

Organizational output often has little to do with original motives or even the demand for it in the first place. While a group strives to deliver on its mission, they cannot escape the impacts of internal processes and externalities on their final product. In the realm of public organizations, that final product is the service they provide to the community. Financial constraints, internal knowledge and capability, and many other factors impact the effectiveness, scale, and timeliness of what they do.

This paper considers three specific factors which have significant consequences for public organizations: political environment, the strategic management process, and communication. The ability to operate comes from the authority of government which delegates the responsibility of providing specific services to a specific organization. In the American system of government, that authority, however, is never fully relinquished by elected officials. They therefore continue to have significant sway in how an organization operates and the degree to which it can do so. The use of strategic processes enable the organization to address problems and implement decisions in a defined method. They make informed decisions by establishing goals, determining guiding procedures, and assigning accountability. Communication is simply the ability to convey a message from one person to another. Its significance is multiplied when applied across complex organizations and networks. These three factors are a sample of issues public organizations must account for to deliver the services a community depends on them for.

## **Section I.**

Organizational structure is significantly influenced by the environment in which it operates. For public organizations, political environments play a major factor. Government hierarchies and legal frameworks determine the scope of a public organization's span of control. Constitutional provisions lie at the root of these dynamics as the means of protecting private citizens and their interests. Other factors include the effects of elections, different levels of government, and separation of powers. Operating within all these considerations, the public sector must

demonstrate its competency, responsiveness, and representativeness as part of a greater social contract with the community and nation. Leaders at every level of government establish these organizations to fill gaps in implementing public policy.

The Environmental Protection Agency was established in 1970 by President Richard Nixon. Its mandate was to consolidate the regulatory and monitoring frameworks for all natural environments, countering the trend of separate efforts such those for the air, the water, and the earth which were housed in different agencies. It was to identify pollutants, trace them to their source, then figure out where within their cycle intervention should take place (US EPA). It would be able to respond to environmental emergencies and research evidence to hold responsible parties accountable or to prevent them from happening entirely. To do all this it assumed functions previously held by the departments of Interior; Health, Education, and Welfare; Agriculture; the councils on Environmental Quality and Federal Radiation; as well as the Atomic Energy Commission (US EPA). Since then, the agency has worked to prevent damaging effects of development by regulating vehicle emissions, banning certain chemicals' use, toxic waste clean-up, and incentivizing recycling programs. In short, it is the advocate for the natural environment which lacks the voice to represent itself in government. Now, in 2017, it is the political environment that is forcing the EPA to reassess its operations and achievable goals.

The election of Donald Trump to the office of the United States President came as an unexpected shock to many. Throughout his campaign and highlighted in his inauguration speech he promised to place US interests before all others. Domestically, that included many contentious issues, but particularly jobs. His administration accordingly has taken steps to position American industry and companies such that they can more easily grow, thereby

increasing demand for workforce. The EPA, whose purpose is regulation and control, has been especially targeted so that obstacles to development can be removed and so capital meant for policy adherence is freed for other uses.

During the previous administration of Barack Obama, environmental policies were slowly strengthened through increased standards on such things as industrial emissions levels. The EPA had a central role in those policies. Now, with political winds changing, the EPA is watching many of President Obama's enabling legislation in his Clean Power Plan be dismantled and its own operating budget being dramatically cut. President Trump has used executive orders to lift many of President Obama's requirements. His actions are not surprising. As a businessman, Donald Trump sought ways to position his companies in advantageous positions. He routinely called climate change a "hoax" and campaigned on promises to make the US energy independent (Worland).

One of the biggest obstacles to that promise being fulfilled is the EPA. Their regulation prevents the opening of new coal mines and exploratory drilling. It ties up millions of corporate dollars in implementing established standards. In addition to reversing much of his predecessor's programs, President Trump is also exercising his budgetary power to scale back the EPA. Non-defense spending could see cuts of nearly \$54 billion under his spending plan and the agency will bear a significant share of it. It will mean little to no grants to states and localities that encourage clean-up and renewal. Programs will be almost eliminated such as the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and departments de-funded like the Office of Environmental Justice (Congressional Digest).

The EPA is obligated to abide by the directives of the President. Its new director, Dir. Scott Pruitt, is intent on leading the agency into its new reality. In his first speech to EPA staff,

Dir. Pruitt focused his message on how the agency would assist states in communicating policies and regulation to companies, not environmental protection (Russell). This clearly signals the direction he will take the agency. As its director, he will establish priorities and redefine the organization's boundaries. Organizational structure will be adjusted to accommodate those priorities as well as the new operating budget. However, it is probable that these changes could have profound impacts on the agency.

