
Communication Plan



Office of Communication – Washington, D.C.

Communication Plan
for Feasibility Study/Competitive Sourcing of
the Forest Service Communication Functions

National Office of Communication
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., 2-Central
Washington, DC 20250 -1111

Telephone: (202) 205-8521

Thiery Curtis
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BACKGROUND

On April 26, 2005, the Deputy Chief for Programs, Legislation and Communication announced the start of a service-wide competitive sourcing feasibility study on the Forest Service communication functions. The feasibility study will assess the best way to increase the cost-effectiveness and organizational efficiency of Forest Service communications.

The feasibility study team subject matter experts include Denny Bschor, Regional Forester; Bruce Jewell, Deputy Station Director; Jim Caplan, Forest Supervisor; and Cindy Chojnacky, Policy Analyst. In accordance with Departmental direction, the feasibility study will be completed by June 30, 2005.

Following the completion of the feasibility study the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) will make recommendations whether any functions within Communications could benefit from a competitive sourcing study. It is projected that about 100 FTEs may benefit from competitive sourcing. .

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The complex process of competitive sourcing is difficult to understand and can cause nervousness and uncertainty among employees involved in Forest Service communicative functions.

GOALS

To inform agency leadership, affected employees and oversight bodies about the competitive sourcing, timeline and results.

To reduce agency leadership and employees' uncertainty resulting from the feasibility study.

To communicate the process and value or organizational improvements derived from the study of communication functions.

AUDIENCES

Internal

Executive Leadership Team (ELT)

The ELT sets goals and is the final decision-maker. It must fully understand the purpose, expectations, process, ramification, and results of any feasibility or competitive sourcing study.

National Leadership Team (NLT)

The Forest Service's National Leadership Team will be responsible for setting the organizational tone for embracing the competitive sourcing strategies; the team will need to have significant ownership and buy-in of the competitive sourcing strategy to set that tone. They will place a key role in reviewing plans and objectives, and may provide resources to support the study.

Administrative Management Council (AMC)

The Administrative Management Council, chaired by the Deputy Chief for Business Operations, includes the WO Business Operations Staff Directors, Operations Section Heads from IITF and FPL, Assistant Station Directors for Administration, and the Deputy Regional Foresters for Operations. AMC will be key in information sharing and coordination, and providing leadership.

Forest Service Supervisors and Managers

To maximize the ability to manage and direct agency actions relative to implementing the Forest Service Strategy, supervisors and managers will need to have significant knowledge and buy-in concerning competitive sourcing initiatives and agency actions relating to them.

Forest Service Employees -- Communicative Functions Employees

Forest Service employees, especially those whose jobs may be subject to organizational changes and/or modifications, will need information from official, trustworthy sources to allay any misunderstanding and achieve buy-in and ownership.

Forest Service Partnership Council (FSPC)

We will move forward consistent with the provisions of the master agreement with the intent of having the FSPC engaged along the way.

External

USDA

The Forest Service's parent organization will need information about agency plans and actions relative to the Forest Service's competitive sourcing plans. Information will be directed at communicating the value of and gaining buy-in for organizational improvements derived from Forest Service competitive sourcing strategies.

Office of Management and Budget

As the Administration's oversight arm for the President's Management Agenda, OMB also will need to achieve buy-in of organizational improvements derived from Forest Service competitive sourcing strategies. That buy-in will gain Forest Service credibility as it relates to meeting competitive sourcing requirements and benchmarks.

US Congress

The Congress has oversight for all federal agencies, including the Forest Service. It will be important for it to receive information about how the Forest Service is implementing its competitive sourcing strategy and what the agency will gain from proposed changes.

Partners

Other federal, state, and local agencies as well as academia and non-profit organizations which work in partnership with the Forest Service will need to be kept informed of the Forest Service's competitive sourcing activities.

TACTICS

Internal

Forest Service Memos

The WO will communicate with timely memos to update managers and employees concerning the feasibility study.

