowledge on proven methodologies that provided tools for the team to address Supervision issues and develop relevant and feasible action plans. During the action planning process, team members used these tools to determine and narrow down core issues and begin to identify causes.

After the workshop, team members worked together from remote locations via teleconferences and computer net meetings. Members were asked to commit approximately 8 hours per week during work hours over a 10-week period from July through late September. It became apparent that the project warranted many more hours of input. Each week included a two-hour meeting with OPM facilitators, plus additional hours in meetings with team members, individual research and report writing.

The development of the included action plans was a multi-step process requiring several months of continuous meetings to progress from a fundamental understanding of the core issues at hand, to developing strategies which may be implemented through the completion of the goals outlined. Through the use of recognized and valid investigation techniques which are explained in this report, the team narrowed the scope of Supervision to three areas of concern, thereby identifying the critical issues as:

- Two-way communication between supervisors and employees
- Supervisor-employee awareness of the purpose and importance of the performance appraisal process
- Supervisor-employee awareness of the purpose and importance of career development training and resource availability

After the three areas of concern were identified, the team divided into three sub teams. Although the entire team still worked together as a group, each subgroup focused predominantly on one area of concern and was responsible for taking it through the

process to generate feasible action plans. The entire team then worked to develop final details and resolved any overlapping solutions across plans.

As the team members ventured into researching the issues, it was discovered that several important and core issues are more indirectly related to the issue of supervision. Further, an appreciation developed for the plans that FGIS Upper Management is proactively developing to prepare its workforce for the changing future. The team also discovered that FGIS has a number of beneficial programs in place of which many employees are not aware. Creating awareness is key. For example, in the area of performance appraisal, it was found that comprehensive FGIS directives were already in place that, if understood and followed, would create a better understanding of the performance appraisal process and would result in fewer complaints from employees. The team recognized that training awareness of these directives on the part of employees and supervisors is essential for an effective appraisal process. Due to this finding, when addressing supervision and appraisal, the team recommends training of employees as well as supervisors within the Action Plan.

This report represents the team's findings following ten weeks of rigorous research, interviews, meetings plus writing and re-writing reports. It proposes action plans that the FGIS action team hopes will achieve the intended objective of addressing and improving supervision issues. The report also summarizes the methodologies utilized by the team to meet the intended objective. An introductory summary for the action plans addressing each of the three issues is included on pages ten, sixteen and on page twenty-one respectively. A detailed action plan follows each summary.

**FGIS Overview**

The Federal Grain Inspection Service (FGIS) is a section of the Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Agency (GIPSA). According to the "GIPSA Workforce Plan FY2005-2009", as of 2004 FGIS employed five hundred sixty-eight people located in headquarters, regional, and field offices throughout the United States. FGIS's headquarters staff is located in Washington, D.C. and Kansas City, Missouri. The table below lists the field office locations.

| Field Office Locations | |
|---|---|
| Domestic | Export |
| Cedar Rapids, Iowa | League City, Texas |
| Grand Forks, North Dakota | Beaumont Texas (Suboffice) |
| Minneapolis, Minnesota | Corpus Christi, Texas (Suboffice) |
| Duluth, Minnesota (Suboffice) | New Orleans, Louisiana |
| Moscow, Idaho (Suboffice) | Crowley, Louisiana (Suboffice) |
| Stuttgart, Arkansas | Olympia, Washington |
| Jonesboro, Arkansas | Portland, Oregon |
| Wichita, Kansas | Sacramento, California (Suboffice) |
| | Greenville, Mississippi |
| | Toledo, Ohio |

Export and domestic field offices are distinguished by their techniques for facilitating the mission of FGIS. Their goals, procedures, and mission remain the same but their structure, number of employees and the main focus of their employees' duties differ.

Export field offices are tasked with physically conducting the original inspection and weighing services for export grain. For the most part, employees are not cross-utilized between different jobs. Some of the types of jobs include inspectors, samplers, technicians, office personnel, lab personnel, scale and weighing specialists, protein specialists, equipment specialists and quality assurance specialists. Employees that work at grain elevator labs rotate between elevator labs on a periodic basis and may not see their supervisor or supervisors for extended periods of time. Export offices include a large number of employees held accountable by a multi-tiered management structure.

The domestic field offices are primarily tasked with the supervision of official State and private agencies which are designated or delegated to conduct weighing and original inspection services in the domestic market as it is conducted by the federal employees in the export market. Domestic field offices are primarily supervisory; the field offices are staffed by a minimal number of employees and overseen by one supervisor. Due to the limited number of employees, plus their main function being supervision, the employees are cross-trained and utilized in many different jobs. (The same jobs that are done in the export office are conducted in the domestic offices but on a limited basis). Due to this variance of management structure, the type and schedule of work conducted by employees, and the number of employees and supervision issues, the culture within the two types of field offices differ. The same can be said for the cultural difference

between headquarters and the field offices. This dissimilarity of tasks and ratio of supervisors to employees creates a variation in concerns regarding supervision issues throughout FGIS. As a result, the FGIS action team took measures to develop proposals that can be applied across FGIS. In developing these proposals, the team took note of and learned from the divisions within FGIS that are operating successfully.

Although the employees within FGIS are divided in some ways, they are united in their agency's mission and vision. As an organization, offices throughout FGIS maintain the same values.

**Agency Mission and Vision as stated in "*GIPSA Strategic* Plan 2005-2009".**

GIPSA's mission is to facilitate the marketing of livestock, poultry, meat, cereals, oilseeds, and related agricultural products, and promote fair and competitive trading practices for the overall benefit of consumers and American agriculture. GIPSA's vision is to be a dynamic organization that responds effectively to the changing conditions of American agriculture.

As an organization, GIPSA values:
• Integrity and professionalism
• Innovation among individuals and teams
• Diversity in the workforce
• Employees and customers
• Fiscal responsibility

**Methodology**

The supervision action plan team used a number of proven methodologies which are listed below. A diagram indicating the process progression is included in Attachment A.

➢ **Brainstorming –** Brainstorming is an idea-generating tool that is used to develop highly creative solutions to a problem. Ideas are encouraged while criticism is withheld. It is particularly useful in helping to break out of stagnate modes of thinking, while nurturing innovative solutions to problems. The team used brainstorming to develop the supervision issues listed in Attachment B. These issues were then further condensed to the three core issues that are identified in this report. Brainstorming was also used to generate initial solutions to each of the three core issues.

➢ **Define Core Issues.** The core Supervision issues had to be determined before we could move onto the next step of developing solutions. To do this, we referenced the Organizational Assessment Survey, reviewed "GIPSA Strategic Plan 2005 – 2009" report to ensure that our ideas would align with GIPSA's values and brainstormed ideas. Our goal was to determine core issues that were relevant, feasible and under the control of employees working together with FGIS leadership. Again, the three areas of concern or core issues that we identified are:

- Two-way communication between supervisors and employees

- Supervisor-employee awareness of the purpose and importance of the performance appraisal process

- Supervisor-employee awareness of the purpose and importance of career development training and resource availability

➢ **Conducting a SWOT Analysis by assessing Internal *S*trengths and *W*eaknesses and identifying External *O*pportunities and *T*hreats.** The team conducted a SWOT analysis for each of the three core supervision issues. The results are listed in attachment C, Attachment D and Attachment E. The analysis was divided into an internal assessment and an external assessment.

- **Internal Strengths and Weaknesses Assessment** - The cornerstone of the action plan entailed an organizational analysis to inventory FGIS's internal strengths and weaknesses pertaining to our core issues. The purpose of assessing the strengths and weaknesses is to assist in developing plans that build upon strengths while acknowledging any issues that will need to be addressed or minimized in any future plan implementation.

- **External Opportunities and Threats Assessment** – An assessment of the external environment involved the identification of threats and opportunities and was more challenging to define. These factors stem from the social, political, economic and technical environment. They were analyzed so that strategies could be developed to take advantage of possible opportunities as well as consider possible threats that could potentially derail plans or change conditions that might be necessary to support them.

➢ **Benchmarking for solutions -** Benchmarking is the process of identifying, understanding and adapting outstanding practices from successful organizations to help improve performance. The team benchmarked businesses and agencies that are well known for their model systems. They also benchmarked areas within FGIS that were successful in the issues researched. Particularly, the team benchmarked agencies and businesses that, when interviewed, the employees regarded their systems as fair and sound. Some of the agencies and businesses that the team benchmarked for core supervision issues are: NASA, EPA, APHIS FGIS and Beckman's. The benchmarking was conducted both in person and through the internet. Results are listed in Attachments F, G and H.

