

BULLET BACKGROUND PAPER
ON
IMPLEMENTING A WING INNOVATION OFFICE

PURPOSE

AETC commander, General Rand, tasked SOS Class 14B Think Tank to develop the concept of a Wing Innovation Office (WIO) in detail. Specifically, SOS Class 14B is tasked to address the following: specific barriers to innovation, office functions, beta test wings, actionable metrics, and staffing in a zero-based manning environment.

DISCUSSION

- Definition: “Innovation is the process within the Air Force of developing, implementing, and sustaining new technology, tactics, processes, or procedures in order to save money, increase efficiency, or expand capability” (SOS Class 14A Think Tank)
- Provide examples of barriers to innovation
 - Lack of Central Focal Point: Need to provide one-stop shop for innovation
 - USAF maintains more than 20 different programs and offices meant to facilitate change
 - Results in overlapping functions, confusing reporting, and multiple POCs
 - Insufficient Advertising: Poor awareness of tools available for innovation
 - Deficient unit-level knowledge of the aforementioned programs:
 - 2013 C3 Review stated, “message not reaching frontline workers”
 - Lack of POC involvement at unit levels
 - Dover AFB IDEA Program had only 64% of offices with IDEA POC in 2013
 - Lack of or ineffective CPI training for Airmen
 - Maintainer implemented \$10K idea, but due to improper paperwork was unable to collect monetary reward
 - Bureaucratic: Size and complexity of innovation programs must be overcome
 - More than 700 different Separate Improvement Process forms for authorizing changes
 - Long delays in implementation of innovative ideas
 - NCO waited over two years to implement TO change for hangar door repair

- Incentives: Need consistent incentives to promote innovation
 - Regulations often inhibit program incentives
 - IDEA submission from 574 AMXS ineligible; implemented idea before submission
 - SNCO focus group identified lack of public recognition as significant barrier
 - Perceptions of disincentives per AFSSO21 FAQ
 - Units lose savings if budget is not spent in fiscal year
 - Successful innovation can lead to loss of positions
- Office Functions:
 - Vision: Build and maintain a wing culture that fosters innovation from conception to implementation
 - Education and Training: Breaks advertising barrier through three elements
 - Senior leader motivates to innovate, debunks myths, and pushes innovation programs
 - Full-day innovation seminar covers innovation programs, AFSSO21, tactical debrief consideration, case study analysis, and hands-on exercises; workcenter reps trained
 - Commander's innovation subject matter expert (SME) works closely with leadership to remedy deficiencies as well as improve unit functions per AFI 90-201 requirements
 - Facilitation: Breaks focal point and bureaucracy barriers by guiding the flow of ideas from conception through implementation
 - Focus: WG/CC focuses innovation efforts; Airmen generate grass-roots level ideas
 - Collect: WIO collects ideas through work center POCs and/or directly from Airmen
 - Refine: SMEs and FMO representative refines inputs for further consideration
 - Vector: WIO identifies correct approval authority based on subject of idea
 - Feedback: SMEs follow up with innovator and CC on status of implementation
 - Coordination: Breaks bureaucracy and incentive barriers through idea sharing
 - Chief Innovation Officer (CINO) distributes ideas laterally in wing
 - WIO leverages outside resource such as Senior Leader recognition
 - CINO shares effective ideas vertically with the MAJCOM to maximize cost-savings
- Staffing in a zero-based manning environment
 - AETC Senior Leaders champion program via advertisement campaigns, mass email, commander's channel, social media, and monitor performance for beta test wing
 - Wing Commander provides oversight and reinforces innovation priorities through continued endorsement of the program, the office, and the process
 - CINO (O-4) selection should be competitive to ensure motivated/qualified individual

-- WIO Team

- NCOIC (E-7) that executes education/training function
- Civilian (GS-12) provides continuity for facilitation/coordination functions
- SME nominated from each group that can either be dual-hatted with above key staff and/or attached to WIO full time on one-year staff assignment; five-level desired
- Financial Management Office expert supports on as-needed basis
- Desired team qualifications: Tiger Team/CAG/OB/exec/First Sergeant experience working closely with CC, knowledge of wing, innovation program expertise, instructor
- Recommendation: Personnel drawn from process-improvement programs in an effort to consolidate innovation efforts

- Beta Test Wing Course of Action

- Goal: Provide a flexible model that can be implemented at any wing
- Methodology: Conducted weighted ranking of the following factors; relative weights determined using systematic pair-ranking process
 - Flying Wing (19%)
 - Representative of entire AF; 87% of bases have a flying mission
 - 18% of AF budget dedicated to flying ops; single largest area for potential savings
 - Host Wing (19%)
 - Cost savings potential due to management of base support and infrastructure
 - Mission Diversity (19%)
 - Multiple missions improves innovation due to diversity of career fields
 - Total Force (19%)
 - Ratio of guard/reserve equal to at least 80% of AF norm; represents total force
 - Guard/reserve represents unique pool of expertise due to off-duty employment
 - C3 Participation (14%)
 - High C3 participation rate or savings per capita indicates recent innovation success
 - Demographics (5%)
 - Ratio of officer/enlisted/civilian within 20% of AF; representative of typical wing
 - Non-Undergraduate Pilot Training (UPT) Only Wing (5%)
 - Wings providing only UPT training have rigid structure; less innovation potential

-- Recommended beta test base: 71 FTW, Vance AFB

--- Pros: Overall highest in quantitative analysis; also, strong C3 participation (4th in AETC), zero Class A Mishaps 2012 (best practices), international student training, contract support (for profit perspective), supports three airframes (T-1A, T-38, T-6A)

--- Cons: UPT program is rigid which limits innovation flexibility

-- Other bases that present with strong weighted scores in the aforementioned categories include the 14 FTW at Columbus AFB and the 56 FW at Luke AFB

RECOMMENDATION

SOS Class 14B Think Tank recommends the establishment of a WIO at the 71 FTW, Vance AFB, to be directed by an O-4 with the support of two key personnel in the grades of GS-12 and E-7 who perform the critical functions of educating leadership and wing personnel regarding innovation tools, facilitating ideas through the vetting and implementation process, and coordinating lessons learned both within the Wing and across external agencies.