

THE HONG KONG HOUSING AUTHORITY

Memorandum for the Human Resources Committee

Core Values and Team Alignment

PURPOSE

The purpose of this paper is to outline some key programmes that drive and support Core Values and team alignment in HA.

BACKGROUND

2. HA has outlined its Vision, Mission and Core Values which lay the foundation of our new service culture. The Vision statement sets out what HA aspires to be and aims to inspire staff towards the desired state. The Mission statement defines the framework for the entire operation and aims to set business focus and direction for staff. The Core Values of ‘*Caring*’, ‘*Customer focused*’ and ‘*Committed*’ set the parameters of HA’s organization culture and aim to guide staff beliefs, behaviours and actions towards the desired culture. The descriptions of our Vision, Mission and Core Values are set out in **Appendix I**.

3. Whilst Core Values guide and support the Vision and Mission and are essential to accomplishment of departmental objectives, these are only words on paper to staff unless we help them create meaning from these statements and generate a sense of common purpose, concern and commitment to these values. A Core Values alignment strategy has to combine efforts of raising staff’s sights, setting their minds and winning their hearts on these Core Values. It has to be built on helping staff to examine their fundamental beliefs and behaviours, and making paradigm shift to new ways of thinking and being.

This is particularly important for an organization where staff have stayed for a major part of their careers, and traditional management approaches are based more on 'tasks' than 'people' orientation.

4. To the 3 'C's of the Core Values, we need to add the dimension of 'collaboration', which is important for putting staff's efforts together for vitality and synergy purpose and to bring them to new frontiers of change. Due to our large size and the functional demarcation of operation in the past, coordination between sections is more difficult. Team work in HA tends to take a functional, hierarchical and discipline-based approach. Following the re-alignment of our core businesses, there is scope for taking a cross discipline approach in project management and fostering a closer work alliance between the management and maintenance functions to allow more room for cross team collaboration and multi-discipline in-put for joint problem-solving. For organizational development, better teamwork at all levels of staff is warranted to bring MEP forward and to provide better sense of purpose and meaning in work.

5. Culture change is a key HRM initiative under the MEP. Winning staff commitment, fostering teamwork for better service delivery and improving internal and external relationship, will be important for nurturing our Core Values. We are recommending a full range of activities that support Core Values and team alignment.

PROGRAMMES FOR CORE VALUES AND TEAM ALIGNMENT

6. The following initiatives that build Core Values and teamwork from management level down to front-line staff have been/are being launched :

I. Corporate communication for consistency and common understanding

- (a) production of a corporate video with key messages from the Director and other corporate leaders that highlight the Vision, Mission and Core Values of HA, for mass communication to staff;
- (b) production and issue of Vision, Mission and Core Values publicity materials e.g. 'tent card' to be placed on staff's desk, as constant reminder of our desired organization culture;

- (c) the Core Values are published in small note pads, training folders and other stationery items;
- (d) a 1-day Orientation Programme for new recruits has been introduced to articulate HA's expectations on staff and to develop the right perspective in them right from the start.

II. Promotion and Re-inforcement

7. As Core Values guide management practices and staff behaviours towards the desired organization culture, we should be very specific on what these practices and behaviours should be. We recommend that the Core Values statement should be further explained and translated into best management practices and staff behaviours that can be acted upon. We believe that the more specific these statements are, the clearer would be the meaning of the Core Values. It would be easier for them to put the Core Values into practice and gradually internalize them as part of their daily actions. For this purpose, we have further defined the appropriate staff behaviours that exemplify the Core Values and will encourage staff to put these into practice as organization-wide efforts. These are set out in **Appendix II**.

8. We will be launching a 'Best Management Practices' series that is built around the themes of our Core Values. These are actionable checklists that guide management practices towards alignment of the Core Values and will focus on best practices that support a '*Caring*', '*Customer-focused*' and '*Committed*' culture. Re-inforcement articles that promote our Core Values will continue to be published in the Staff Newsletter together with other promotional materials.

9. We will also be designing a self assessment questionnaire that enables staff and their supervisors to assess the extent of which Core Values are being practised by staff and their teams, and to keep track of improvements in this regard.

10. We recognize that the best way to ensure that staff focus on the Core Values is to make these an integral part of staff's performance. We will ensure that in the design of the new Performance Management & Development System, HA's Core Values are included as part of the competency profile and performance criteria of all staff groups.