There is a growing trend in politics to discredit evidential support for any agenda that is counter to your own. When that evidential support comes from credentialed specialists, like environmental scientists, discrediting means to call into question the findings that led them to their conclusions in the first place, regardless of how many endorsements it may have. Essential to the administration's efforts to de-fund the EPA is to dispute evidence pointing to carbon emissions as a contributor to rising global temperatures (Worland). This could have long-term impacts to the EPA's perceived competence as the public is persuaded over time that the agency's efforts are unfounded. The dramatic funding cuts will have equally dramatic impacts on the agency's responsiveness. Its ability to respond to environmental emergencies will be degraded as staff members, mobility, and equipment are cut to meet fiscal requirements. Additionally, it will cease to be reliable as it becomes incapable of preventing these emergencies in the first place without inspection programs and the inspectors themselves. Its loss of effectiveness will place more emphasis on the states to manage their own remediation and compliance programs. However, it's been the EPA which has funded many of these states' efforts to the tune of more than \$3.2 billion prior to 2017 (Congressional Digest).

The agency's new executive, Dir. Pruitt, will also change the operating environment of the EPA potentially in profound ways. As its new leader, Dir. Pruitt will have significant

impacts based on those issues he emphasizes, the culture he promotes, and how he holds staff members accountable. Those issues will include transparency of how the agency enforces laws on regulated companies, his control of scientific information sharing, and any cooperation the agency has with industry to name a few. EPA staff will observe these trends and adjust their behavior accordingly, which will influence organizational culture as well. If they see an administration supportive of their efforts and intent on holding industry accountable, regardless of budget cuts, they will respond in kind. Stifling external communication, deflecting blame when emergencies occur, or perceiving preferential treatment toward industry will certainly damage that culture through the feelings of powerlessness and betrayal. Dir. Pruitt's personal actions will be observed as well. The organization will emulate the standards he sets for himself in transparency, ethical judgement, and personal accountability. Will he be a Truett Cathy, instilling moral code and standards into his organization? Or will he be a Jordan Belfort, promoting impropriety and deception. Dir. Pruitt will likely fall somewhere in the middle (hopefully leaning towards Cathy), but the examples of organizations like Chick-Fil-A and Stratton Oakmont demonstrate the influence an executive can have on their institution.

Ultimately, history will be the judge of the EPA and how it shifts to operate within the new political environment. We have yet to see if President Trump's environmental policy results in more jobs or simply more corporate revenue. Will it result in the energy independence many desire? Where alternatives really afforded the opportunity to prove themselves? Given time, it's possible that the development of alternative energy sources could help achieve domestic energy independence. This could eventually be necessary since, as Worland points out, the coal industry was on shaky ground even before the Clean Power Plan's enactment (Worland). These

questions will eventually be answered. The presidential shift that necessitates these questions also demonstrates how quickly the political environment can change and the implications which that poses to public organizations.

Whether you support the new administration's actions or not, the political environment in which the EPA operates has changed. The EPA must now change with it in order to adapt to the new realities of permissiveness and fiscal constriction. The decision to change can be quite controversial both within and outside the organization. It must also be rooted in a clear understanding of the goals of the organization and possible alternatives. Doing this will enable an organization to move decisively, but it also requires analysis and buy-in.

## **Section II.**

Power comes in many forms and can be leveraged by an individual or the entire institution. Decisions represent a degree of power as the person who made them had to be authorized to do so. One method is the rational decision model which requires clear understanding of goals, an issue, and possible alternatives. It favors outcomes that offer greatest utility, but can be limited by the degree of information and time available. Public institutions and officials use this model frequently to make informed decisions. They do this while being aware of time constraints that pressure them to be responsive. That pressure can have significant impacts on the effectiveness of their decisions, though, as procedures and best-practices are at risk of being overlooked.

The Central Intelligence Agency of the United States is a crucial organization within the American intelligence community. President Truman established the CIA in the National Security Act of 1947 from the remnants of the World War II Office of Strategic Services (CIA).

Its job is to safeguard and facilitate US interests abroad through the collection and analysis of intelligence.

