

## **APPENDIX B-2**

# **FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOLS**



**THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT DEMONSTRATION PROJECT**

**FACILITATORS' FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL**  
*For*  
**DEMONSTRATION GROUP NON-SUPERVISORS**  
*Spring 2005*

**PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT DEMONSTRATION PROJECT  
FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL**

**DEMONSTRATION GROUP, NON-SUPERVISORS**

**I. INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND**

➤ **Welcome and overview of session**

*Hello everybody. My name is (facilitator) and this is (co-facilitator). We are from Booz Allen Hamilton, a management consulting firm in McLean, VA. We will be leading today's discussion about the Department of Commerce's Personnel Management Demonstration Project (Demo Project).*

➤ **Demonstration Project Background**

*We would like to start by briefly talking about the Demo Project. As you probably know, DoC initiated the Demo Project in March 1998 as a means of testing whether a series of alternative personnel practices could be more successful than traditional personnel practices in helping DoC achieve its goals. A series of HR interventions were implemented in a subset of the organization. In 2003, this Demo project was extended another five years to better understand the impact of these HR interventions.*

*The Demonstration Project includes two groups and our assessment compares human resource practices in these two groups. The first group is made up of those work units within DoC where a series of human resources practices have been implemented under the Demo Project. We call this the Demo Group. The second group consists of DoC work units similar to those participating in the Demo Project but who have maintained the traditional human resources practices. This group is called the Comparison Group.*

➤ **Booz Allen's Role**

*DoC contracted with Booz Allen to conduct a comprehensive program evaluation of the Demo Project's performance in meeting its objectives. Booz Allen's role in the Demonstration Project is as an objective, third party evaluator. Booz Allen was not involved in the design of the Demonstration Project's new human resources practices. The DoC has been responsible for implementing the new practices, with oversight provided by the Office of Personnel Management. Booz Allen's job is to collect information and act as an impartial evaluator of how the new human resources practices are working.*

➤ **Purpose of the Focus Group**

*The intent of this focus group is to gain an understanding of specific human resource practices within the Department of Commerce from the perspective of employees. We would like to identify how these practices impact employees and their work units. Also we would like to hear*

*from you about any past successes and/or possible future improvements to human resource practices. In particular, we will be talking about:*

- A. Performance Management*
- B. Career Paths*
- C. Hiring/Recruitment*
- D. Turnover and Retention*
- E. Quality of Workforce*
- F. Organizational Excellence and Workforce Diversity*

*Information from this focus group will be combined with the information collected from the focus groups taking place in other locations. Booz Allen will then use all the focus group data, plus information from surveys, interviews, and other sources, to evaluate the seventh year of the Demonstration Project.*

➤ **Participant Selection**

[USE THIS PARAGRAPH FOR THE REGULAR NON-SUPERVISOR SESSIONS:] *I imagine that you are interested in knowing how you were invited to join today's session. We were given a list of employees at this location and from this list we randomly selected names. For this focus group, we selected names of non-supervisors. To be sure that we sampled names correctly, I want to make sure everyone here belongs in this group. Is there anyone here who is a supervisor? (Facilitator's note: If so, thank them for their time and excuse them from the session. Note that we defined supervisors as those who conduct performance appraisals of others.)*

[USE THE SHADED TEXT ONLY IN ALL MINORITY OR ALL FEMALE SESSIONS:] *You may have noticed as we went around the room that our group is rather homogenous. In fact, this is by design. We were given a list of employees at this location and from this list we randomly selected names based on [MINORITY/GENDER].*

*The reason that we did this is because we want to assess the impact of the Demo Project's human resources interventions on [MINORITY/FEMALE] employees. Our discussion today will be included as part of our overall data collection efforts but will also allow us to compare the perceptions of [MINORITY/FEMALE] employees with the perceptions of employees overall.*

*We are also conducting other focus groups across the United States. We are meeting with employees in the Demo Group as well as the Comparison Group.*