III. Managers to Manage Core Values

11. We recommend that managers should be a role-model and living example of HA's Core Values and should manage staff in a way that enables the Core Values to flourish. They should take opportunities to articulate and promote the Core Values of HA in both formal and informal communication with staff. They should be encouraged to engage in speeches and education process that express Core Values succinctly and passionately. They should be facilitated to use planned efforts to engage the hearts and minds of their staff, and build strong beliefs of what HA can achieve collectively as a team. They should 'walk the talk' by focusing on more caring and customer focused initiatives that demonstrate their own commitment to these values and facilitate staff commitment and teamwork in the process. Soft skills and activities that win commitment from the heart would be facilitated, in addition to task skills for continuous service improvement. Managers would be encouraged to include Core Values support initiatives as work targets for culture change in the Business Plan. Our Leadership Development training for managers will cover the elements as stated in this paragraph and based on the profile of a new leader in times of change as set out in **Appendix III**.

IV. Team Alignment

12. As team work and collective efforts provide the driving force for making change happens, team alignment programmes will be launched for staff to build a sense of 'we' ness, characterized by mutual respect, appreciation, understanding and support, to lay foundation for joint problem solving, collaboration and synergy. To take staff out of their traditional environment and comfort zone, and to provide a better environment for informal interaction, we recommend that team alignment programmes should be outdoor events which consist of action-based experiential learning and open-hearted discussions to explore personal and team values, and new ways of thinking, leading and performing. Through self and team exploration and discovery, the programmes will provide grounds for building team spirit and instill organization values and to seek commitment for change and continuous improvement. They should be organized for Units within Branches, rather than as open courses for nominations from different Units. The programmes will provide opportunities for senior staff to articulate their vision and values for their teams and,

encourage every individual to exercise leadership for our Core Values success as highlighted in para 11.

V. Staff Incentives

13. A number of department-wide staff incentive awards are being designed to promote HA's Core Values (a separate HRC paper 31/97 is being submitted on the subject). Some examples are -

- award for staff who work in teams to suggest ways of putting the 3 'C's into practice; and
- award for staff who put the 3 'C's into practice when performing their duties.

In addition, Branch Heads would be authorized to implement incentive schemes which suit the needs of their Branches and to include the 3 'C's as one of the selection criteria for outstanding staff and best service team awards. Continuous re-inforcement and recognition to engage staff in actions that exemplify the values and beliefs of HA and to synchronize individual efforts with departmental Core Values objectives will be a prominent feature of these Staff Incentive Schemes. We will also be promulgating stories of individual and team 'heroes' in our Staff Newsletter and organizing award presentation ceremonies for these 'heroes' that personify our Core Values.

VI. Removing Hindrances and Hurdles

14. We recognize that in addition to promoting Core Values, we need to consciously identify restraining forces that are holding back Core Values and team alignment. A reality check of current climate and culture is important, and inconsistent management practices and procedures should be identified and removed. We believe that staff should be the driving force to identify hindrance factors and hurdles of Core Values and team alignment. The Staff Suggestion Scheme will be further expanded to encourage and recognize staff in identifying restraining forces, factors and procedures. All these hurdles will be acted upon seriously and promptly by senior management.

IMPLEMENTATION

15. Core Values and team alignment will be the collective efforts of all Branches concerned, covering a number of large scale as well as small scale initiatives for both management and staff, with suggested time frame for implementation set out at **Appendix IV**. This paper highlights some areas for further actions by both Corporate Services Branch and Business Branches. We recommend that these recommended actions be taken forward as a planning guide. Promotional materials will be developed and issued continuously with the assistance of ICRD. Team alignment training will be provided by the T&D Centre, using initially a pilot scheme approach, to be followed by further launch. We have identified the management teams of Management Branch (NTW pilot region for EM&M merger), the project management teams of Development Branch, and the MEP Ambassadors, who are themselves change agents, to be priority staff groups for team alignment training.

