

Action Learning Scenario #4
Room _____

Knowledge transfer across generations – not one way

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Assistance provided by Cassandra Ladino and Brian Fox in constructing the Scenario.

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Action Learning Team

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Issue/Challenges:

How do we improve knowledge transfer between early, mid and late career staff especially bringing the experience of late career (possibly retiring) and radical thinking of early career to the table to solve problems? As USGS looks forward to implementing “integrated science” we need to adjust to a multi-generational workforce, in a way USGS has never seen before, merging the best ideas, new ways of problem solving and experience, from both long careers and new staff to the table in ways that cross discipline boundaries, time and hierarchies, etc.

How do we think strategically about career dynamics? We are expecting an acceleration in retirements over the next few years which puts at risk the transfer of knowledge back to the organization. Additionally, early career staff are subject to a variety of position types (i.e. term, pathways, Mendenhall) that influence their on-the-job learning and motivation.

How do we think outside of stereotypes? Assumptions often get made about generational behavior creating bias towards people (both old and new) and reducing incentive for interaction. A familiar example might be that new ideas only come from the young, but of course all late career scientists are not necessarily traditionalists.

How do we make the most out of opportunities to engage? Some best practices exist in USGS like internships, details, Mendonhall, Mentoring Program, Community for Data Integration, and others. Science Centers independently have processes (that are generally not shared) that also assist in this area of transition.

Background Material/Resources (include any background materials/resources that would help to educate the team about the Action Learning Scenario)

Below are several examples Workforce Knowledge Transfer occurring in Industry. In many cases, organizations are actively researching and developing programs to address knowledge gaps.

Generational Examples

<https://www2.usgs.gov/humancapital/e cd/mentoringreadinglist.html>

[Multi-Generational Workforce](#)

[Better Practices for Retaining Organizational Knowledge](#) -Communities of Practice

[Building a Knowledge Transfer Culture](#)

[Leveraging Mentorships for Sustainability](#)

[Forget All The Stereotypes](#)

Different ways of thinking

<https://hbr.org/2014/12/a-better-way-to-think-about-risk>

<https://hbr.org/2017/03/how-to-push-your-team-to-take-risks-and-experiment>

<https://hbr.org/2016/12/the-5-skills-that-innovative-leaders-have-in-common>

Leadership

CDI Workshop Presentations

https://my.usgs.gov/confluence/download/attachments/571574348/20170516_MorningPlenary.mp4?api=v2

Marty Goldhaber at 28:10 and Bruce Caron starts at 57:00. Bruce's leadership discussion beginning at 77:00 is particularly good.

Expectations (your expectations for resolution): (outcomes you would like to see - this should include what questions you want answered or what you want from the team)

Is it valid that USGS is at risk for knowledge transfer gaps due to workforce cycling?

Is the knowledge gap affecting the ability for USGS to move forward with integrated science?

Do we we need a plan for knowledge transfer at the Science Center or Bureau level?

Should this be an addition to the USGS Mentoring Program?

Should it be a Leadership 201 exercise?

Should the Powell Center take this subject on, as in developing a plan?

What are some ways USGS can address the knowledge gaps?

Science Center continuity plans

Centers of Excellence

Communities of Practice

Formal programs for Knowledge Transfer

Are there existing programs in USGS that can be leveraged to help knowledge gaps?

How does the Water Mission Area transfer instrumentation knowledge?

How does Natural Hazards transfer the Seismic duties - employee to employee?

Don't be reluctant to shake up the hierarchical order of things.

Focus on solutions that integrated into how the organization operates on a day to day basis.