➤ **Focus group participant introductions**

*Before we continue, we would like to find out who you are. If you would, please tell us your name, your organization, and department, and how long you've been with DoC.*

(FACILITATOR'S NOTE: State the following only at sites at which it applies.) *While we are here, we also will be conducting another focus group with supervisors and will be asking them similar questions.*

*We also are conducting focus groups at several other locations across the United States. We are meeting with employees in the Demo Group as well as the Comparison Group. (Facilitator's note: Bring your copy of the list showing where we are conducting focus groups in case anyone asks.)*

➤ **Confidentiality**

*Any information you share with us today will be held confidential. We will be aggregating results from all focus groups and will not be attributing comments to any particular groups or individuals.*

*We also ask that anything said in this group remains in this room. We want everyone to feel comfortable about talking, which means that we have to agree not to discuss what was said here today. Is everyone comfortable with that?*

➤ **Timing**

*Today's focus group will last approximately 2 hours. We will take one 15-minute break during this session.*

*Are there any questions before we get started?*

## **II. DISCUSSION**

### **A. Performance Management**

#### **Performance Appraisal Process**

*Our first set of questions pertains to the performance appraisal process.*

- 1. How often do you receive formal or informal feedback from your supervisor? How often does that feedback help you improve your performance?*
- 2. Do you feel that your performance is linked to the organizational mission? If yes, how? If no, why not?*
- 3. Does the current performance appraisal process clearly identify the consequences of poor performance to employees, as well as the rewards of good performance?*

4. *Does the current performance appraisal process help to differentiate between high and low performing employees?*
5. *Has your understanding of the performance appraisal system enacted under the Demo Project improved, stayed the same, or lessened over the past seven [two] years since the Demo Project was implemented?*
6. *If you could modify aspects of the current performance appraisal system to better meet your needs, what changes would you make?*

### **Pay-for-Performance**

*Next, I have a series of questions for you about pay and performance.*

7. *Do you feel that your pay has increased during the seven [two] years that you have been in the Demo Project more quickly than it would have under the traditional GS system? If yes, is this due to the Demo Project? If no, why not?*
8. *Do you believe that larger pay raises are given to people who perform better? Do you believe that average or lower performers are treated fairly?*
9. *Do factors other than performance contribute to an employee's salary? If yes, what are the other factors? Do you think other factors besides performance should contribute to an employee's pay raise?*
10. *What influence do Rating Officials and Pay Pool Managers have on the pay for performance system? Are they fair in how they do these jobs?*
11. *Do you think pay-for-performance is motivating employees to perform better on the job? If yes, why? If no, why not?*
12. *What could DoC do in the future to improve the link between an employee's pay and his/her performance?*

### **Performance Bonuses**

*Our next set of questions pertains to performance bonuses.*

13. *Does your work unit distribute performance bonuses?*
14. *Do performance bonuses motivate employees to perform better?*
15. *Are performance bonuses distributed fairly, that is, based on performance? If not, what other factors are considered?*

**B. Career Paths**

*As you know, within the Demo Project, positions were grouped into one of four career paths—ZP for scientists and engineers, ZT for scientific and engineering technicians, ZA for administrative positions, and ZS for support positions. We have a question for you about how these career paths are working.*

16. *In what ways have the career paths improved your opportunity to progress in your career as you would like?*
17. *What impact, if any, has the broadband classification system had on your career progression?*

**C. Hiring/Recruitment**

*Our next set of questions pertains to hiring and recruitment.*

18. *Have you noticed any differences in the past seven [two] years in your work unit's ability to attract and hire high quality candidates? If yes, to what do you attribute the difference?*
19. *Have you noticed any differences in the quality of new hires since the Demo Project began? If yes, to what do you attribute the difference?*
20. *What else could DoC do to attract and hire high quality employees?*