➢ **Creating Actionable Plans -** Actionable plans results through planned and coordinated effort with a clearly defined objective. The objective of this team was to investigate and propose actionable plans that could help improve supervision issues. In order for an actionable plan to be successful, it must align with the organizational strategy, respect organizational culture, and motivate change by recognizing and

incorporating the complexity of change. This plan should maximize the collective benefits for all those employees affected by the change, while minimizing the risk of failure in implementing the change. Furthermore, the action plans should preemptively consider reasons for resistance and incorporate lessons into change plans. The action plans below detail the results of the ongoing efforts of this team to develop a forum to create a strategy to improve supervision.

**Identification of Core Supervision Issues Associated with the Action Plans.**

The OAS Report included a summary of the state of the critical dimension of supervision within FGIS, which was identified as one of the high-impact dimensions of the OAS report. These high-impact dimensions are described as being especially critical drivers of organizational health and performance. When benchmarking FGIS with other Federal Government agencies, the supervision dimension was near the benchmark low. When comparing FGIS performance with the private sector, FGIS had less favorable results on the issue of "satisfaction with supervisor's performance".

A breakdown of the supervision dimension items including the outcome identified within the Organizational Assessment Survey is listed below.

| OAS Survey - Supervision Dimension Item Break Down | % Agree | % Disagree |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Supervisors communicate clearly what is expected of employees in term of job performance (e.g. task responsibilities, performance standards). | 49% | 33% |
| 2. Supervisors provide employees with constructive suggestions to improve their job performance. | 44% | 33% |
| 3. Supervisors provide fair and accurate ratings of employee performance. | 41% | 38% |
| 4. There is trust between employees and their supervisors. | 41% | 44% |
| 5. Supervisors take steps to minimize work-related stress. | 31% | 46% |

The culmination of research and benchmarking of the supervision issue within FGIS, of which the data is included in attachment B, resulted in a narrowing down of the areas of concern to three core issues. Two of these core issues, communication and training, were a common thread of concern throughout the survey. The core issue for "supervisors providing fair and accurate ratings of employees' performance" was also found to be rooted in lack of training and understanding. Implementing action plans proposed for these two areas would have a domino affect in improving other dimensions of concern within FGIS. The core issues that the team identified as relevant and

feasible were determined to be a root cause for employees assigning low ratings to the *dimension of supervision*. These three core issues are listed again below.

- Two-Way Communication between Supervisors and Employees
- Supervisor-employee awareness of the purpose and importance of the performance appraisal process
- Supervisor-employee awareness of the purpose and importance of career development training and resource availability

The team identified, explained, and developed action plans for each of these three areas of concern in the following section.

## Summaries of Core Issues and Action Plans

### Issue 1 Summary: Two-Way Communication between Supervisors and Employees

Research indicates that managers spend between 50% - 80% of their total time communicating in one way or the other. It is not capital equipment or technology that differentiates organizations, it is their workforce and the processes by which that workforce is established, leveraged, and maintained. The essential element in all of these processes is communication.

The Supervision Action Team has recommended an action plan that will strengthen communication at GIPSA through the initiation of the following proposals:

(1) Town Hall Meetings with GIPSAs Upper Management
(2) Monthly Staff Meetings
(3) Assign one person responsible of providing updated information for the INGIPSA Website
(4) Suggestion Box in export field offices and TSD

If implemented, these initiatives will facilitate improved communication in the workplace. Desired outcomes of plan implementation are to:

- Improve communication between employees and management such that management will be able to discuss agency-wide changes and answer employees' concerns.

- Improve communication between employees and supervisors in each field office and division.

- Establish a place where employees can obtain information that is not efficiently been transmitted to them.

- Improve communication in each field offices and help employees feel well informed on issues affecting their jobs.

The team believes these changes will increase effective communication between management and employees while creating a more informed organization for achieving both agency and employee goals. The Action Plan that follows details the steps needed to reach these goals.

## *Action Plan* - Two-Way Communication between Supervisors and Employees.

***Issue:***
There is minimal communication among various levels of the organization.

***Desired State of Affairs:***
Improved communication between employees and management. Management will have a forum to discuss agency-wide changes and answer employees' concerns.

***Proposed Solution:***
Schedule monthly, (OR AS DEEMED NECESSARY), TOWN HALL MEETINGS with management.

| ***Action Steps*** | ***Resources*** | ***Implementation Timeframe*** | ***Responsible Parties*** | ***Key Success Indicators (KSI)*** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| • Gather questions before meetings.<br>• Set specific time and place.<br>• Dedicate each meeting to a specific topic.<br>• Some topics: Retirement, Performance Appraisals, IDP, Awards. | • Time<br>• Supplies<br>• Video Conferencing | Approximately 3 months from plan implementation – January 2007 | • Management<br>• Supervisors<br>• Employees | • Attendance<br>• Amount of feedback<br>• Receive feedback from supervisor on action taken by management to address topics |

***Linkage to organizational strategic goal:***
Effective communication of agency goals.

***Consequences if not addressed:***
Confusion among employees about the future of the agency. A feeling of disconnection among employees.

## *Action Plan* - Two-Way Communication between Supervisors and Employees.

***Issue:***
Employees need to be more informed on issues affecting their job.

***Desired State of Affairs:***
Improved communication between employees and supervisors in each field office and division.

***Proposed Solution:***
Schedule **MONTHLY STAFF MEETINGS** in Field Offices and Divisions (Mostly done in DC)

| *Action Steps* | *Resources* | *Implementation Timeframe* | *Responsible Parties* | *Key Success Indicators (KSI)* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| • Set specific time and place.<br>• Gather questions for Town Hall meetings.<br>• Employees and Supervisors inform their activity for the month and announce news from management.<br>• FOM/Supervisor travel to export offices.<br>• Discuss issues from the "Suggestion Box". | • Time<br>• Supplies | • Approximately 5 months from plan implementation February 1, 2007 | • Supervisors<br>• Employees | • Amount of feedback received<br>• Amount of questions for Town Hall meetings by F/O<br>• Attendance<br>• Each FOM/Division Leader compiles a report and puts it in the Outlook Folder<br>• Put together field office focus groups in six months to assess employee satisfaction. |

***Linkage to organizational strategic goal:***
Better communication and coordination of functions within each field office and division.

***Consequences if not addressed:***
Discontent with supervisors due to lack of information propagated to employees.

## *Action Plan* - Two-Way Communication between Supervisors and Employees

***Issue:***
Employees need to be more informed on issues affecting their jobs.

***Desired State of Affairs:***
Establish a place where employees can obtain information that has not efficiently been transmitted to them.

***Proposed Solution:*** Promote the INGIPSA website (redesigned based on employee feedback)

| ***Action Steps*** | ***Resources*** | ***Implementation Timeframe*** | ***Responsible Parties*** | ***Key Success Indicators (KSI)*** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| • Ask for feedback in newsletter and focus groups.<br>• Post notes from town hall meetings on this website.<br>• Assign one person from each Division to provide information for website. That person is also in charge of motivating employees to provide information.<br>• Promote/announce it by email, flyers, and GIPSA newsletter.<br>• Award/Recognize division that provides most up-to-date information (ex. time-off award, GIPSA bags, gift certificates).<br>• Post Awards and Recognitions<br>• Survey employees that visit the website.<br>• Get from the USDA/GIPSA website (already in progress)<br>• Limit to GIPSA employees. | • Budget<br>• Time<br>• Supplies | • Within six months from plan implementation February 1, 2007 | • IT Website Team<br>• Employees<br>• Supervisors | • Amount of feedback<br>• Number of employees that visit the website<br>• Feedback from employees posted on website<br>• Put together focus group in six months to assess employee satisfaction. |

***Linkage to organizational strategic goal*:** Move towards a more electronic workplace.

***Consequences if not addressed*:**
Information not readily available and present resources not utilized to their fullest.

## *Action Plan* - Two-Way Communication between Supervisors and Employees.

***Issue:***
There is minimal communication among various levels of the organization and no established forum to contribute and receive feedback.

***Desired State of Affairs:***
Improved communication in each field offices. Keep employees well informed on issues affecting their jobs.

