

USACE 2012

FUTURE CORPORATE AND HQ
DESIGN STUDY

APPENDIX J

FOLLOW-ON STUDIES AND
ACTIONS

Appendix J: Follow-on studies and Actions

Many respondents told us how we could fix problems in Army Corps. While this study had a limited scope, we did not want to lose the many good ideas that our interviewees and respondents had provided. Many ideas fell under broad general themes, other ideas were just stand-alone. We've tried to provide a selection of both in this appendix.

1. Corps Missions and Responsibilities:

Some said that the Corps needs to rethink its missions. There are some missions that the Corps can do better like working on proactively supporting Army transformation. Others said that there were some broad national issues like quality of life and health that would benefit from the recreation and natural resources missions that we do. They offered ideas of new missions and of missions we needed to give up. Currently this is a topic of conversation with many including those who wish to reform the Corps. Because the Corps is directed and funded for its civil works mission through the laws of the United States, and given military missions through the Department of the Army and Department of the Defense, a re-look at our mission cannot be done in isolation. We see that there are many needs that our expertise can fill. Many in this nation still live without clean drinking water for instance. Overseas our experience in Kuwait may be relevant to the post-war Afghanistan and Iraq. But whether we are given these missions is not within the scope of this study, and probably not appropriate for us to do a follow –on study without significant outside involvement. We do stand ready, however, to provide information to those who are interested about Corps capacity to help in these and other areas.

2. Number of Divisions and Size and Make-up of Districts.

Some said that we should be looking at reducing the number of regional offices in the Corps. Others said we should look at reducing the number of district offices, or having only one in a state, or having only one robust district in a region with several storefront districts. Customers complain that they have to deal with more than one Corps office in a single state and that there is little consistency between the offices. Perhaps where two district offices occur, the smaller one becomes an area office. This study did not address any of those ideas. Technology continues to make sharing work easier and even working virtually feasible. As we work more regionally and on large system problems and overhead rates rise, these ideas should be explored.

3. Align along Business Lines.

Consider aligning districts along the lines of the headquarters directorates versus the existing stovepipes. Then, align by business products and service lines below that, such as hydropower, navigation, environment, recreation, emergency response, versus existing stovepipes of operations, engineering etc.

4. “Mine the Ore” of the Collected Comments

Corps staff from across the organization should mine the collected comments of this report for items pertinent to their areas of business and determine and implement improvements. The idea is not to prepare another report saying what you are going to, but respond in a positive way to the comments.

5. Use the Emergency Operations Model Everyday.

We heard from a number of people that if the Corps delivered everyday like it does in an emergency, we’d be much more successful. What are the lessons learned that come out of our emergency operations experiences? Can they be applied to day-to-day operations?

6. Engage with those Outside the Corps: Customers, Sponsors, Interest Groups and Overseers.

Time and again we heard that we don’t talk enough to those outside of the Corps. We don’t talk to them early enough or often enough. Whether it is our customers, sponsors, the Wing Commander, Congressional staff, or other federal agencies—we don’t talk enough to others. They want to hear the bad news from us, not a third party. We need to have more working level meetings with outside interest groups. Headquarters senior leaders need to have regional interface with people. Engaging with those outside the Corps helps build better relationships and allows us to better understand those we serve. Headquarters senior leaders need to concentrate on improving relationships with senior leaders in the Army, DOD and OMB. Hold district meetings with the customer quarterly and divisions should meet yearly. Get out and meet the people engaged in delivering projects. Bottom line: talk with others outside the Corps and listen to them.

7. Get a Viable Lessons Learned Program Going.

Some said that the Corps didn’t like to admit where it had made mistakes, but there is learning from success and from mistakes. One suggestion was to go to some of the major construction firms and find out how they do it. We need a lessons learned systems that doesn’t overload people with data.

8. Tell the Corps Story Better.

Many folks said that we do good things but don’t tell the Corps story well enough. We need to have a strategic communications plan and improve our public affairs and outreach activities. Environmental restoration component of our work is one of the best opportunities we have to demonstrate our success. Need to focus on articulating our success externally, not just internally. We need to publicly state how we measure success and tell the public up front, during and at the end of a project. We tend to complete projects and silently move on to the next job. People outside the Corps do not

understand what we can do, we're told. We don't leverage the good things that we do and don't advertise our success stories. We need to educate decision makers on the needs of the nation and get out in front of the issues.

9. People Issues Need to be Addressed.

Some suggested that we give bonuses to get top technical performers to the Corps and to stay with the Corps. These are not necessarily project managers. Some said they Corps needs to focus on succession planning. They also had suggestions on how to improve the quality of our employees using rotational assignments and mobility to really understand the total organization. Some said to capitalize on the key retirements and don't just automatically submit a 52. We need to select for a different mix of skills—more strategic and entrepreneurial. Some suggested that we ensure that project managers are qualified. Others suggested a formal mentoring program. Others suggested making USACE employees active participants in making changes.

10. Project Management Business Process Implementation.

While the Project Management Business process is in the implementation stages throughout the organization, several have ideas on how to better implement it. One was to reward team performance more, top down. Others said that we need the tools to support PMBP—metrics, enforcement and rewards. Not directly related to the PMBP, some suggested that we ask ourselves how is everything I'm doing helping the corporation and remove all tasks that don't. Good topic for staff meetings. Some suggested that the Corps needs to be more competitive with the private sector. Others suggested that we look at how many people we send to meetings, the number of Corps team members can overwhelm the sponsor.

11. Leadership Ideas

Many folks gave ideas about leaders. Some said we need to hold leaders accountable. Others suggested developing good leaders from top to bottom. Some suggested that we need open forums where personnel can be honest with management without recrimination. Concentrating more on employee relationships rather than daily operations was another idea. Some suggested that we be more aggressive in opening up leadership positions to younger employees at all levels.

Others said that senior leaders need to have regional interface with people other than their regular internal and external counterparts. Field developmental assignments would also help.

12. Other ideas about how we do our work:

Several said we need to go to design-build for standard buildings and structures. Others said to establish a center of expertise on the support for others mission. Some said we should look at supervision and administration costs (S&A) and consider a flat rate.

Others said we need to develop a transition plan to more outsource. Another suggested that we set up a group of guerilla experts to move quickly in on some projects and use their expertise on environmental restoration

13. Expertise in the Corps Can Also Improve.

Some suggested that we benchmark with other federal agencies like GSA, Navy, EPA, FEMA (2 tiered structure), HQ MTC, plus customer focused private sector. They have standard metrics that allow flexibility and we can learn from them. Others suggested creating centers of expertise and using them to achieve economies of scale and serve customers similar to Huntsville Center's franchising idea. Some said we should be measuring the quality of our products and services. Some said that we need corporate methods to stabilize the quality of science and engineering methods being used for technical studies: R&D equivalent of P2. A number of people suggested concentrating technical planning centers.

14. Independent Technical Review

Reexamine the independent technical review process and establish baseline, intermediate, and advanced requirements. For example, baseline might include a virtual district team (not associated with the project at hand) reviewing the work concurrently over the web for small projects; intermediate might be a virtual division team doing the same and meeting for a finalization of opinions for medium projects; advance might be a facsimile of the Environmental Advisory Board (mix of internal, other feds, and academia) virtually reviewing the work and then meeting for finalization for large and very controversial projects. For all cases, we could also encourage researchers to submit any research conducted in support of a project to a juried professional organization like The Wildlife Society, American Fisheries Society, National Academies or other organizations.