**(BREAK: 5-15 MIN)**

**D. Turnover and Retention**

*Our next set of questions pertains to turnover and retention.*

21. *How much turnover is there within your work unit?*
22. *Why do people leave this organization? What types of employees are leaving?*
23. *Have any of the following personnel changes made as part of the Demo Project helped DoC retain high performing employees? If so, which ones and how?*
  - *performance-based pay increases*



- *performance-based bonuses*
- *potential for pay increases with promotion*

24. *What else could DoC do to retain high performing employees?*

**E. Quality of Workforce**

*The next few questions pertain to the quality of the workforce.*

25. *Thinking about the fact that the Demo Project was designed to improve performance, do you think employee performance has improved, stayed the same, or worsened over the past seven [two] years?*

26. *Is work being done more efficiently within your work unit since the Demo Project began? If yes, what impact have new hires had on this improvement?*

**F. Organizational Excellence and Workforce Diversity** (pass out listing of the nine Merit System Principles and to avoid the 12 Prohibited Personnel Practices)

*We have several questions about organizational excellence and workforce diversity.*

27. *Have you noticed any changes in how the nine Merit System Principles are followed since the Demo Project began? If yes, how?*

28. *Have you noticed any changes in how the twelve Prohibited Personnel Practices are avoided since the Demo Project began? If yes, how?*

29. *Do you feel that any of the human resource practices implemented as part of the Demo Project have had a particularly positive impact on minorities, women, or veterans in the Demonstration Project? If yes, how?*

30. *Do you feel that any of the human resource practices implemented as part of the Demo Project have had a particularly negative impact on minorities, women, or veterans in the Demonstration Project? If yes, how?*

**G. Outstanding Issues**

31. *Before we end today, do you have any other issues regarding the Demonstration Project that you would like us to know?*
32. *Considering the Demonstration Project overall, including all the HR interventions implemented during the Demo Project, what do you think DoC did well? What could DoC have done differently?*

**III. CLOSING**

*In closing, we want to again mention that your comments will be held confidential. We will be combining information that we gather in the focus groups with information gathered from the survey and interviews. We will then prepare our Year Seven evaluation report and will submit it to DoC and the Office of Personnel Management later this summer.*

*Thank you for participating in today's session. We appreciate your taking the time and sharing your ideas with us!*

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**I. INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND**

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➤ **Demo Project Background**

*We would like to start by briefly talking about the Demo Project. As you probably know, DoC initiated the Demo Project in March 1998 as a means of testing whether a series of alternative personnel practices could be more successful than traditional personnel practices in helping DoC achieve its goals. A series of HR interventions were implemented in a subset of the organization. In 2003, this Demo project was extended another five years to better understand the impact of these HR interventions.*

*The Demo Project includes two groups and our assessment compares human resource practices in these two groups. The first group is made up of those work units within DoC where a series of human resources practices have been implemented under the Demo Project. We call this the Demo Group. The second group consists of DoC work units similar to those participating in the Demo Project but who have maintained the traditional human resources practices. We call this the Comparison Group. All of you here today are part of the first group, the Demo Group.*

➤ **Booz Allen's Role**

*DoC contracted with Booz Allen to conduct a comprehensive program evaluation of the Demo Project's performance in meeting its objectives. Booz Allen's role in the Demo Project is as an objective, third party evaluator. Booz Allen was not involved in the design of the Demo Project's new human resources practices. The DoC has been responsible for implementing the new practices, with oversight provided by the Office of Personnel Management. Booz Allen's job is to collect information and act as an impartial evaluator of how the new human resources practices are working.*

➤ **Purpose of the Focus Group**

*The intent of this focus group is to gain an understanding of specific human resource practices within the Department of Commerce from the perspective of supervisors. We would like to identify how these practices impact supervisors and their work units. Also we would like to hear*

*from you about any past successes and/or possible future improvements to human resource practices. In particular, we will be talking about:*