Since its establishment, the CIA has had a thrilling and controversial history in global politics, stand-offs, and conflicts. However, it has often struggled to keep pace with technological advancements, integrate information across services, and satisfy oversight expectations since the formative attacks of September 11, 2001. Since then, it has seen several governmental attempts to make it more effective and collaborative. President George W. Bush brought it under the wing of the Director of National Intelligence, an integrator of intelligence agencies across the services, in 2004 (CIA). As Director of the CIA, Leon Panetta established reforms in 2010 meant to make the agency nimbler and more ethically adherent (Augustyn). John Brennan, then Director of the CIA, introduced his Blueprint for the Future in 2015 which was designed to improve responsiveness and adaptation to the digital world (Brennan). This latest example faced significant challenges, among them overcoming the agency's history of change attempts and a short timeline for implementation given that presidential elections were just 18 months away at the time. Today it is organized into five directorates which divide the responsibilities of operations, analysis, science and technology, information management, support, and digital innovation. In these directorates are the employees who implement the changes their director establishes.

In order to make a decision, leaders must know what they want to achieve first. Dir. Brennan identified the need for change then used a panel of selected agency staff members to solidify a clear picture of where the agency needed to be. He then rank-ordered them while maintaining an interconnection so that emphasis was not lost on any goal.

Foremost among these goals, he identified the need for greater investment in the members themselves. This included leadership and skillset development as well as a re-emphasis on the importance of recruiting young, intelligent new blood. To do this, all development and recruitment programs were consolidated under one office, the Talent Development Center of Excellence (Brennan). Next, all training would be managed by the CIA University and arranged in similar fashion to higher education models with a chancellor whose job it was to grow all staff members and prevent stagnation. They also enacted policies that provided cross-functional assignments for leaders to build their understanding of organizational capabilities.

Dir. Brennan and his panel of staff understood the significance of the digital revolution. In it, they saw both the opportunities it presented in capability and efficiency, but they also recognized the threat it posed to the agency and national interests. The Blueprint's second priority was the incorporation of the digital tradecraft. The newly established Directorate of Digital Innovation (DDI) would oversee its implementation. It would be the first senior directorate to be established since the 1960s (Slick).

Third, the Blueprint highlighted the need to streamline decision-making. Executive directors would be empowered to exercise greater day-to-day control of activities. Decision authority would be pushed down to the lowest possible level to minimize bureaucratic red tape. In doing so, the panel hoped to make the agency more responsive to the pace of world events.

Lastly, the agency wanted a more integrated and collaborative environment. They saw from previous successes that it worked and often led to positive outcomes. To facilitate this, the agency would introduce a new matrix organization it would call *Mission Centers*. These Mission



Centers would bring together specialists from across functional areas to provide more integrated responses to agency projects (Brennan).

Dir. Brennan understood that organizational change at the CIA was essential to its continued relevance in the global intelligence community. He drew from personal experience as a 25-year veteran of the CIA's Directorate of Intelligence (which he renamed Directorate of Analysis) by experiencing first-hand the reforms of previous directors. He had also been part of the agency when the "Silberman-Robb" Commission recommended in 2005 that its covert action mission be removed from the agency's operations division, then called the National Clandestine Service. This attempt was due to the agency's faulty performance in assessing the status of Iraq's pre-war weapons of mass destruction program. The Commission wanted to create a separate directorate reporting immediately to the Director of the CIA which would also have placed additional layers of bureaucracy between it and the other directorates (Slick). These experiences offered several alternative methods for reshuffling that Dir. Brennan had been present for.

Appropriately, it is impossible to know what other alternatives Dir. Brennan and his panel considered without an appropriate security clearance. There is a strong likelihood that many alternatives were suggested by agency members themselves because of surveys and interviews conducted to arrive at the final Blueprint for Tomorrow. Additionally, one must assume that the decision to pick this course of action over all others was done because its benefits outweighed its disadvantages and provided more than the benefits of the alternatives. While the CIA's decision-making process is also appropriately classified, sister services' processes in the Department of Defense are not. All of them utilize some form of analysis of

alternatives which assign weight to selected criteria to create quantitative findings. It is an assumption of this report that such comparisons were conducted by Dir. Brennan and his panel.

