

Vision Statement – Field Project Services - Brigitte Baeuerle

Overall Vision: I envision FPS as a team of resourceful and efficient individuals who will provide scalable project management support services to the geosciences user community as well as to the EOL staff. FPS itself will consist of a small core group of project managers, an administrator and an administrative assistant. A significant number of other EOL individuals from various facilities will join FPS on a temporary basis as priorities are set and projects are allocated. Project management will not be limited to NSF field program support but will also be available to other EOL projects that require coordination across several groups within and outside of EOL (e.g., polar C-130, driftsonde etc). The FPS team will work closely with NSF Program Officers, EOL management, principle investigators and EOL staff including scientists, engineers and technicians to determine resource and staffing requirements for each project, facilitate preparations, and conduct programs to completion in a timely manner and within budget. Close collaboration between FPS and the Cyber Infrastructure and Data Services group (CDS) will be essential in order to continue providing state-of-the-art communications, software development, data transfer, access and storage. Within the FPS, special attention will be given to a supportive work environment in which all members of a team are treated well and have ample opportunity to grow and advance. Responsibilities and tasks are distributed in an equitable, non-discriminatory manner. The highest priority will be given to good communications, full sharing of information and knowledge transfer in all areas of project management.

Strategy, Opportunities and Challenges: Rather than attempting a radical change within FPS, I suggest building on the grass-root efforts that have evolved since IHOP to improve communications and collaboration across EOL facilities as well as JOSS. The creation of an official FPS facility with staff and resources is encouraging as it allows us to move from the ad-hoc approach implemented by a few individuals to a team of project managers with clearly defined responsibilities, and provides validation and visibility of the work that is being done within EOL. The matrix structure suggested by Cooper combined with the merger of EOL and JOSS has the potential to work well for FPS, assuming that attention is paid to some of the well-known challenges, specifically overcoming the history of competition between EOL and JOSS and a clear definition of where the authority of a project manager begins and ends. One of the biggest challenges will be maintaining close ties between the FPS project management group and the individual EOL facilities and platforms to make sure that project managers maintain familiarity with the facilities, priorities and activities within the lab.

The opportunities clearly outnumber these challenges. From a project manager's point of view, the formation of FPS is an explicit charge from EOL management to streamline project management within the laboratory and creates a long-overdue peer group within EOL. Within FPS, project managers will be expected to become familiar with and understand the needs and requirements of all LAOF system in order to be able to serve in various roles and support all systems. As a result, EOL will have a pool of individuals who can fill in for each other and pass on knowledge, providing for continuation and consistency. At the same time, a merged EOL/JOSS FPS project office opens the

possibility of project managers filling several roles during a project, especially once set-up is complete. Services previously provided separately to EOL staff and users will now be streamlined and integrated without much additional cost or effort, providing a more comprehensive set of support services especially for large projects. Rotating project leadership will allow each team member to be routinely in charge of an entire deployment, which provides a more challenging and satisfying work environment and mirrors project management in the industry. In the same manner, FPS administrative assistants will be involved in many aspects of a project and charged with a multitude of tasks rather than limiting the contributions of administrative staff to just one area.

FPS within EOL, NCAR and UCAR: FPS fits well into the overall NCAR mission. Field project support is an integral and important part of EOL's mission, with EOL being the national provider of most of the Lower Atmospheric Observing Facilities. Field activities drive many of the EOL activities, especially technical developments within the laboratory. The NSF-funded user community identifies NCAR, through EOL, with deployment of the Lower Atmospheric Observing Systems and collection of high quality atmospheric data sets. The suggested changes to field project support services within EOL provides higher visibility of the project support services that EOL has always done well. In the long run, EOL may give consideration to extending its project support services to other groups within or outside NCAR, from universities to other agencies and even NGOs.