- A. Performance Management*
- B. Career Paths*
- C. Classification*
- D. Hiring/Recruitment*
- E. Three-Year Probation for R&D Employees in ZP Career Path*
- F. Turnover and Retention*
- G. Quality of Workforce*
- H. Organizational Excellence and Workforce Diversity*

*Information from this focus group will be combined with the information collected from the focus groups taking place in other locations. Booz Allen will then use all the focus group data, plus information from surveys, interviews, and other sources, to evaluate the seventh year of the Demo Project.*

➤ **Participant Selection**

*I imagine that you are interested in knowing how you were invited to join today's session. We were given a list of employees at this location and from this list we randomly selected names. For this focus group, we selected names of supervisors only. To be sure that we sampled names correctly, I want to make sure everyone here belongs in this group. Is there anyone here who is not a supervisor? (Facilitator's note: If so, thank them for their time and excuse them from the session. Note that we defined supervisors as those who conduct performance appraisals of others.)*

*(Facilitator's note: State the following only at sites in which it applies.) While we are here, we also will be conducting other focus group with non-supervisors and we will be asking them similar questions.*

*We are also conducting focus groups at several other locations across the United States. We are meeting with employees in the Demo Group as well as the Comparison Group. (Facilitator's note: Bring your copy of the list showing where we are conducting focus groups in case anyone asks.)*

➤ **Focus group participant introductions**

*Before we continue, we would like to find out who you are. If you would, please tell us your name, your organization, and department, and how long you've been with DoC.*

➤ **Confidentiality**

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➤ **Timing**

*Today's focus group will last approximately 2 hours. We will take one 15-minute break during this session.*

*Are there any questions before we get started?*

**II. DISCUSSION**

**A. Performance Management**

**Performance Appraisal Process**

*Our first set of questions pertains to the performance appraisal process.*

1. *Does the current performance appraisal process enable you to accurately evaluate the performance of your employees? If yes, how so? If not, what is missing?*
2. *Does the current performance appraisal process create an opportunity for you to provide your employees with relevant feedback regarding their performance? If yes, how? If no, what is missing?*
3. *From the perspective of a supervisor, is the current performance appraisal process easier, the same as, or more difficult to use than the traditional process? How so?*
4. *Does the current performance appraisal process help to differentiate between high and low performing employees?*
5. *Do you believe that average or lower performers are given guidance on how to improve performance? If so, what kind of guidance are they receiving?*

### **Pay-for-Performance**

*Next, I have a series of questions for you about pay and performance.*

6. *Under the Demo Project, do you believe that larger pay raises are given to employees who perform better?*
7. *Do factors other than performance contribute to an employee's salary? If yes, what are the other factors? Do you think other factors should contribute to pay raises?*
8. *Do you think pay-for-performance is motivating employees to perform better on the job? If yes, why? If no, why not?*
9. *What influence do Rating Officials and Pay Pool Managers have on the pay for performance system? Are they fair in how they do these jobs?*
10. *What could DoC do in the future to improve the link between an employee's pay and his/her performance?*

### **Supervisory Pay**

*We have a couple of questions for you regarding supervisory performance pay. Does your group provide supervisory performance pay? If no, skip section.*

11. *Does the supervisory performance pay intervention motivate supervisors to perform better as supervisors? If yes, how? If no, what would be a better motivator?*

### **Performance Bonuses**

*Our next set of questions pertains to performance bonuses.*

12. *Does your work unit distribute performance bonuses?*
13. *Do you think that performance bonuses motivate employees to perform?*
14. *Are performance bonuses distributed fairly, that is, based on performance? If not, what other factors are considered?*
15. *Do you think it is easier or more difficult for employees to obtain a bonus than before the Demo Project began?*

**B. Career Paths**

*As you know, within the Demo Project, positions were grouped into one of four career paths—ZP for scientists and engineers, ZT for scientific and engineering technicians, ZA for administrative positions, and ZS for support positions. We have a question for you about how these career paths are working.*