Competitive Sourcing Webpage

The Competitive Sourcing Program Office will create a separate page within its website so that available information can be easily located and downloaded.

Functional Meetings, i.e. Communicative Functions National and Regional meetings

Periodic meetings should be conducted by Directors, Program Managers and/or Team Leaders in communicative functions meetings to inform employees and other internal stakeholders about competitive sourcing plans and progress. These meetings may involve union representatives and should solicit feedback on any proposed actions under study. The Program Manager, CSPO, is also available to give presentations.

Ombudsman

Establish a single point of contact, the Program Manager, to answer internal stakeholder questions, track down information, respond to suggestions, and investigate complaints. Use the competitive sourcing contacts in the regions and stations as the field points of contact.

E-mails

Periodic e-mails should be sent to internal stakeholders describing decisions, timelines, processes, plan implementation, etc.

FS Today Articles

FS Today articles that provide news updates regarding the study and implementation progress should be written and published regularly.

External**Hill Briefings**

The legislative affairs staff will prepare and manage a congressional contact plan.

Improving Efficiency – FYI

As study decisions and implementation procedures are determined, information relating to them will be reported in the “Improving Efficiency-FYI” newsletter. The newsletter can then be sent to members of Congress, OMB and USDA.

ACTION PLANMay – June 05 - Internal

TARGET DATE	Activity/Product	PURPOSE	RESPONSIBILITY
26 April 05	Chief’s Letter to Union	Advise Union	Jacque Myers, Business Ops
27 April 05	Deputy Chief PL&C Letter to Communication Directors	Advise Directors	Elizabeth Estill, PL&C
29 April 05	Communication Plan	For Team and Field Reference and Use	Thiery Curtis, OC
29 April 05	Key messages and Q&A for use at Leadership and Employee meetings	Inform and employees	Thiery Curtis, OC
29 April 05	Hill Briefings/Contact Plan	Communicate FS BPR improvements to Congress	Terri Cleeland, LA
3 May 05	Fact sheet for use by leadership and employees	Communicate information to employees	Thiery Curtis, OC
3 May 05	Teleconference with field representatives	Discuss Issues and Concerns	Thiery Curtis, OC
May 05	FS Today article	Provide employee update	Thiery Curtis, OC
30 June 05	Complete Communication Functions Competitive Sourcing Feasibility Study	Assess Functions	Denny Bschor and Team

July 05- Dec 05 Internal

TARGET DATE	ACTIVITY/PRODUCT	PURPOSE	RESPONSIBILITY
July 05	Update Communication Plan, Q&A, and Key Messages	For Team and Field Reference and Use	Thiery Curtis, OC
Sept 05	Brief NLT on feasibility study results and provide recommendation	Update to Leadership	Elizabeth Estill, PL&C
Oct-Dec 05	Brief ELT on feasibility study results and NLT recommendation	Decision Brief	Elizabeth Estill, PL&C

KEY MESSAGES/TALKING POINTS

Internal

1. The competitive sourcing tool is a part of the President's Management Agenda and may help some functions become more effective or efficient.

- Operating budgets are shrinking as Congress and the administration continue to reduce spending
- In order to compete for scarce funding and have the support of the taxpayers, we must strive to use taxpayer funding efficiently and effectively.
- Competitive Sourcing will help reduce indirect costs and move the Forest Service toward the goal of 10%.

2. Competitive sourcing is a proven tool that will help us improve our organizational efficiency.

- Our IRM office recently underwent the competitive sourcing process and improved efficiencies and productivity.
- OMB reports an average savings of over 25% of costs regardless of the outcome of the competition.
- Competitive Sourcing has been endorsed by all Presidents to some extent since 1955.

3. Employees have a stake in these studies and will be represented and be given the opportunity to comment.

- We're committed to communicating with all employees as this effort goes forward. The frequency and nature of the communication will be based on decision points, milestones and significant developments.
- We recognize that communication flows both ways.
- In addition the employees, union will participate in the process.