EVALUATION

16. As we are adopting multiple approaches to promote and advance Core Values and team alignment, the progress of change to a '*Caring*', '*Customer focused*' and '*Committed*' culture, with teamwork as the foundation of its strength, should be monitored to ensure success. Actual achievement of results will be determined by combined efforts of -

- (a) staff, supervisors and senior management's assessment of whether the Core Values are being practised in HA;
- (b) number and impact of Core Values related awards;
- (c) staff suggestions being launched and implemented;
- (d) feedback from staff, managers and customers on HA's improved culture of service relating to Core Values and team alignment ; and
- (e) culture change index to be developed for monitoring performance measures of MEP.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

17. We have considered the resource implications of the recommendations. We believe that the key initiatives outlined in this paper can be absolved by existing staff and financial resources.

ADVICE SOUGHT

18. At the Human Resources Committee Meeting to be held on 10 July 1997, Members will be invited to comment and endorse the recommendations on Core Values and team alignment as outlined in this paper.

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HA's Vision, Mission and Core Values

Vision

- To be the community's pride as a professional team striving for continuous improvement in the provision of public housing and related services.

Mission

- To provide affordable housing and quality management, maintenance and other housing related services to meet the needs of our customers in a proactive, progressive and caring manner.
- To ensure cost-effective and rational use of public resources in service delivery and allocation of housing assistance in an open and equitable manner.
- To engender a competent, dedicated and performance-oriented team under an inspiring, dynamic and forward-looking leadership.

Core Values

- Caring
- Customer-focused
- Committed

CORE VALUES COMPETENCY PROFILE

<i>Competency Dimension</i>	<i>Behaviours</i>
Caring	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Treat others politely, irrespective of age, appearance, rank and status.2) Care, understand and help each other.3) Listen patiently; empathize and respect other's feelings and wishes.4) Communicate sincerely with others, willing to answer enquiries and help others to solve problems.
Customer-focused	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Focus work objectives on serving customers; know and understand both external and internal customers; work with enthusiasm and always try one's very best.2) Positively and proactively serve customers, establish good and equal relationship.3) Keep close contact and communication with customers, understand their needs and feelings.4) Establish an image of reliability, honesty, responsibility and helpfulness.
Committed	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Try one's very best for each task; is not afraid of difficulties or mindful of extra work.2) Take initiative, to do one's very best to satisfy customers and department's needs within reasonable limits.3) Is open minded and receptive to ideas/comments; handle the job with flexibility.4) Continuously look for effective ways to improve at work.

Housing Authority Leadership Dimensions

1. Role Model

- Is self motivated
- Continuously improve oneself & the service
- A one stop problem solver
- Take personal accountability for decisions, actions & results
- Put customer service at the centre of operation
- A living example of the department's core values

2. Team Builder

- Build ownership & enthusiasm in staff teams
- Empower staff to make decisions and achieve high performance
- Lead, coach & develop staff to contribute their best
- Provide feedback on progress & recognition for contributions
- Communicate & reach down to maintain dialogue & build relationship

3. Challenger

- Challenge status quo, complacency & inertia
- Is prepared to take risks and try new grounds
- Encourage innovation and creativity in self and others
- Act as change agent, lead and facilitate change

4. Visionary

- Shape positive future of the organisation
- Lead & inspire others to a new direction
- Communicate & promote organisational vision & mission
- Rally support and commitment for a new direction

Appendix IV

<u>Major Activities</u>	<u>Action by</u>	<u>Time frame</u>
(1) Orientation Programme for new recruits	Corporate Services Branch (T&D Centre)	Mar 97 (started)
- corporate video on Core Values	Corporate Services Branch (T&D Centre/ ICRD)	Dec 97
- resource kit & material		
(2) 'Best Management Practices' series	Corporate Services Branch (T&D Centre)	May 97 (quarterly)
(3) Building Core Values		
- Value- based staff behaviours	Corporate Services Branch (T&D Centre)	May 97
- Assessment questionnaire for staff & supervisors		July 97
(4) Core Values as performance management criteria	Corporate Services Branch (Staff Management Section)	May 97 (start)
(5) Managers manage Core Values	Branch Heads to lead	July 97 (start)
(6) Team alignment programme	Corporate Services Branch (T&D Centre)	September 97
- pilot scheme	Branch Heads	December 97
- Branch launch		
(7) Staff incentives		
- Core Values awards	Corporate Services Branch	July 97
(8) Removing hindrances and hurdles of Core Values		
- Expand Staff Suggestions Scheme to include suggestions to remove hindrances & hurdles of Core Values	Corporate Services Branch (Staff Management Section)	September 97
(9) Review of Core Values and team alignment	Corporate Services Branch/ Business Branches	January 99