16. *In what ways have the career paths improved employees' opportunity to progress in their career as they would like? Is this different for supervisors? How?*
17. *Is there any way you would change these career paths to make them more conducive to improving employees' career progression?*

**C. Classification**

*We have a few questions about the job classification process.*

18. *Are you using the automated job classification system? If yes, how effective is the system? How easy is it to use?*

**D. Hiring/Recruitment**

*Our next set of questions pertains to hiring and recruitment.*

19. *Have you noticed any differences in the past seven [two] years in your ability to attract and hire high quality candidates? If yes, to what do you attribute the difference? What techniques have worked well for you in attracting high quality candidates?*
20. *Have you noticed any differences in the past five years in the quality of new hires? If yes, to what do you attribute the difference?*
21. *Have you lost a qualified candidate because he/she was made a better offer somewhere else? If yes, did this offer come from a federal agency or a private sector organization? Do you know what factors led this candidate to choose the other opportunity?*
22. *What else could DoC do to attract and hire high quality employees?*

**(BREAK: 5-15 MIN)**



**E. Three-Year Probation for R&D**

*Our next set of questions pertains to the three-year probation period for ZP employees performing research and development work. Does your unit use the three-year probation period? If no, skip to next section.*

23. *If you have hired ZP employees performing R&D work: do you feel that you have the flexibility to terminate ZP employees performing research and development work who are covered by the three-year probation period?*

**F. Turnover and Retention**

*Our next set of questions pertains to turnover and retention.*

24. *How much turnover is there within your work unit? How has this influenced morale in your work unit?*
25. *Why do people leave this organization? What types of employees are leaving?*
26. *Has the overall turnover rate changed as a direct result of this Demo Project? If so, has it gotten higher or lower?*
27. *Have you lost high performing employees to opportunities outside of the Federal Government?*
28. *How are high performing employees encouraged to stay with DoC?*
29. *Have any of the following personnel changes made as part of the Demo Project helped DoC retain high performing employees? If so, which ones and how?*
- *performance-based pay increases*
  - *performance-based bonuses*
  - *potential for pay increases with promotion*
  - *retention bonuses*
30. *What else could DoC do to retain high performing employees?*

**G. Quality of Workforce**

*The next question pertains to the quality of the workforce.*

31. *As you probably know, the Demo Project was designed to improve employee performance at DoC. Considering the employees hired during the Demo Project who you expected to be high performers, has their performance met your expectations? If yes, what impact are they having on the work unit? If no, why not?*
32. *How else could DoC improve employee performance?*

**H. Organizational Excellence and Workforce Diversity** (pass out listing of the nine Merit System Principles and the 12 Prohibited Personnel Practices)

*We have several questions about organizational excellence and workforce diversity.*

33. *Have there been any changes in how the nine Merit System Principles are followed since the Demo Project began?*
34. *Have you noticed any changes in how the twelve Prohibited Personnel Practices are addressed since the Demo Project began?*
35. *Do you feel that any of the human resource practices implemented as part of the Demo Project have had a particularly positive impact on minorities, women, or veterans in the Demonstration Project? If yes, how?*
36. *Do you feel that any of the human resource practices implemented as part of the Demo Project have had a particularly negative impact on minorities, women, or veterans in the Demonstration Project? If yes, how?*

**I. Outstanding Issues**

*I have just a few final questions for you.*

37. *Considering the Demonstration Project overall, including all the HR interventions implemented during the project, what do you think DoC did well? What could DoC have done differently?*
38. *Before we end today, do you have any other issues regarding the Demo Project that you would like us to know?*

### **III. CLOSING**

*In closing, we want to again mention that your comments will be held confidential. We will be combining information that we gather in the focus groups with information gathered from the survey and interviews. We will then prepare our Year Seven evaluation report and will submit it to DoC and the Office of Personnel Management later this summer.*

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## PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT DEMONSTRATION PROJECT FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

