U.S. Water Resource Agency - Flagstaff District[i]

The Flagstaff District (FD) is one of 41 districts within the U.S. Water Resource Agency (USWRA—an Agency in the Department of Renewable Resources—DoRR) charged with the responsibility to develop, protect and administer water resources within the United States. The Flagstaff District provides six major product lines of goods and services: (1) the development of new infrastructure and projects; (2) management of the operation and maintenance of existing infrastructure; (3) the performance of reimbursable work for others; (4) administration of regulatory requirements; (5) provision of emergency response and recovery; and (6) the delivery of defense, environmental, and restoration programs.

The Flagstaff District's purpose, vision, mission, and values are:

Purpose—To be effective stewards of the public trust

Vision—The Flagstaff District embraces the Agency's vision as its own. This vision can be summed up in terms of our commitment to protect and promote our nation's water resources to be second to none.

Mission—To ensure and protect water resources for economic and recreation benefit to the nation, partner states, and local governments. FD's principal mission areas include

- development and management of projects and programs to provide for inland navigation, flood-damage reduction, environmental protection, recreation, water supply, and other public benefits
- protection of the region's waterways and wetlands
- support for emergency preparedness, natural-disaster relief, and recovery work worldwide
- provision of a broad range of engineering and technical support for other organizations

Values—The District achieves its mission by means of five core values that serve as the foundation of the organization's overall operations and the behavior of every employee.

- Honor and Respect
- Selfless Service and Courage
- Integrity
- Sharing Knowledge
- Working Safely

Field employees operate 24 multi-purpose dam projects and six lock-and-dam complexes, an equipment-repair station, and a fleet of maintenance vessels. Field offices are connected to the District Office by a radio network and Wide Area Network, or WAN. Computer-Aided Design (CAD) is used in all design projects, as well as Global Positioning System techniques and, most recently, Tele-engineering. Tele-engineering is a critically important advance in state-of-the- art engineering practices in that many projects support international efforts, such as mapping the hydrology of Iraq in just two weeks using a simultaneous combination of U.S.- based and on-site engineering capabilities.

One of the hardest concepts to translate from the private sector into the public sector is that of "competition." In many cases, the services provided to the public by an agency of the Federal Government can be obtained from only that Government agency. Historically, this has led to the unfortunate perception that Government service providers are "the only game in town," lessening the concern for, or need to understand, customer needs, desires, or drivers of satisfaction. In recent years, however, nothing could be further from reality. This realization has served to strengthen the USWRA commitment to providing exceptional value for its customers and continuously improving every aspect of its business. As a Government agency, FD "competes" in three major ways: (1) with private companies for projects or portions of projects; (2) with other districts for reimbursable work; and (3) through outsourcing studies that determine whether work will continue to be accomplished by Government employees or will be contracted to private companies.

Discussion Questions

1. As a public not-for-profit agency, who are Flagstaff District's customers?
2. How might the district define quality? How could it use this definition to evaluate its success in "competing" with other entities?

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[i] Adapted from Baldrige National Quality Program, 2006 Flagstaff Case Study. This is a fictional agency and was used for training purposes for the not-for-profit Baldrige Award process.