***Proposed Solution:***
Create a **"BOX OF SUGGESTIONS"** in each export field office, Headquarters, TSD, and work locations. This solution will address issues specific to each office.

| ***Action Steps*** | ***Resources*** | ***Implementation Timeframe*** | ***Responsible Parties*** | ***Key Success Indicators (KSI)*** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| • Emphasize that it is for constructive criticism by discouraging anonymity.<br>• Offer guidelines on criteria to judge "best suggestion."<br>• Award the "best suggestion" on an optional monthly or quarterly basis.<br>• Place boxes in each field office and work location.<br>• Supervisors or an assigned person should quantify suggestions and report to management at the end of the month.<br>• Boxes should be in public view available to everyone.<br>• Supervisors should record and submit a memo detailing which suggestions were accepted/rejected. | • Time<br>• Supplies | • Within a month of Implementation - December 1, 2007 | • Supervisors<br>• Employees | • Number of suggestions<br>• Supervisors following through on suggestions.<br>• Quantify suggestions after a three month period in a report to management. |

***Linkage to organizational strategic goal:***
Effective communication within each field office.

***Consequences if not addressed:***
Employees feel misinformed about their duties and decisions made by management.

**Issue 2 Summary: Supervisor-employee awareness of the purpose and importance of the performance appraisal process.**

Yearly performance reviews are a critical part of our organization's structure. When executed correctly and on a timely basis, both supervisors and employees gain from the process.

A well-done Performance Appraisal can help supervisors identify their employees' work strengths and weaknesses. When done correctly, the appraisal process allows supervisors to re-connect with employees and the work they do and gives them an opportunity to give constructive feedback. This feedback can turn a good employee into a powerhouse performer and turn an employee with lackluster performance into a better performer. In turn, employees are assured a clear understanding of what is expected from them. They also realize their own personal strengths and areas for development. The appraisal may even help employees to develop a better relationship with a supervisor.

When performance appraisals are not taken seriously, are ignored, or are done incorrectly, the ultimate results are a decrease in the trust and credibility of the supervisor, a decrease in morale and an increase in apathy. Employees perceive that good work is not rewarded and lackluster performance goes unpunished. Apathy decreases FGIS's overall effectiveness and productivity and increases absenteeism. Consequently, supervisors have to spend time "putting out fires".

The team discovered that FGIS has in-place two comprehensive directives on the appraisal system that, if understood and followed correctly by both employees and supervisors, would lead to fair and meaningful performance appraisals. Two of our proposed action plans for addressing this second core issue suggest conducting training sessions that will increase awareness and educate both employees and supervisors on these directives.

**FGIS directive 9000.1:** briefly, this directive contains field performance appraisal elements and standards for field office personnel at the shift supervisor level and below. The generic elements and standards are used for all shift supervisors, scale specialists, agriculture commodity graders, agriculture commodity technicians, agriculture commodity aids, and clerical staff members. According to this directive, the elements and standards are to be communicated to employees.

The team did notice that directive 9000.1 expired in 1996. Therefore, as part of our action plan, we will recommend that this directive be updated to reflect the current FGIS environment. The directive itself is a very useful tool for both employees and supervisors that this directive applies to if they were aware of it and comprehended what is in it.

**FGIS directive 4430.1:** briefly, this directive outlines basic responsibilities of FGIS employees under the Performance Management System. It also establishes a tool for managers by linking performance appraisals to personnel actions, i.e. promotions, reassignments, within-grade increases, performance awards, removals, quality step increases, reduction-in-force (RIF), retention under RIF procedures, and training. It also includes a small section on employees' rights and responsibilities.

The team did notice that the directive indicates that employees and supervisors participate in the establishment of their performance elements and standards. According to our research, employees can discuss the elements and standards but do not participate in their establishment.

Likewise, FGIS's Compliance Division is already monitoring how field offices fare with a compliance review conducted every 3 years. One of the many issues that the Compliance division reviews is performance appraisal. Review teams look at written performance measurement systems, timeliness, and supporting documentation of ratings among other items.

Findings related to Performance appraisals are not always major non-compliance items. Major non-compliance items require a written response from Field office managers to Field Management division and are discussed during briefings to the FGIS Deputy administrator.

The team highly recommends that FGIS raises the importance of Performance Appraisals to always be a major non-compliance item in compliance reviews.

Core Issue:

- Employees desire fair and accurate Performance Appraisals.

Desired State of Affairs:

- Supervisors and employees both have an understanding of how the appraisal system is supposed to work, what the expectations are, and what is expected of them. Employees will become empowered with this knowledge and have more confidence in the supervisor. The appraisal system is taken seriously.
- Supervisors understand the importance of performance appraisals and know how to give fair, meaningful performance appraisals.
- The Appraisal System is perceived as fair and accurate.

Proposed solutions are in the following action plans.

## *Action Plan* – Supervisor-employee awareness of the purpose and importance of the performance appraisal process

***Issue:*** Employees desire fair and accurate performance appraisals.

***Desired State of Affairs:***
Supervisors and employees both have an understanding of how the appraisal system is supposed to work, what the expectations are, and what is expected of them. Employees will become empowered with this knowledge and have more confidence in the supervisor. The appraisal system is taken seriously by both supervisors and employees.

***Proposed Solution:***
Schedule *TOWN HALL MEETING* for all FGIS personnel with the main topic: *The Appraisal System.*

| ***Action Steps*** | ***Resources*** | ***Implementation Timeframe*** | ***Responsible Parties*** | ***Key Success Indicators (KSI)*** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| • Recruit an HR specialist to give a talk on the Appraisal System.<br>• Use FGIS directive 4430.1 as training material.<br>• Schedule specific time and<br>• Reserve the Conference Room.<br>• Develop and send flyer out to all employees with time, date and topic.<br>• Specify in the flyer that questions should be sent to a designated person and received 1 week before the meeting.<br>• Conduct *Town Hall Meeting* with the Appraisal System as the topic. | • Time<br>• Video Conferencing<br>• Personnel | • Target Date - April 1, 2007 | • Management<br>• Training Officer<br>• Supervisors<br>• Employees | • Reduced complaints on the appraisal system.<br>• Employees take a more active part in their appraisals. |

***Linkage to organizational strategic goal:*** This program will support - *Management* Initiative 1: Human Capital Management.

***Consequences if not addressed:*** Employees lack confidence in supervisors. Production is compromised because employees do not believe ratings matter.

## *Action Plan* – Supervisor-employee awareness of the purpose and importance of the performance appraisal process

**Issue:** Employees desire fair and accurate Performance Appraisals.

**Desired State of Affairs:** Supervisors understand the importance of performance appraisals and know how to give fair, meaningful performance appraisals.

**Proposed Solution:** Request an HR specialist to conduct a separate awareness training for headquarters supervisors, field office managers, shift supervisors, and co-lateral duty training officers to train them in the steps needed to conduct a meaningful, fair performance appraisal and inform them of their responsibilities in the process.

| ***Action Steps*** | ***Resources*** | ***Implementation Timeframe*** | ***Responsible Parties*** | ***Key Success Indicators (KSI)*** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| • Recruit an HR specialist to train supervisors and managers on FGIS directives 9000.1 and 4430.1.<br>• Renew and update directive 9000.1 to reflect any changes since its expiration.<br>• Set schedule for training.<br>• Training for export locations may be on-site but training for other locations could be held by using *net meeting*. | • Budget<br>• Time<br>• Personnel | • Target Date - April 1, 2007 | • Supervisors<br>• Training specialist<br>• Training Officer | • Fewer complaints on appraisals on follow-up survey.<br>• Increase perception of fairness.<br>• Fewer ratings below fully successful because problem areas are addressed. |

***Linkage to organizational strategic goal:*** This program will support - Management Initiative 1**:** Human Capital Management. "Work force development, accountability, talent management and leadership development".

***Consequences if not addressed:***
Employees lack confidence in supervisors. Production is compromised because employees do not believe ratings matter.

## *Action Plan* – Supervisor-employee awareness of the purpose and importance of the performance appraisal process

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***Issue***: Raise the importance of Performance Appraisals to always be a major non-compliance item in compliance reviews. | | | | |
| ***Desired State of Affairs:*** The Appraisal System is perceived as fair and accurate. | | | | |
| ***Proposed Solution:*** Raise the importance of Performance Appraisals to a major non-compliance item in compliance reviews. | | | | |
| ***Action Steps*** | ***Resources*** | ***Implementation Timeframe*** | ***Responsible Parties*** | ***Key Success Indicators (KSI)*** |
| • Meeting between heads of Compliance and Field Management Division (FMD) to discuss raising this item in importance within the compliance review.<br>• Add this item to the review list of items to check and to the "Plan" for compliance reviews.<br>• Send out a memo from the administrator to all managers and supervisors indicating the change. | • Time<br>• Personnel | • Target Date - December 1, 2006 | • Management<br>• Compliance Management<br>• FMD Management | • Records for appraisals back-up the actions of the supervisor.<br>• Fewer complaints about performance appraisals from employees. |
| ***Linkage to organizational strategic goal:*** This program will support - Management Initiative 1**:** Human Capital Management. "Work force development, accountability, talent management and leadership development". | | | | |
| ***Consequences if not addressed:*** Employees lack confidence in supervisors. Production is compromised because employees do not believe ratings matter. | | | | |

**Issue 3 Summary: Supervisor-employee awareness of the purpose and importance of career development training and resource availability**

A well-educated and trained workforce is essential for our agency to move forward. In response to new technologies and an expanding global market, the face of our agency is changing. Employees must be highly trained in order for FGIS to maintain an edge. Without a well-educated and trained workforce, productivity and customer service suffers. Apathy sets in and credibility is lost.