### COMPARISON GROUP, NON-SUPERVISORS

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##### ➤ Booz Allen's Role

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*We also are conducting focus groups at several other locations across the United States. We are meeting with employees in the Demo Group as well as the Comparison Group. (Facilitator's note: Bring your copy of the list showing where we are conducting focus groups in case anyone asks.)*

➤ **Focus Group Participant Introductions**

*Before we continue, we would like to find out who you are. If you would, please tell us your name, your organization, and department, and how long you've been with DoC.*

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*Are there any questions before we get started?*

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- 1. How often do you receive formal or informal feedback from your supervisor? How often does that feedback help you improve your performance?*
- 2. Do you feel that your performance is linked to the organizational mission? If yes, how? If no, why not?*
- 3. Does the current performance appraisal process clearly identify the consequences of poor performance to employees, as well as the rewards of good performance?*
- 4. Does the current performance appraisal process help to differentiate high and low performing employees? If no, why not? If yes, is this process being implemented fairly by managers?*

#### **Pay and Performance**

*Next, I have a series of questions for you about pay and performance.*

- 5. In what ways are employees rewarded for performing well?*
- 6. Would a pay-for-performance system – one in which level of performance drives amount of pay – motivate you to perform better?*
- 7. What could DoC do in the future to improve the link between an employee's pay and his/her performance?*

**Awards**

*Our next set of questions pertains to awards.*

8. *Does your work unit distribute awards? If so, what types of accomplishments result in awards?*
9. *Do awards motivate employees to perform better?*
10. *Are awards distributed fairly, that is, based on performance? If not, what other factors are considered?*

**B. Career Progression**

*The next question relates to your ability to progress in your career.*

11. *Are there personnel practices that affect your opportunity to progress in your career as you would like?*

**C. Hiring/Recruitment**

*Our next question pertains to hiring and recruitment.*

12. *What types of activities do you see being used to attract and hire high quality candidates?*

**(BREAK: 5-15 MIN)**

**D. Turnover and Retention**

*Our next set of questions pertains to turnover and retention.*

13. *How much turnover is there within your work unit?*
14. *Why do people leave this organization? What types of employees are leaving?*

**E. Organizational Excellence and Workforce Diversity** (pass out listing of the nine Merit System Principles and to avoid the 12 Prohibited Personnel Practices)

*We have several questions about organizational excellence and workforce diversity.*



15. *Are the nine Merit System Principles followed in your work units? If so, please describe how they are followed.*
16. *Are the twelve Prohibited Personnel Practices avoided in your work units?*
17. *Do you feel that any of the human resource practices we have discussed have had an especially positive impact on minorities, women, or veterans within DoC? If yes, how?*
18. *Do you feel that any of the human resource practices we have discussed have had a negative impact on minorities, women, or veterans within DoC? If yes, how?*

**F. Outstanding Issues**

19. *Before we end today, do you have any other issues regarding the human resources practices that we have not covered that you would like us to know?*

**III. CLOSING**

*In closing, we want to again mention that your comments will be held confidential. We will be combining information that we gather in the focus groups with information gathered from the survey and interviews. We will then prepare our Year Seven evaluation report and will submit it to DoC and the Office of Personnel Management later this summer.*

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**COMPARISON GROUP SUPERVISORS**  
*Spring 2005*

## PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT DEMONSTRATION PROJECT FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

### COMPARISON GROUP, SUPERVISORS

#### I. INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

##### ➤ Welcome And Overview Of Session

*Hello everybody. My name is (facilitator) and this is (co-facilitator). We are from Booz Allen Hamilton, a management consulting firm in McLean, VA. We will be leading today's discussion about the Department of Commerce's Personnel Management Demonstration Project (Demo Project).*

##### ➤ Demo Project Background

*We would like to start by briefly talking about the Demo Project. As you probably know, DoC initiated the Demo Project in March 1998 as a means of testing whether a series of alternative personnel practices could be more successful than traditional personnel practices in helping DoC achieve its goals. A series of HR interventions were implemented in a subset of the organization. In 2003, this Demo project was extended another five years to better understand the impact of these HR interventions.*