The Blueprint for the Future does leave many questions about the longevity of its implementation. There is very little information available describing how, or if, it is being adhered to following the transfer of authority from Dir. Brennan to the current head, Dir. Mike Pompeo. The new naming conventions of directorates and the addition of the DDI still exist. However, there was more to the Blueprint's ambitions than just these facial changes. Matrix structures underneath Mission Centers represent dramatic new organizational methods and recruitment efforts of new young staff members will only be effective if it is maintained. Additionally, Slick's article notes that the influence of the average agency member was nominal once Dir. Brennan's staff panel conducted its initial organizational pole (Slick). Would this affect the plan's acceptance in an organization with a reputation of being resistant to change? Perhaps most importantly, was there enough time (about 18 months) between its rolling-out in 2015 and the transition to new leadership in 2017? This problem plagues many public organizations as political appointees come and go. Most importantly, did the changes result in a more effective agency prepared for the evolving threats of a digital world? Pending the eventual declassification of documents, our only indication of this may be whether yet another reform agenda is introduced in our nation's premier intelligence service.

The CIA's organizational change occurred very deliberately. It was a response to what Dir. Brennan saw as the agency's potential loss of relevance due to an inability to adapt to a changing global environment. It was informed by decades of professional experience and the responses given by agency staff. Identifying and instituting these dynamic changes required the ability of everyone involved to communicate what wasn't being done right and expectations of

how things should be. Communication within a group often determines success or failure since how messages are delivered and received conveys information. Communications with multiple agencies is even more complicated and often requires deliberate analysis to ensure success.

### **Section III.**

Effective communication in groups is essential; it is required whenever more than one person has to cooperate to get a job done. The challenge behind communication is conveying the right message. Messages aren't conveyed when they are confused, denied, or withheld. They aren't correct when they lack clarity or are misunderstood. With the many different mediums that exist today, it is important for communication to deliver the message needed despite any limitations of the chosen method. When communication has to occur across organizational boundaries with partner networks, it becomes even more imperative.

The field of emergency management is a time-sensitive and life-saving profession. Emergency managers are responsible for responding to crisis and emergencies across the country. It's their job to plan for and respond to events like floods, earthquakes, tornados, manmade disasters, and even terrorist attacks. Their purpose is to prevent the loss of life and minimize suffering of those who are effected. Through them, the efforts of first responders and follow-on support personnel from different departments and multiple jurisdictions are coordinated. Since every emergency is different, each one requires a different combination of capabilities to address the issue. There are individual emergency management departments at municipal and county levels. Each state has its own agency, and overseeing them all is the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). With such a broad range of departmental overlap, first responder variations (i.e. police/fire fighters/emergency medical services/etc.), and

lives at stake the need for effective inter-organizational communication becomes even more paramount.

On January 13, 1982, 78 people died when Air Florida flight 727 crashed on the 14<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge in Washington DC. Over 3,000 people died during the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001 in New York, Washington DC, and Pennsylvania. Hurricane Katrina killed almost 2,000 people along the Gulf Coast on August 29, 2005 (History). These examples of emergencies demonstrated the necessity of good coordination between responders and were also landmark cases of poor communication. To address this, Congress directed the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) to develop of the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP). It sought to identify requirements needed to ensure different departments could talk to each other, make short- and long-term recommendations, establish timeframes for completion, and guide the federal government's emergency communications program (DHS). It would provide continuity across governmental, non-governmental, and even private-sector entities.

The NECP began by defining the communication goals of emergency management leaders. They were simple. First, 90% of urban areas could demonstrate multi-departmental response communication within one hour of a routine event within two years of the plan's implementation. Second, 75% of non-urban areas could do the same within three years after implementation. Finally, 75% of all jurisdictions could demonstrate the same level of communication within three hours of a major incident after five years from implementation (DHS). This implies the expectations for communication were simultaneously horizontal, vertical, and external.

Once goals were established, DHS identified what capabilities were needed to achieve them. As a product of the goals' simplicity, the list of identified capabilities needed to meet their implied and specified tasks was long as it addressed gaps which existed at one or more levels of government. They included strong leadership, clear lines of communication, and processes for strategic planning all to support governance. Standardization was needed to ensure interoperability equipment and terminology. Measures of performance standards for individuals was also synchronized. Finally, recommendations were made to help departments ensure their equipment was up-to-date and maintained (DHS). To measure the success of implementation, the OEC published a list of standardized metrics which could be accessed by any department to help them gauge their own progress toward the established goals. It also highlighted the importance of broad acceptance by the myriad of government agencies to unify practices and improve national response.