GIPSA's Human Capital Plan was developed to addresses the training issue. The plan guides continued Agency business practices to build, sustain, and effectively deploy a skilled, knowledgeable, and high-performing workforce that is aligned with mission priorities. With this said, it is surprising that "lack of training direction" and "lack of training opportunities" were a theme throughout results to the OAS survey. Only 36 percent of the respondents reported that the allotment of time and money was adequate for training. Only 30 percent of respondents indicated that training programs are developed based on employees' training needs and just 44 percent of respondents indicated that supervisors provide employees with constructive suggestions to improve their job performance.

The Action planning team conducted extensive researched to find the core cause of this discrepancy. The team found that the FGIS training team maintains a stellar program with a vast array of classes that are accessible to all employees on Aglearn. The majority of these classes are free of charge. They also maintain a lending library, which is available to all employees. The Technical Center maintains training tools on-line, available to all employees. A training budget is maintained in each office for additional training from the outside.

Tools are in place for maintaining an educated workforce but the team found that, in some areas, there was not a visible training culture which would support education of the workforce. Supervisors in some areas, primarily export, work at dual jobs and are not able to dedicate their time to maintaining a well- trained workforce. Computers are available to employees but some employees are not computer savvy. (This is a major problem as most of the currently available training is on-line). Some employees do not know what is available to them or where to find training. The nature of the work at export offices does not lend itself to dedicating a predictable amount of time to training. Employees may have down-time during which they could be training but some employees do not want to start training during their downtime because the time allocation can not be guaranteed. (They could be pulled away at any time).

The team realized that some training issues can not be controlled without a major change. Some of these are, "supervisors being able to dedicate their time totally to supervision" or "allocate more finances to training". The team decided to focus their resources on issues that could be controlled at a local level with minimal

cost and disruption. Offices within FGIS are unique in many respects; consequently, some of the solutions may fit individual offices better than others.

The issues and action plans formulated by the FGIS action planning team for the issue of "Supervisor-employee awareness of the purpose and importance of career development training and resource availability" are summarized below. The detailed action plans follow.

Issues:

- All Supervisors should provide all employees with constructive suggestions for their IDPs to improve their training.
- Employees are often not provided with training they need to perform their jobs (for example, on-the-job training, conferences, work shops).
- Employees are often not provided with training that enhances their career advancement opportunities.

Desired State of Affairs:

- A well-trained workforce would make supervision easier and improve work performance.
- Employees informed about resources availability and how to access resources.
- Employees provided with twelve weeks of enhanced learning experience through the Specialized Enhancement Program (existing Excel program in New Orleans).

Proposed Solutions:

- Supervisors and employees work together to develop and review IDPs during performance evaluations.
- Provide employees with a Training Assistant (1) per shift at FGIS lab sites
- Implement the existing *EXCEL PROGRAM.*

## *Action Plan* - Supervisor-employee awareness of the purpose and importance of career development training and resource availability

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***Issue:*** All Supervisors should provide all employees with constructive suggestions for their IDPs to improve their training. | | | | |
| ***Desired State of Affairs:*** A well-trained workforce would make supervision easier and improve work performance. | | | | |
| ***Proposed Solution:*** Supervisors and employees work together to develop and review IDPs during performance evaluations. | | | | |
| ***Action Steps*** | ***Resources*** | ***Implementation Timeframe*** | ***Responsible Parties*** | ***Key Success Indicators (KSI)*** |
| • IDP forms made available to all employees by all supervisors 2 weeks before employee's review.<br>• During Mid-Term performance review supervisors assist and address employees with IDP concerns.<br>• The supervisor reviews the present IDP progress and discusses their future IDP's.<br>• All employees are responsible for completing their IDPs even if they choose no | • Time<br>• IDP Forms<br>• Meeting Room | • APRIL 2007<br>• Mid-Term Review<br><br>• Due date varies by year and is determined by Training Officer. | • Employees<br>• Supervisors<br>• Training Officer<br>• Training Resources (example) flyers on-line | • Employees receive their IDP forms two weeks prior to review.<br>• Employees receiving feedback from supervisors.<br>• Employees check yes on their IDP forms that IDP career development was discussed with their supervisor.<br>• Signed IDP forms with all required signatures.<br>• Increased employees' interest in applying for training.<br>• Increased consistency, responsiveness and accountability. |

| ***Action Steps - CONTINUED*** | ***Resources - CONTINUED*** | ***Implementation Timeframe - CONTINUED*** | ***Responsible Parties - CONTINUED*** | ***Key Success Indicators (KSI) - CONTINUED*** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| further training at this time.<br>• Supervisor reviews and IDPs are signed with all required signatures.<br>• Supervisor makes necessary distributions.<br>• During the annual performance appraisal the progress made on the IDP is reviewed by supervisor with the employee. | | • October 2007 | | • Increases development discussion between employee and supervisors.<br>• Provides supervisors with a valuable tool for refocusing the workforce to meet future organizational requirements.<br>• Improve productively due to a knowledgeable workforce.<br>• Improved production due to better communication between the supervisor and employees. |
| ***Linkage to organizational strategic goal:*** Well Trained Workforce | | | | |
| ***Consequences if not addressed:*** Employees will have less confidence in their supervisors. Communications between the employees and supervisors will decrease and available training opportunities will not be unitized. | | | | |

## *Action Plan* - Supervisor-employee awareness of the purpose and importance of career development training and resource availability

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***Issue***: Employees are often not provided with training they need to perform their jobs (for example, on-the-job training, conferences, workshops). | | | | |
| ***Desired State of Affairs:*** Employees are informed about resource availability and how to access resources. | | | | |
| ***Proposed Solution:*** Provide employees with a Training Assistant (1) per shift at FGIS lab sites. | | | | |
| ***Action Steps*** | ***Resources*** | ***Implementation Timeframe*** | ***Responsible Parties*** | ***Key Success Indicators (KSI)*** |
| • Establish criteria for training the training assistants.<br>• Criteria developed and training conducted by Collateral Training Officer.<br>• Memo sent from FOM requesting interested volunteers to serve on a one year term program. Offer incentive awards to selected participants.<br>• FOM and Collateral Training Officer will appoint selected | • Time<br>• Budget<br>• Supplies<br>• Computers | • Within 90 days<br>• Target date:<br>• January 22, 2007<br>Ongoing | • Field Office Manager<br>• Training Officer<br>• Supervisors | • 3 Training Assistants are actually installed at every FGIS lab site.<br>• Increase employee Awareness.<br>• Improve employee's competencies.<br>• Increased employee self-development and learning.<br>• Highly trained professionals.<br>• Reduction of problems dealt with supervisors/ management.<br>• Documentation records serves as a reference guide. |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***Action Steps - CONTINUED***<br><br>Training Assistants at FGIS lab work sites.<br>• Train the selected Training Assistants to educate and assist employees.<br>• Training Assistant keeps a log record file at every site to document trouble shooting problems and the procedures performed to correct them. | | | | |
| ***Linkage to organizational strategic goal:***<br>A better informed employee improves agency efficiency to meet needs of global agricultural markets. | | | | |
| ***Consequences if not addressed:***<br>Agency will become stagnant and unable to facilitate movement within agricultural markets. | | | | |

## *Action Plan* - Supervisor-employee awareness of the purpose and importance of career development training and resource availability