4. The competitive sourcing program objectives are to:

- Increase operational efficiency

- Realize substantial cost reduction
- Support the President's Management Agenda
- Minimize service impact of the process
- Make more funds available to Forests and districts.

External

1. The Forest Service's commitment to mandated organizational efficiency is serious and sound as demonstrated by our use of the competitive sourcing tool.

- In fiscal 2005, the agency will conduct a communicative functions competitive sourcing feasibility study to assess the best way to increase cost-effectiveness.

2. Even if we didn't have the President's Management Agenda, we would still have a responsibility to perform at peak efficiency.

- That responsibility extends from taxpayers who entrust us to use tax dollars wisely.
- In this new environment, we will be held accountable for how we use taxpayer funding and for the work we do. We will be held accountable either from within or from without. It's better when we hold ourselves accountable.

Q&A

Q1. What is the competitive sourcing feasibility study that is being conducted on Forest Service communication functions and will it affect me?

A service-wide competitive sourcing feasibility study will be conducted on the Forest Service communication functions to assess the best way to increase cost-effectiveness and organizational efficiencies. It is projected that the study will result in recommending a competitive sourcing study of approximately 100 full-time equivalents (FTEs) in a couple functional areas.

Q2. What is competitive sourcing?

The President's Management Agenda determined that the goal of the Competitive Sourcing Initiative should be to improve government performance and efficiency through an increased number of public-private competitions. The objectives of the Forest Service's competitive sourcing efforts are to:

1. Increase the cost-effectiveness of Forest Service work
2. Position the Forest Service to effectively compete to do the work
3. Treat Forest Service employees with sensitivity when organizational changes are implemented
4. Avoid unintended consequences from complex processes employed on the way to improved cost-effectiveness

Essentially, competitive sourcing is a management tool that provides a framework to study, guide, and assist business streamlining efforts.

Q3. How did the Forest Service come up with 100 FTEs?

The ELT, while reviewing the OMB-directed competitive sourcing goals for savings and efficiencies, directed that all Forest Service functions be reviewed for study opportunities and it determined that 100 FTEs appear to be a reasonable number.

Q4. What happens after the feasibility study is completed on June 30, 2005?

The study will make a recommendation to the National Leadership Team (NLT) and the NLT will then provide its recommendation to the ELT. The ELT will decide which FTEs will be competed.

Q5. Are Forest Service communication jobs at risk?

Yes, as with any business study where streamlining and improved efficiencies are the goal, organizational restructuring can occur. However, history shows that very few employees (less than 5 percent) are separated through reduction-in-force.

Q6. When will the actual competitive sourcing of the communication functions start and how long will it take?

The plan is to start the competitive sourcing process in January, 2006. It will take approximately 12 months to complete.

Q7. Are the feasibility study/competitive sourcing being applied throughout the Forest Service, or is it being applied only to specific organizations?

Elizabeth Estill announced the feasibility study of communicative functions only. Other functions are to be reviewed in 2006. A core team has been formed to complete this study. An oversight team of NLT members was also formed to ensure the activities are conducted in a fair, consistent and effective manner.

Q8. As an employee, what can I do to help the process?

The input of employees is critical to our success. We need your help. You know how the Forest Service conducts its business better than anyone. If requested, it is essential that you participate in describing those processes. Employees are the strength of our organization. We need your help managing and improving the Forest Service

Q9. What are the functions within communications that will be studied?

All functions within the area of Communications will be included in the feasibility study. The objective of the study is to determine exactly what the scope of Communications is, and then to determine what areas within that scope would benefit from further review.

Q10. Does this study have any relationship to the recent criticism over hiring public relations experts to advocate for the administration?

No. This study is an ongoing part of the President's Management Agenda to increase agency effectiveness and efficiency.

Q11. Where can I learn more about the Competitive Sourcing process?

Information on competitive sourcing is available at the following website:

<http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/pma/main/index.htm>. As the feasibility study moves forward, a link will be placed on this site to take employees to information specific to the study. In addition, employees will be kept informed through periodic written updates.