Listing standards of communication looks good on paper, however, managers need to have a realistic understanding of what level of cross-talk they can expect when the time comes. To measure the effectiveness of all these inter-agency communication efforts, the DHS utilizes surveys to pole emergency management offices. The National Interoperability Baseline Survey was administered in 2006. Scorecards are routinely developed to help understand progress over time. Additionally, crisis scenario rehearsals are held frequently which test the various stakeholders' capabilities in simulated environments. To help this, it is common for large metropolitan and regional areas to join in cooperative agreements for support to pool their resources. These arrangements also promote interoperability and improve readiness as a result of increased real-world responses (Carafano).

Such a diverse field of organizational cross-talk becomes even more complicated when including private groups and individuals. Carafano discusses how to promote commercially available equipment for private responders that help achieve interoperability, but what happens when the social-media variable is introduced? The prevalence of this medium of communication is significant. Pew Research found that over half of American adults, 62%, get their news from it (Gottfried). This trend presents both opportunities and problems for the emergency manager. Responders can get near real-time information about areas affected by an event. However, these reports need verification lest critical resources be dedicated to an area which isn't needed because of a wrong or uninformed report.

One community in Indonesia faced this problem during a natural disaster which resulted in the deaths of over 350 people. Compounding the confusion, local governance was unable to support response efforts effectively and local media was inaccurate. Their solution was to leverage the existing communities' networks of information using Civilian Radio-Station Volunteers (CRVs) (Gultom). These individuals were already incorporated into tight-knit groups and thus had access to information that might not have been shared with responders. These CRVs could confirm or deny local social media reports as well as gather more detail to help prepare incoming help.

The comparison of US and Thai emergency responses may seem far-fetched given differences in government capacity and responder capabilities. However, it's important to remember that similar scenarios could be possible during times immediately following a wide-area event. Hurricanes and long-tracked tornados (think Hurricane Katrina and the April 2011 "Tornado Super Outbreak" in several southern states) can, and did, cause substantial damage which took responders a long time to identify and address the multitude of need.

The collaboration of emergency management can be a complicated matter. Although funding and communication streams vertically and horizontally through the national network, authority is only solidified during actual crisis, not day-to-day activities. In the 2006 National Interoperability Baseline Survey mentioned earlier, only 6,819 agencies responded of 22,400 who received it (Carafano). That means conclusions were based on barely one third of the population. FEMA is also limited in what it can dictate to other agencies. It cannot break up logjams or resolve disputes between agencies, or force them to work together. For instance, Carafano noted how the emergency management agencies of Chicago and Cook County, Illinois had been unable to resolve their disagreement over whose equipment and radio communications network would be implemented for standardization (Carafano). This was although both agencies publicly recognized the importance of having a single system.

The national emergency management network does understand and implement some critical lessons-learned. They are aware and operate with the understanding that the people closest to the problem should be given the greatest amount of authority and resources when determining how to respond. They practice a lot. Through simulations and exercises, the various agencies get to work with each other, become accustomed to each other practices, and develop shared techniques. They also continuously stress the need for national standards. Doing so could eventually lead to common protocols and practices that will enable nation-wide responses to catastrophic local events enabled by effective communication.

As discussed, public organizations are forever accounting for issues stemming from a less-than-perfect operating environment. No matter how good their intentions are, they must always be mindful of how who they report to, how they implement decisions, and how they

communicate influences the quality of what they produce. Otherwise, failure affects the lives and livelihoods of their community and can drive perceptions of ineffectiveness.

These three factors impacted their respective organizations in dynamic ways. The election of an anti-regulation US president has created an impressively difficult financial environment for the EPA. The change in political backing at the highest national level contrasts sharply with the support given and emphasized by the previous administration. The CIA recognized its need for reform as a result of a changing threat landscape that used widespread digital capabilities. The agency used its people to inform what that change should look like, identified its goals, then mapped out how to reach them. Effective communication can easily be a difficult thing to achieve. For emergency managers, they must work hard to not only communicate within their respective organizations, but within the network of multi-echelon and inter-governmental agencies as well. Doing so is essential to maintain a rapid and effective reaction to national emergencies.

Dealing with the number of external issues on a public organization requires thoughtful and flexible responses. Internal decision processes and communication can enable effective answers to these problems, though. These are established by leadership who motivate and empower their team-members to contribute to the solution. Their ability to maneuver in fluid political environments, make informed decisions, and communicate inside and outside their organization is essential. It is important that leaders at every level acknowledge and demonstrate these abilities for the benefit of their communities.



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