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***Issue:*** Employees are often not provided with training that enhances their career advancement opportunities. | | | | |
| ***Desired State of Affairs****:* Provides employees with twelve-week enhanced learning experience**.** | | | | |
| ***Proposed Solution:***<br>Specialized Enhancement Program (SEP) replaces the existing *EXCEL PROGRAM.* | | | | |
| ***Action Steps*** | ***Resources*** | ***Implementation Timeframe*** | ***Responsible Parties*** | ***Key Success Indicators (KSI)*** |
| • Review and revise criteria's of existing Excel Program Training Resource Guide by Excel Program Staff.<br>• Change name to: Specialized Enhancement Program (SEP).<br>• Collateral Training Officer creates flyers.<br>• Send (SEP) training guide to Rosemary for final approval.<br>• Collateral Training | • Time<br>• Budget<br>• Supplies<br>• Computers | • Target Date:<br>• February 26, 2007<br><br>January/July (Email & flyers) | • Manager (FOM)<br>• Employees<br>• GIPSA Training Officers<br>• Program Staff includes: Collateral Training Officer, Equipment Specialist, Safety Officer, Scales/Weights Specialist, QAS, Mycotoxins/Protein specialist,<br>• Dispatcher,<br>• Clerical Administration Staff, | • By 2008, four employees would have completed the program and continued on an annual basis.<br>• Number of graduates<br>• Improve performance by all GS-5 thru GS-9 levels.<br>• Certificate of Training issued<br>• Employee develops a |

| Action Steps – Continued | Resources - CONTINUED | Timeframe - CONTINUED | Responsible Parties – CONTINUED | Key Success Indicators - CONTINUED |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Officer sends out flyers and emails to promote the program twice a year.<br>• Letter sent from FOM to employees describing the procedures for applying..<br>• Four employees chosen per year.<br>• Program conducted by collateral Training officer.<br>• Manager sends letter to the 4 participants that were selected.<br>• Participants receive a Certificate of Training and plaque for completing the (SEP) Program.<br>• Certificate presented by management to recognized participant. | | 30 days prior to start date.<br><br>First session start date February 26, 2007 thru May 18, 2007. Implementation<br><br>Second session start date August 13, 2007 thru November 2, 2007. | • IT Specialist<br>• Electronics Engineer | broader perspective of organizational cultures, dynamics and climate.<br><br>• Enhance employee's learning skills<br><br>• Achieve Communications<br><br>• Knowledgeable employees<br><br>• 12 week rotation will not be interrupted<br><br>• Major Holidays will not<br><br>• affect major scheduling.<br><br>• Employee Recognition |
| ***Linkage to organizational strategic goal:*** Well-Trained workforce | | | | |
| ***Consequences if not addressed:*** Low production/ Management and supervision problems | | | | |

## Conclusion

After reviewing the Organizational Assessment Survey and brainstorming ideas, The FGIS Action Planning Team identified three areas of concern including communication between supervisors and employees, and the role of supervisors in ensuring well-trained workforce, and fair and meaningful performance evaluations. Foundation concerns for the agency, team members felt were the most important issues to address and would have the greatest positive impact on our FGIS effectiveness.

Development of action plans to address these areas of concern was a multi-step process requiring several months of continuous meetings, intense research and the use of proven methodologies. Members of the FGIS Action Planning Team, were grateful to be given the opportunity to be change agents. Our recommendations for change described improvements to processes and procedures that are already in place and created new ones where we felt there would be a benefit.

In sum, our discussions and research suggested patterns of deficiencies in communication. Training needs exist for both the supervisor and employees. A culture that promotes learning and communication was also not found to be visible in some areas. Although the team was tasked with looking at supervision issues, many of the core issues related directly to training and communication and more indirectly to supervision. A lack of training and communication breeds misunderstanding, mistrust and apathy. It inhibits productivity and innovation. The mantra for the future workforce is education. Without an educated workforce, FGIS would be stuck in a rut and unable to progress.

An objective of GIPSA's goals stated in the GIPSA Workforce Plan 2005-2009 is to"ensure GIPSA maintains a skilled, professional workforce to carry out the agency's mission in the future". To provide the employees with tools needed to improve their performance, (the *Special Enhancement Program*, maintaining a Training Assistant at FGIS lab sites and addressing employees *Individual Development Plans* during performance evaluations), would help bridge the gap between current capabilities and the agency's goals and objectives. Continuous education is needed in order to keep up with technology and avoid stagnation.

Implementing the proposed action plans for achieving better supervisor-employee communication would allow the agency to improve its relationship both internally as well as externally with its customers by improving awareness of organizational projects, goals and mission. The proposed simple yet effective tools (monthly staff meetings, Town Hall Meetings, suggestion boxes, and an updated, informative InGIPSA website), would create a more cohesive, informed agency.

Assuring a meaningful performance appraisal system (ensure awareness of

directives found to be already in place with the use of Town Hall Meetings and training seminars plus increasing the importance of documentation in performance appraisals during compliance reviews) would create an empowered workforce that would be able to build on its strengths and work on its weaknesses. Cooperation between supervisors and employees is critical. Collaboration between supervisors and employees would foster a mutually beneficial relationship in which both partners are more productive and work together to create a cohesive environment.

Through research, interviews and discussion, the Action Planning Team has gained a greater appreciation for the innovative individuals that are the cornerstones of our agency. Tools for many solutions are in place. The training staff within FGIS maintains a stellar training program; including a library and educational training tools on Aglearn. Comprehensive directives on the appraisal system and the awards system are also in place.

Small steps and simple solutions can solve critical problems. Implementation of the suggested items within this report would enable supervisors and employees to achieve frequently expressed goals, have an agreed upon direction for the improvement of supervisor and employee relations, and move beyond crisis management to embark upon wide-ranging and long-term issues that are critical to the agency's success. If implemented, they will assist to bridge the gap between current capability and the agencies goals of "working to build, sustain, and effectively deploy a skilled, knowledgeable, diverse, and high-performing workforce", as expressed in the GIPSA Workforce Plan 2005-2009. Furthermore, implementation of these items will help to achieve a heightened capacity to adapt to a changing environment.

The action plans identified by the Action Planning Team are straightforward and attainable. However, they will require the formation of an Implementation Team in order for the recommendations to become an effective reality. The Action Planning Team looks forward to the next step in the journey of bridging the gap between the current capabilities and the agencies goals.

The Action Planning Team has attained a new level of awareness and has gained an appreciation for the stellar work that goes on behind the scenes of our agency. We have become more knowledgeable and appreciative of areas and topics that we would never have accessed through our regular positions. We are grateful for this opportunity. We would like to thank the following:

- GIPSA's administrator, Mr. James Link for realizing the importance of the task and initiating and supporting the Action Planning Team.
- FGIS Deputy Administrator, Mr. David Shipman for allowing us, as employees, to voice our opinions and for providing the team with the resources needed to improve supervision-employee issues within our agency.
- Our supervisors Mr. Steve Bennett, Mrs. Karen Guagliardo, Mr. Dannye

Cameron, Mr. Kerry Petit, Mr. Walter Rust, Mrs. Freda Achtentuch, and Dr. Ron Jenkins for providing us with the time and space to conduct meetings and to accomplish our goal and for giving us feedback and information.

- Dr. Kimberly Wells and Dr. Alexis Adams-Shorter, our facilitators from OPM for not only being wonderful facilitators and teachers in methods and team building but for being role models in patience, understanding and guidance.
- Mr. Bob Lijewski of Field Management Division for providing direction and stability for the team, for serving as our sponsor and as our liaison to upper management, and for giving us many hours of consultation resulting with a wealth of information.
- Mr. John Sharpe,and Ms. Karen Guagliardo for giving us many hours of valuable information and advice.
- Ms. Rosemary Mayne for sharing her expertise and time with us on many occasions; allowing us to proceed with a clear picture of where we were going. Extra thanks are given for the care in assuring a well-organized meeting during out time in Washington D.C.
- Agency employees and staff for willingly sharing information and providing feedback.

