

InterAction Collaboration Peer Review at TRIUMF Laboratory

Subcommittee on Organization Structure,
Management and Resources

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Findings

- The laboratory senior management recognizes and supports the critical role of strategic communication.
- The communication director reports to the laboratory director and is part of the senior management team.
- In the short time of its existence, the SPC has made major strides in improving strategic communication at TRIUMF.
- The laboratory has completed a comprehensive strategic Five-Year Plan with significant participation at many levels. It represents a completely fresh approach to five-year planning. The SPC director had a key role in producing the plan.

Findings

- TRIUMF is trying to transform the laboratory from a collection of scientists under one roof to a unified national laboratory. Currently, there appear to be many worthwhile programs but no defining vision of the laboratory.
- TRIUMF has made good progress in the standardization and usage of the laboratory brand.
- TRIUMF is attempting to bring together many previously dispersed communication and planning functions. However, they are still physically scattered.

Findings

- The total budget for communication and strategic planning was not readily apparent to the committee.
- The SPC has a generally sound communication plan for the coming year. However, it is not clear whether the budget resources exist to carry it out. The committee heard about many “to-do” lists containing significant unmet communication needs.
- The communication plan at times appeared to mix communication goals with strategies. For example, achieving the Five-Year Plan is a goal; making TRIUMF well known is a strategy.
- The production of educational videos consumes a large fraction of available funds for strategic communication.
- Integration of communication team elements is a work in progress.

Comments

- The laboratory's recognition of the importance of communication and its role in laboratory management is commendable. Combining the functions of strategic planning and communication appears to work well. The SPC is appropriately located in the laboratory organization.
- The close working relationship between the laboratory director and the SPC director is a key asset for the laboratory.
- The committee commends the SPC for its emphasis on relationship-building at all levels, from within the communication team itself to the highest levels of national and international stakeholders.

Comments

- There is still work to do to establish the vision of the laboratory as a national leader in science and technology. There remains much emphasis on the various elements of the program, rather than a unifying framework into which all the elements fit. The myriad small equipment photos lining the hallways of the main building exemplify this challenge.
- Without budget clarity, planning and prioritization for strategic communication are difficult. The combination of planning and communication functions further muddies the budget waters.
- “To do” lists are too long. The budget for communication does not appear adequate for the magnitude of the task. An accepted industry standard is to devote one percent of the organization’s overall budget to communication.

Comments

- The internship program is commendable, both for the quality of the students and the work they do.
- The physical dispersion of the communication staff is a barrier to team-building and effective communication management.
- The committee questioned whether the conference office belongs in SPC.

Recommendations

- TRIUMF needs to strengthen its efforts to articulate a vision of the laboratory as more than a home for individual programs, however excellent. This vision is key to achieving communication goals at all levels.
- TRIUMF should clarify the budget data for communication functions. With clear data on available resources, SPC should create a budget for implementing its communication plan. If resources are not adequate, the budget should be increased or the plan should be descoped.
- The communication plan should more clearly distinguish goals from strategies. Without a clear definition of the goals, it is difficult to set communication priorities.

Recommendations

- The laboratory should try to consolidate the communication team in one physical space.
- If improving the level of scientific literacy among the general public is a laboratory priority, it will require significantly more resources.