*The Demo Project includes two groups and our assessment compares human resource practices in these two groups. The first group is made up of those work units within DoC where a series of human resources practices have been implemented under the Demo Project. We call this the Demo Group. The second group consists of DoC work units similar to those participating in the Demo Project but who have maintained the traditional human resources practices. We call this the Comparison Group. All of you here today are part of the second group, the Comparison Group. So, your work units are still following the traditional HR policies and practices; they have not implemented the interventions that are being tested in other parts of DoC.*

##### ➤ Booz Allen's Role

*DoC contracted with Booz Allen to conduct a comprehensive program evaluation of the Demo Project's performance in meeting its objectives. Booz Allen's role in the Demo Project is as an objective, third party evaluator. Booz Allen was not involved in the design of the Demo Project's new human resources practices. The DoC has been responsible for implementing the new practices, with oversight provided by the Office of Personnel Management. Booz Allen's job is to collect information and act as an impartial evaluator of how the new human resources practices are working.*

##### ➤ Purpose of the Focus Group

*The intent of this focus group is to gain an understanding of specific human resource practices within the Department of Commerce from the perspective of supervisors. We would like to*

*identify how these practices impact supervisors and their work units. Also we would like to hear from you about any past successes and/or possible future improvements to human resource practices. In particular, we will be talking about:*

- A. Performance Management*
- B. Career Progression*
- C. Classification*
- D. Hiring/Recruitment*
- E. Turnover and Retention*
- F. Quality of Workforce*
- G. Organizational Excellence and Workforce Diversity*

*Information from this focus group will be combined with the information collected from the focus groups taking place in other locations. Booz Allen will then use all the focus group data, plus information from surveys, interviews, and other sources, to evaluate the seventh year of the Demo Project.*

➤ **Participant Selection**

*I imagine that you are interested in knowing how you were invited to join today's session. We were given a list of employees at this location and from this list we randomly selected names. For this focus group, we selected names of supervisors only. To be sure that we sampled names correctly, I want to make sure everyone here belongs in this group. Is there anyone here who is not a supervisor? (Facilitator's note: If so, thank them for their time and excuse them from the session. Note that we defined supervisors as those who conduct performance appraisals of others.)*

*(Facilitator's note: State the following only at sites in which it applies.) While we are here, we also will be conducting other focus group with non-supervisors and we will be asking them similar questions.*

*We are also conducting focus groups at several other locations across the United States. We are meeting with employees in the Demo Group as well as the Comparison Group. (Facilitator's note: Bring your copy of the list showing where we are conducting focus groups in case anyone asks.)*

➤ **Focus Group Participant Introductions**

*Before we continue, we would like to find out who you are. If you would, please tell us your name, your organization, the department you work in, and how long you've been with DoC.*

➤ **Confidentiality**

*Any information you share with us today will be held confidential. We will be aggregating results from all focus groups and will not be attributing comments to any particular groups or individuals.*

*We also ask that anything said in this group remains in this room. We want everyone to feel comfortable about talking, which means that we have to agree not to discuss what was said here today. Is everyone comfortable with that?*

➤ **Timing**

*Today's focus group will last approximately 2 hours. We will take one 15-minute break during this session.*

*Are there any questions before we get started?*

## **II. DISCUSSION**

### **A. Performance Management**

#### **Performance Appraisal Process**

*Our first set of questions pertains to the performance appraisal process.*

1. *Does the current performance appraisal process enable you to accurately evaluate the performance of your employees? If yes, how so? If not, what is missing?*
2. *Does the current performance appraisal process create an opportunity for you to provide your employees with relevant feedback regarding their performance? If yes, how? If no, how could it be improved?*
3. *From your perspective as a supervisor, in what ways is the current performance appraisal process easy or difficult to use?*
4. *Does the current performance appraisal process clearly identify the consequences of poor performance to employees, as well as the rewards of good performance?*
5. *Does the current performance appraisal process help to differentiate between high and low performing employees? If no, why not?*