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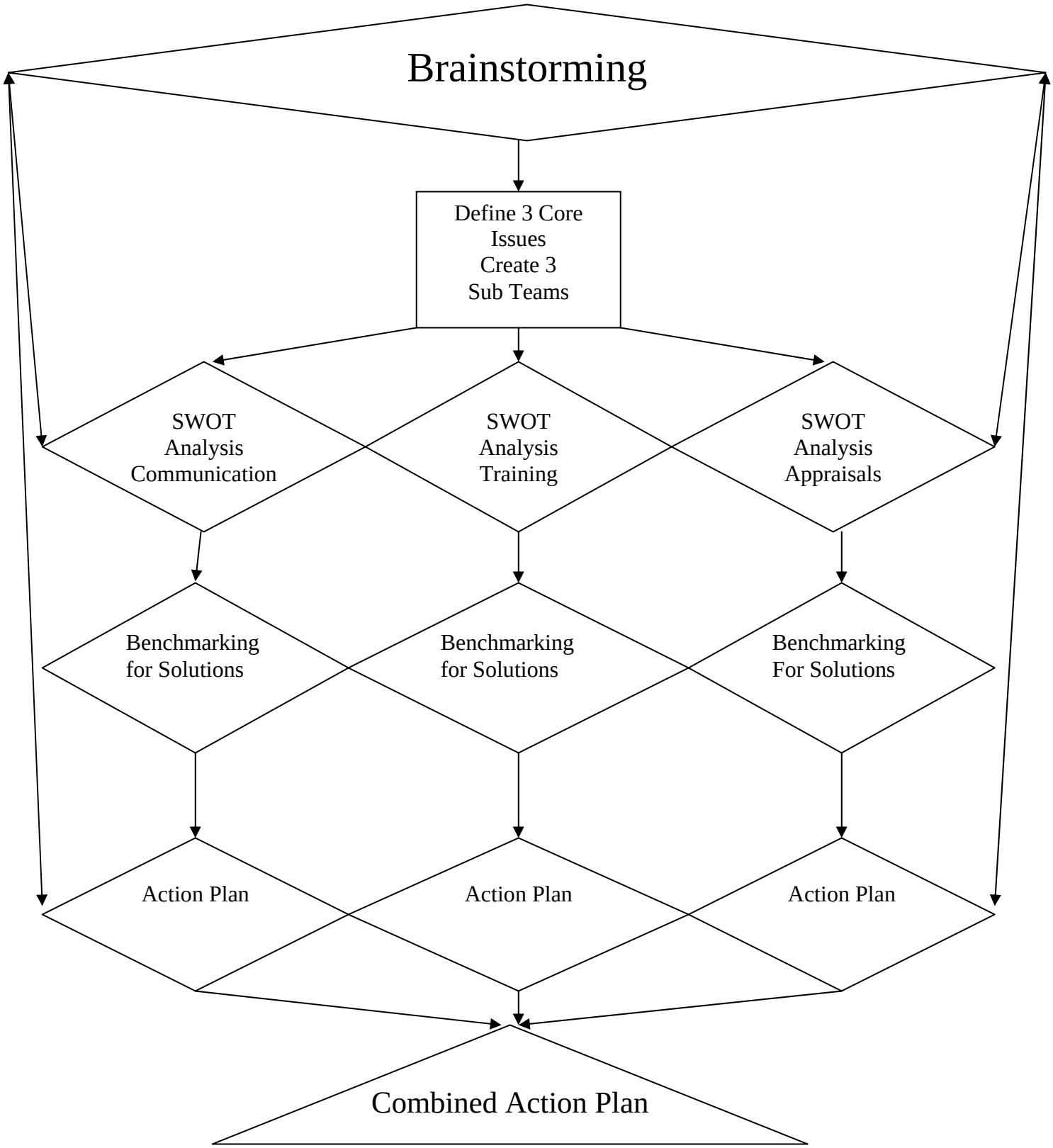
Brainstorming
Define 3 Core Issues Create 3 Sub Teams
SWOT Analysis Communication
SWOT Analysis Training
SWOT Analysis Appraisals
Benchmarking for Solutions
Benchmarking for Solutions
Benchmarking For Solutions
Action Plan
Action Plan
Action Plan
Combined Action Plan

**Brainstorming - Narrowing Down Core Issues List**
**Purpose - Determine the main issues for supervision survey results.**
**Group Similar Items and Prioritize Issues.**

**Round 1:**

**Group 1: Communication**
Information Exchange
Rumors vs. Facts
Access to Resources
Job Announcements

**Group 2**: **Unknown Fears**
Outsourcing
Agency Mission
Job Security
Short term and Long term goals
Rumors vs. Facts (Newsletters)

**Group 3**: **Career Ladders & Training**
Mentors
Promotions (Awards, Recognitions)

**Group 4: Managers vs. Employees**
Manager Training

**Group 5:** Safety, Health
Aging workforce
Work load distribution

**Round 2:**

**Group 1: Information Exchange**
Career Ladder (How to advance & Training)
Agency's Mission
Newsletter & Job Announcement

**Group 2: Appraisals**
Feedback sessions
Re-instate Performance Appraisal Review Board

**Group 3: Awards/Recognition**
Unfair Distribution

**SWOT ANALYSIS**
**Problem: Communication**

| ***Internal Strengths*** ***"to build on"*** | ***Internal Weaknesses*** ***"to navigate or cope"*** |
|---|---|
| • GIPSA News – Anyone can submit information.<br>• Everyone has an e-mail address.<br>• The appraisal system is being revamped to be more measurable.<br>• AG Learn is a free learning tool that can be used to study ways to better communicate.<br>• The Suggestion Box can be used to communicate.<br>• GIPSA is reorganizing at the moment and opportunities exist to make beneficial communication changes..<br>• We are a small agency and have communication between Offices. | • Export Personnel must rotate between elevators on a regular basis. Managers do not rotate.<br>• Information is on a need to know basis.<br>• Information is located on computers. With few computers, not everyone in the export elevators has access to computers.<br>• Information is there but one has to have the time to go to many different places and know where to go.<br>• The offices are divided between interior and export functions.<br>• Favoritism in elevators occurs when employees do not rotate.<br>• Work load.<br>• Work hours.<br>• The nature of our work, We are at the mercy of the railroads and elevators. |
| ***External Opportunities*** ***"to exploit"*** | ***External Threats*** ***"to ease or lower"*** |
| • Other agencies have effective communication systems that we can model.<br>• Networking between agencies/offices. | • Outsourcing.<br>• Corruption. |

***SWOT Analysis***
**Problem: Appraisals**

| ***Internal Strengths*** ***"to build on"*** | ***Internal Weaknesses*** ***"to navigate or cope"*** |
|---|---|
| • An IDP and Appraisal system already exists.<br>• Performance appraisal is a good way to "spot" employees with potential for promotion or other career paths.<br>• GIPSA already has a multi-level appraisal system (5 levels).<br>• Performance Review Board was established in to help set up current appraisal system for non-bargaining unit employees.<br>• FGIS Directive 9000.1 for inspectors. It spells out what an inspector can do to earn beyond "Fully successful".<br>• GIPSA's organizational goals were tied in with staff's performance appraisal elements in Fall 2005. | • An IDP and Appraisal system exist, but are not always taken seriously, are not followed, or are not acted upon by management.<br>• Appraisal process is not truly understood by many employees, and or current managers<br>• There is NO directive similar to 9000.1 for non-inspectors.<br>• Misconception of quota for different levels.<br>• Employees do not know where to turn to if they don't agree with rating.<br>• Raters are not trained.<br>• Perception: "Fully successful" is perceived to be used often by managers for both performers and non-performers because managers have to justify awards if they rate employees highly and complete write-ups for non-performers.<br>• Perceptions: whatever good or bad performance happens right before appraisal time will determine an employee's rating. Some managers do not seem to keep track of employees' performance throughout the appraisal period..<br>• No audit of reviewing officials as well as rating officials. |
| ***External Opportunities*** ***"to exploit"*** | ***External Threats*** ***"to ease or lower"*** |
| • The following agencies are getting high marks from their employees in agencies' effort to improve performance evaluations:<br>OMB, GAO, NASA, APHIS, HCA<br>• There are agencies with good appraisal systems to benchmark. | • Government-wide trend to give appraisal ratings on a curve.<br>• Time constraints. |

**SWOT ANALYSIS**
**Problem: IDP/Training**

| ***Internal Strengths*** ***"to build on"*** | ***Internal Weaknesses*** ***"to navigate or cope"*** |
|---|---|
| • AG Learn is a free learning tool for training with many different programs to offer each employee.<br>• IDPs already exit.<br>• At the present time new computers are being installed and updated.<br>• Advance notice is given on all time-framed, mandated training.<br>• Access to computers at government. labs sites and field offices. | • There are not a lot of computers in the export elevators.<br>• Intermittent Internet Connection.<br>• Poor Internet Service at some Export field sites.<br>• 50% of the workforce in export field locations is not requesting any training on their IDP's due to past requests repeatedly being turned down.<br>• Some employees lack basic computer skills.<br>• Lack job responsibilities and duties.<br>• Shifting workloads make it difficult to set a time frame for training.<br>• Under-staffed.<br>• Unscheduled leave abuse causes employees to be shuffled from elevator to elevator.<br>• No access to computers at floating rigs.<br>• AGLearn is available but one has to have the time and know how to access it.<br>• High level of skepticism exists. |
| ***External Opportunities*** ***"to exploit"*** | ***External Threats*** ***"to ease or lower"*** |
| • Other agencies effectively incorporate IDPs and have effective training programs that we can model. | • Corruption.<br>• Time constraints. |

