

The Anonymous Field Office A Case Study

The Anonymous Field Office is located near a large metropolitan area called Big Town. This office has a variety of responsibilities in relation to natural resources, environmental contaminants, stream restoration, land management activities, land acquisition, public education/outreach, and partnerships with individuals and groups in the local community.

You are the new Supervisor of a staff of eleven employees. Their names, positions, major duties, and personal information follow. Further information about the office, its history and information about the community are described after this table.

Name	Position / Grade	Major Duties	Personal Info
Michelle Hawkins	Biologist, GS-11	Works on environmental contaminants and stream restoration Issues	Her position calls for her to be working more on stream restoration but in actuality, because of demand and the grants they have been getting, she primarily works on contaminants.
Al Mercer	Biologist, GS-11	Works on Biological Species Issues	Single parent w/ 3 children; elderly mother lives in his home; having difficulty supporting his family on his current salary.
Charlie Sampson	Student intern	He's been assisting Lynette and Al and filling in wherever needed.	He's an honor student and will get his masters in Zoology; single and African-American.
Lynette Ortega	Biologist, GS-13	Handles the partner's program and land management issues.	Retirement eligible; husband in poor health; born and raised in Big Town and has worked at this field station for 15 years. Lynette is the only one who knows how to write grants at this field office.
Molly Chung	Administrative Assistant, GS-6	Handles administrative support for the entire field office including correspondence, phone duties, bill paying, general office management, purchasing, etc.	In transferring from another Federal agency she took a downgrade so she could move with her significant other and has been at this office for 6-months. Has recently begun doing the ordering function.

Name	Position / Grade	Major Duties	Personal Info
Julie Smith	Biological Technician, GS-7	Performs a variety of duties in the field, does limited public outreach and helps out with some of the responsibilities that should be assigned to the Biologist GS-13 position.	Julie is an excellent employee who has been at this field office for over 5 years and, since she has lived in this community her whole life, has a very good understanding of the political climate in the area as well as partnership issues.
Grady Reynolds	Biological Technician, GS-5 (Temporary)	Performs a variety of duties in the field and does limited public outreach.	He is currently attending Big Town College and earning his degree in Environmental Conservation. He'll graduate with a BS next year. (His position is a temporary one but Grady is hoping it will be converted to permanent sometime in the near future).
Linda Coldwell	Realty Specialist, GS-12	Working on land acquisition; employed by the headquarters office but stationed here; you provide day-to-day supervision, but are not her official supervisor.	She loves the freedom of being away from the Regional Office and her hard-to-get-along-with boss; likes Big Town and doesn't want to return to the RO once her acquisition work is done.
Harry Blackhawk	Outreach Specialist, GS-9	Public outreach and education on conservation and the activities of the field station.	He's in an FPL 11 position; recently married; recently converted to the same religion as his wife.
Jill McDonald	Law Enforcement GS - 11	General law enforcement responsibilities	Has been very effective in dealing with local community members in resolving trespassing issues on areas of the property where there is restricted access.
Frank Williams	Wage Grade 9	Responsible for all maintenance tasks and heavy equipment operations. Has also has been tasked with training new and current employees on safety and operations of heavy equipment.	Has major personality clashes with some of the people in the partnerships that the field office has established.

The Anonymous Field Office has been in existence since 1971. In the beginning, many people in the local community felt that the government was starting the office near Big Town to micromanage the actions of the community relating to environmental issues. The first project leader worked hard to establish good relations with the community and succeeded in establishing many partnerships with local groups and got the community involved in the success of the office. This feeling changed about 8 years ago when Fred Alexandover replaced George after his retirement. Fred misused his authority with some of the local partners and alienated many of them to the point where they walked away from the partnerships with the office on key projects. Instead of using cooperative techniques, he approached them with a "my way or the highway" attitude. Building the trust back up has been difficult, to say the least.

The budget for this field office is extremely tight with allocated funds being cut back each year. About 30 % of the funding coming into this office is from grants that are renewed every two years. Many of the grants that are written can only be submitted with other partners signed up as co-applicants and co-implementers. Because of the poor relationship this field office has with the local community, at least one grant has been lost because one of the key partners opted out several months before the application deadline. To make matters worse, Lynette, the GS-13 Biologist, is getting ready to retire and she is the only one on the staff who is a proficient grant writer and knows the process. Additionally, the building that houses the staff offices is in need of serious repair and most of the computers are out of date.

Losing key partners connected with other projects has had unanticipated consequences. Two local university professors who do a great deal of research in areas of concern for this field office have served on the Board of Directors of two of these partner organizations, and now are not on good terms with the field office. These professors donated many hours of their time and brought many student volunteers with them to work on important projects to the office. Now they have cut their time way back and you really need their expertise and assistance.

One of the challenges of this field office is that there are five significant Conservation Plans that are coming up for renewal in the next year. Three of these plans involve agreements with partners who have indicated a reluctance to sign a renewal for their plan. If they will not commit and sign, there is a chance the other two plans may not be renewed either.

The list of partners of this field office include many state agencies such as the Department of Health, local public schools, the State Department of the Environment, the local Education Office, the State Department of Education, the State Department of Conservation and Recreation, and the Department of Environmental Quality. Federal agency partners include other DOI Bureaus, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the U.S.D.A Forest Service, the EPA, and the US Army Corps of Engineers. Academic organizations include State University-Big Town and the State Cooperative Extension. Nonprofit organizations include the Big Town Alliance of Conservation, the Big Town Foundation, and the Greater Area Big Town Environmental Trust organization.

This field office has excellent relationships with the other DOI Bureaus and the Department of Environmental Quality. In the past, when times were tough, these partners were always there to support this field office.

You've tentatively identified the Administrative Assistant position, currently held by Molly Chung, to take over much of the grant writing and other additional responsibilities which you believe are reasons to justify a grade increase for this position.

As a final note, next year is the 50th anniversary of the Lost Duck National Territory which is nearby. The Headquarters Office has dedicated a substantial amount of funds to celebrate this event.