#### **Pay and Performance**

*Next, I have a series of questions for you about pay and performance.*

6. *How do you reward high performers? Is this different than the way you reward average or lower performers?*
7. *Would a pay-for-performance system – one in which level of performance drives amount of pay – help you to reward your high performers?*
8. *What challenges do you foresee in managing employees under a pay-for-performance system?*

### **Supervisory Performance**

*We have a couple of questions for you regarding supervisory performance.*

9. *What techniques are used now to encourage supervisors to improve their performance as supervisors?*

### **Awards**

*Our next set of questions pertains to awards.*

10. *Does your work unit distribute awards?*
11. *Do awards motivate employees to perform better?*
12. *Are awards distributed fairly, that is, based on performance? If not, what other factors are considered?*
13. *What role do you, as a supervisor, have in the distribution of awards and/or the amount? Would you increase your role or decrease your role in this process? What would you change?*

## **B. Career Progression**

*The next question relates to your ability to progress in your career.*

14. *Are there personnel practices that affect your opportunity to progress in your career as you would like?*

## **C. Classification**

*Our next two questions pertains to job classification.*

15. *What role do you have in job classification?*

16. *Do you think the current classification system works for your work unit? For the agency?*

**D. Hiring/Recruitment**

*Our next set of questions pertains to hiring and recruitment.*

17. *Have you noticed any differences in the past seven [two] years in your ability to attract and hire high quality candidates? What techniques have worked well for you in attracting high quality candidates?*
18. *Have you noticed any differences in the past seven [two] years in the quality of new hires?*
19. *Have you had any difficulty recruiting high quality candidates as a result of personnel restrictions? If so, what type of restrictions have affected you?*
20. *Have you lost a qualified candidate because he/she was made a better offer somewhere else? If yes, did this offer come from a federal or a private sector organization? Do you know what factors led this candidate to choose the other opportunity?*

**(BREAK: 5-15 MIN)**

**E. Turnover and Retention**

*Our next set of questions pertains to turnover and retention.*

21. *How much turnover is there within your work unit? In what ways, if any, has this impacted the morale in your work unit?*
22. *Why do people leave this organization? What types of employees are leaving? Were they high performing employees?*
23. *Have you lost high performing employees to opportunities outside of the Federal Government?*
24. *In what ways have you encouraged high performing employees to stay with DoC?*
25. *Do you feel there are restrictions placed on the steps you can take to avoid turnover among high performing employees?*

**F. Quality of Workforce**

*The next question pertains to the quality of the workforce.*

26. *What does DoC do to improve the quality of its workforce?*

**G. Organizational Excellence and Workforce Diversity** (pass out listing of the nine Merit System Principles and the 12 Prohibited Personnel Practices)

*We have a few questions about organizational excellence and workforce diversity.*

27. *Are the nine Merit System Principles followed in your work units?*
28. *Are the twelve Prohibited Personnel Practices avoided in your work units?*
29. *Do you feel that any of the human resource practices we have discussed have had an especially positive impact on minorities, women, or veterans within DoC? If yes, how?*
30. *Do you feel that any of the human resource practices we have discussed have had a negative impact on minorities, women, or veterans within DoC? If yes, how?*

**H. Outstanding Issues**

31. *Before we end today, do you have any other issues regarding the Demo Project that we have not covered that you would like us to know?*

**III. CLOSING**

*In closing, we want to again mention that your comments will be held confidential. We will be combining information that we gather in the focus groups with information gathered from the survey and interviews. We will then prepare our Year Seven evaluation report and will submit it to DoC and the Office of Personnel Management later this summer.*

*Thank you for participating in today's session. We appreciate your taking the time and sharing your ideas with us!*