## *Benchmarking*

***Issue: Supervisors Accountability: Semblance of little COMMUNICATION between supervisors and employees.***

| *Area of Challenge* | *Benchmark Practice/ Best Practice* | *Outcome* | *Success Indicator* | *Source* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Accountability and Communication** | **Employee Performance Communication System -** ensures open communication exists between supervisors and employees during the formal planning, monitoring, and reviewing of performance. http://ohcm.gsfc.nasa.gov/sup_info/toolbox/EmpPerf/EmpPerf.htm | Improvements in Performance Appraisal Process. | Originally implemented in 2001 and its still running today. | NASA |
| | **Supervisory Feedback Process** – Employees give constructive and anonymous criticism to Supervisors. | Supervisors identified areas that needed improvements to better do their jobs. | Originally implemented in 2001 and its still running today. | NASA |
| | **Performance HCA**- System of quarterly reviews where initial goals are set at the beginning of the year, prioritized and weighted. The goals are reviewed quarterly, and adjustments are made to timelines, new goals, workload, etc. Each employee then scores themselves based on accomplishments and the weight of each task to give the employee an overall achievement score. The manager then scores the employee as well and both scores are discussed at quarterly review sessions. | Allows employees to stay on task and gives more opportunity to meet with the manager rather than once or twice a year. Allows the employee a chance to "rate" themselves | Implemented in 2003 and still in effect today | HCA Inc. |
| **Communication** | **Several Practices in Place:** Employee Opinion Survey and an *Anniversary Survey* —looks at how GE is connecting with new employees and provides a baseline at the end of an employee's first year of service, as well as a comparison during the third year of service. | 95% response rate Ensures new employees have a voice. | # 7 in Fortune 500 Companies | General Electric |

## Benchmarking Continued

| *Area of Challenge* | *Benchmark Practice/ Best Practice* | *Outcome* | *Success Indicator* | *Source* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Communication** | **Support Central**-global knowledge management system that contains thousands of support communities, tens of thousands of experts and cases, and millions of accessed entries per year to help employees connect with subject matter experts and share best practices. | Extensive resource system on a variety of topics. | Employees have access to a huge assortment of resources. | General Electric Co. |
| | **People Measures**- balanced scorecard to assess communication, attracting and retaining staff, staff utilization and development, and organizational leadership. | Management is re-organized to become a more consultative, decision support organization. | Originally implemented in 2000 and its still running today. | US Government Accountability Office (GAO) |
| | **Entire web page devoted to resources for employees** with links to: "Communication tips, Evaluations, Acting on Employee Feedback, Tips for becoming a leader, Being a better boss", etc. http://www.microsoft.com/smallbusiness/resources/management/leadership_training/bosses_7_communication_tips.mspx#EPE | Employees have multiple resource articles for a variety of communication issues | Supervisors and subordinates have access to articles and advice on better communication. | Microsoft Corporation |
| | **Monthly or weekly staff meetings** | Supervisors talk and inform employees. | No major complaints about communication with supervisor. | Review Branch, FGIS |
| | **Employees weekly or monthly activity report to supervisors** | Employees are well informed of each others job. | Employees work together on projects. | Review Branch, FGIS |
| | **Knowledge portal called the VR Knowledge Portal (vr-wissen)** - integrates information and databases from many different sources. It incorporates a database of all the memos sent by supervisors so local bank employees can easily find the latest information. It also contains databases that help to answer customer questions, resolve customer problems, and make better, faster loan decisions. http://www-306.ibm.com/software/success/cssdb.nsf/CS/EHON-5RYQ69?OpenDocument&Site | Brings people together in an on-demand, collaborative environment. | People have already built their own Communities where they share information and ask questions of each other. | German Cooperative Banks |

## Benchmarking Continued

| *Area of Challenge* | *Benchmark Practice/ Best Practice* | *Outcome* | *Success Indicator* | *Source* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Communication** | The agency runs a **Web site** where employees can get information on their pay, benefits, organizational goals, policies and procedures in plain language. The Web site also includes news articles about FAA — good and bad. http://www.federaltimes.com/index.php?S=1891941 | Employees are well informed and the agency's efforts have been recognized. | Having a single portal where employees can get updates and information they need is a good part of a communications strategy, experts said. | Federal Aviation Administration |
| | **Employee suggestion program** that awards employees for suggestions on ways to improve GAO's performance and accountability. (http://www.gao.gov/atext/d041063sp.txt) | Boosts employee morale and makes them feel like a valued asset and part of communication in the workplace. | Increase in communication with tangible incentives (rewards) to provide suggestions. | US Government Accountability Office (GAO) |
| | The agency regularly briefs supervisors and posts agency **news on a Web site for all employees**. The bureau has a management control program that rigorously tracks audit findings and agency progress in fulfilling auditors' recommendations. Supervisors receive regular management and policy briefings and employees can access a Web page to keep updated on management initiatives, progress toward PMA goals, and other agency news. http://www.federaltimes.com/index.php?S=1891941 | Employees make more meaningful contributions to the organization. | The Treasury Department's Bureau of Public Debt has been praised by the Office of Management and Budget as an agency that does an especially good job of communicating with employees. | The Treasury Department's Bureau of Public Debt |
| | An eBay **Town Hall event** is a live online Community forum event that gives eBay members an opportunity to ask questions related to the eBay marketplace and to get answers from eBay's leadership team. | Members are more informed. | Increase in members. | EBay |

**Benchmarking Continued**

| *Area of Challenge* | *Benchmark Practice/ Best Practice* | *Outcome* | *Success Indicator* | *Source* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Communicating Info that is unexpected or hard to deal with.** | **Grace and a real caring for people.**<br>Everyone deals with situations in a different way, depending on their personal coping style and the nature of their specific situation. What is true for one person may not be true for another. When dealing with an employee in a difficult situation, keep these facts in mind.<br><br>Communication and flexibility are the keys to success. | Building on better relationships. The supervisor has a personal relationship and not just a work relationship.<br><br>Improves the attitude and makes a better work environment. | Employee – Supervisor relationship is improved. | American Cancer Society |

## *Benchmarking*

***Issue: Supervisors Accountability: A perception that some supervisors do not give fair appraisals. APPRAISALS are not taken seriously.***

| *Area of Challenge* | *Benchmark Practice/ Best Practice* | *Outcome* | *Success Indicator* | *Source* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Performance Appraisal are a one way street – Supervisors does all of the work of appraising the employee while the employee signs a name to a form and listens. There is no incentive for either party to put much into the system.**<br><br>**Supervisors sometimes are not completely aware of what the employee has done.** | **CSU Extension Performance Appraisal System**<br><br>At least three core area of performance are identified during the performance appraisal that will be worked on for the coming year. Discussions are conducted between the employee and supervisor on ways and methods to accomplish the goals.<br><br>At the end of the year, employees rate themselves with documentation in a five page report on at least three core areas of performance that had been identified in the previous year's appraisal. The employees submit the review to the supervisor at least two weeks before the scheduled appraisal.<br><br>Employee and Supervisor meet, after the supervisor has reviewed additional information, discuss the previous year and the coming year and an initial rating is identified.<br>Clients and coworkers are solicited to give feedback.<br><br>All paperwork is submitted to the Supervisor's supervisor who reviews it, questions it if necessary and has the final say on the rating.<br><br>An informal meeting between the employee and supervisor is scheduled half way through the year.<br><br>Inadequacies identified by the supervisor are addressed immediately. | Both the employee and the supervisor has a say in the ratings.<br><br>There is an automatic appeal system as the immediate supervisor does not have the last say in the ratings.<br><br>Performance goals are specified and methods to achieve them are discussed. | Employee's participation in appraisals.<br><br>Employees strive to do well because they are rating themselves and justifying the rating. | CSU |

**Benchmarking Continued**

| *Area of Challenge* | *Benchmark Practice/ Best Practice* | *Outcome* | *Success Indicator* | *Source* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **In some pockets of FGIS, supervisors give no incentive to the employees to create goals or to work on improving their performance.** | A pool of money is created every year for use in the Appraisal System. All employees within the agency are eligible. The amount of the pool is dependant on the amount of money that the agency made the year before. The pool is divided between employees that did average or above on creating and meeting their goals on a proportional basis.<br><br>The employee is encouraged but not ordered to submit a synopsis of their accomplishments for the year to their supervisor. | The employee has an incentive to create goals that can be obtained and strive to reach those goals.<br><br>The supervisor is aware of the accomplishments of the individual and is better able to make an informed determination on the Appraisal. | Goals are made and met.<br>Employees are actively trying to reach their goals.<br><br>Employee feels like a part of the system.<br>Less complaints about the appraisal process being just a motion to go through. | EPA |
| **Some employees do not believe that the supervisors give fair appraisals.** | Employees create reasonable goals and discuss them with their supervisor at the beginning of the year. Tools for obtaining these goals are discussed. An informal meeting to discuss progress is held during the middle of the year. The employee writes a report on whether s/he thinks that s/he met the goals at the end of the year and rates their progress themselves. This is handed in to the supervisor for review before the formal appraisal. During the appraisal, the ratings and progress are discussed. | Employees are more satisfied with the results and have more say in their appraisals.<br><br>Employees have to stop and look at what they are doing to assess their goals and their path.<br><br>Supervisors are more knowledgeable on what the employee has accomplished. | More harmony between workers and supervisors.<br><br>Supervisors and employees have the same expectations.<br><br>Fewer complaints about appraisals. | Beckman Inc. |

## *Benchmarking*

***Issue: Supervisors Accountability: Some supervisors do not create a culture for TRAINING that would benefit the agency.***

| *Area of Challenge* | *Benchmark Practice/ Best Practice* | *Outcome* | *Success Indicator* | *Source* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Time and Training** | **Mentoring program**, empowering junior-level staffers. Matching newcomers with veterans. | Create relationships since the beginning of employees' careers. | Successful team projects.<br>Projects started by junior level employees rare expanding to other agencies. | The Energy Department |
| | **Knowledge Transfer/Retention Program--** to transfer institutional and individual knowledge, as well as train and mentor less experienced employees, by reemploying selected retired employees. Mentors have key skills and knowledge and employment is for a temporary period at the same pre-retirement salary. | Helps address the "aging" workplace and allows older workers to make valuable contributors, fosters relationships with new employees. | Helped implement an organizational realignment, including eliminating a layer of management and reducing the number of organizational units. | GAO |
| | **NOFO EXCEL PROGRAM** for ACG'S and ACT'S (Full time permanent and seasonal employees) | Employees will be challenged to grow and develop both personally and professionally. Improving Skills | Implemented in May 1999 and was discontinued due to down turn in export of grain. | New Orleans Field Office |
| | **Rotational Assignments: within the agency.**<br>**http://nasapeople.nasa.gov/training/cdmr/procure/htm** | It provides cross-training and establish skills in other disciplines | Creates professional development opportunities without requiring added funds. | |

**Brainstorming Actionable Solutions**

***Issue #1:***

There is minimal communication among various levels of the organization and no established forum to contribute and receive feedback.

| Planned Action | Specific Steps | Benefits to Communication |
|---|---|---|
| Schedule Town Hall Meetings with management and employees. | • Gather questions before meetings.<br>• Set specific time and place<br>• Reserve Room<br>• Each Meeting can be dedicated to a specific topic. | Employees and Supervisors could be informed about what is taken place agency-wide. They can also get answer to many of their questions. |
| Schedule Monthly and/or Weekly Staff Meetings in Field Offices and Divisions.<br><br>**The huddle**<br>A huddle is often a stand-up affair, no longer than 15 to 20 minutes, right in the work area. It's format is loose and simply assesses how things are going and helps determine what changes are needed. This is particularly useful for a team who works together in a fast paced environment to reach a common goal. | • Set specific time<br>• Reserve room<br>• Gather questions for the town hall meetings.<br><br>• Loose format<br>• It last 15 to 20 minutes<br>• Takes place in the work area | Employees could be well informed about each other's job and Supervisors can communicate their plans.<br><br>Most teams require constant communication throughout the week, as the workflow changes. A quick huddle once or twice a week can keep everyone informed and part of the process. Rather than a lengthy meeting |
| Redesign INGIPSA website | • Make it more user friendly. Make it more appealing (better looking)<br>• Let people know about it. | It will serve as a portal for employees to gather information about career opportunities and information |

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|---|---|---|
| | • Post notes from town hall meetings on this website.<br>• Survey employees that visit the website (optional).<br>• Award employees that write down their suggestions.<br>• Announce Awards and Recognitions.<br>• Each F/O can post a message. (Assign a person for each F/O)<br>• Include links to other articles, resources, etc.<br>• Offer “advise” to supervisors to build relationships with employees.<br>• Include info about pay, benefits and organizational goals. | pertaining to all employees. |

**Brainstorming Actionable Solutions**

**Issue # 2:**
In some areas, employees believe that the Appraisal System is flawed and is not taken seriously.

| Planned Action | Specific Steps | Benefits to Appraisal |
|---|---|---|
| Create in-depth Training CD for supervisors by December 1, 2006. | • Determine funding for the project Extra expenses will be in mail costs and blank CD purchases.<br>• Form a team to create a script plus a PowerPoint presentation for the training CD.<br>• Revamp APHIS's training molules to meet our needs if possible.<br>• If needed, review APHIS's training on aglearn and create a similar training CD.<br>• Have Rosemary Mayne proof the script and Power Point.<br>• Burn a CD for each office. | Supervisors will become more familiar with GIPSA's appraisal system and will be able to better implement it. They will be better able to assist the employee with any questions that they may have. |
| Create a general Power Point presentation on Performance Appraisals for employees by November 1, 2006. | • One person can develop this.<br>• Have Rosemary Mayne proof the Power Point.<br>• Find out if the Union has to look at it.<br>• Distribute the Power Point by e-mail a month before the next performance appraisals are due. | Empowered employees.<br>Understanding of the system..<br>Know roles of employees and supervisors. |
| Make Performance Appraisal Training Mandatory for all Supervisors. | • Determine the date that the training CD should be sent out with the date that it should be done.<br>• Create a letter to be sent to supervisors explaining why the training is important and forward it to Rosemary to proof and then send out with the CD.<br>• Specify in the letter that the training officer will report to Rosemary Mayne the individuals that have completed the training.<br>• Training can be done on Aglearn or by using the CD. | **All** supervisors will have a chance to review the appraisal system. The Directive on Appraisals was created with management and Union input.<br>The refresher on the system will assist the supervisor in creating fair, meaningful appraisals. |
| Town Hall Meeting. HR | • Determine a person to give the talk. | Employees and supervisors will be |

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| Person talks on Appraisals. | • Arrange for a date.<br>• Send out an e-mail to all employees reminding them of the time and date. | more knowledgeable on the appraisal system. |

## Brainstorming Actionable Solutions

**Issue # 2:**
Some employees believe that awards are not distributed evenly or fairly.

| Planned Action | Specific Steps | Benefits to Supervisor/Employee Perceptions |
|---|---|---|
| Create a general Power Point presentation on the awards system for employees. | • One person can develop this.<br>• Have Rosemary Mayne proof the Power Point.<br>• Find out if the Union has to look at it.<br>• Distribute the Power Point by e-mail to all employees.<br>• Create a CD of the PowerPoint for employees with slow connections.<br>• Put the presentation on Ag Learn. | By reviewing the Power Point presentation, the employees will have a better understanding of the system. This will improve communication and lessen complaints. |
| Have a HR person give a talk on the Awards system during a Town Hall Meeting. | • Assume that the Town Hall Meetings are a go.<br>• Determine a person to give the talk.<br>• Arrange for a date.<br>• Send out an e-mail to all employees reminding them of the time and date of the talk. | Employees and supervisors will be more knowledgeable on the Awards system. Concerns on he system can be addressed. |

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**Brainstorming Actionable Solutions**

**Issue # 3: IDP/training**

| Planned Action | Specific Steps | Benefits to Communication |
|---|---|---|
| Start up the Excel Program | • 12 week program for Technicians/Graders<br><br>• Interested employees must provide a statement of what they expect to achieve through this program and returned to the training officer.<br><br>• Two participants selected at a time.<br><br>• If an employee needs assistance in communication skills, and computer skills informal training will be given during the program.<br><br>• The program will include a detailed overview of all major functions of the Field Office.<br><br>• Completion of Program Employee will be recognized by managers and staff and will receive a certificate of training in the Excel Program. | Employees would have the opportunity to work with the field office staff. They would have a better understanding about field office procedures.<br><br>They would get to communicate with top field managers and specialists on a day to day basis and voice any concerns or questions they may have.<br><br>They would receive guidance and directions from supervisors and specialist.<br><br>Rotational duties stations/ On the Job training<br><br>Achieve communication between field office and the field.<br><br>Face to face interactions with supervisors and co-workers. |
| IDP<br>Excellent Plan | • FMD could quarterly or annually review the performance appraisal and IDP system in each field office and report to | The review would keep track of major non compliance items and reinforce the directives on performance |

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|---|---|---|
| Create IDP tutorial tool guide for all employees to access. http://training.usgs.gov/IDP/index.html | FOM.<br>• Management can target supervisors that need to improve their skills on IDPs and provide training for them.<br><br>• Training officer responsible for implementing. | appraisals and IDPs. Oversee career development of the workforce and rating supervisors.<br><br>Supervisors would be trained and educated to provide employees with IDP assistance.<br><br>Helps to create an effective and personalized IDP. |
| Discuss and review employee's IDP during their performance appraisal evaluations. The filing procedure is stated in the 3-Step processing of IDPs in the inGIPSA web-site and has not been implemented. Ingipsa.gipsa.usda.gov/t<br><br>raining/fgistrain/idp.htm | Promote and discuss interested employees on their draft IDPs at Mid-Term and final evaluations. | Builds up the employee's confidence and motivation levels.<br><br>Assess employee's strengths and development needs. |