

55th Wing
Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska
Department of Defense

The 55th Wing's mission is to provide worldwide reconnaissance, command and control, and combat support critical to national leadership and war fighting commanders. They employ approximately 6,400 Federal Government employees, 2,100 contractors, and host an additional 3,197 employees in tenant organizations.

After a full, complete, and open competition of 1,459 positions, the 55th Wing was identified as the most efficient organization winning the Air Force's largest cost comparison in April 2002. Recent competitions under OMB Circular A-76 have resulted in savings of more than 20 percent for work that stayed in-house and more than 30 percent for work outsourced to the private sector. The 55th Wing exceeded even the highest standard by realizing a 58 percent manpower savings by reducing 848 positions resulting in an estimated \$46 million annual personnel cost savings. This competition was completed with no administrative appeals and no protests from its competitors.

By maintaining vigilance on the desired results – focusing on “what” work is required versus “how” the work is accomplished, they were able to identify significant process improvements necessary to become a more efficient and effective organization. The Wing used Activity Based Costing to assist in determining the actual cost of activities and identify the most resource consuming processes. Additionally, they conducted market research, continually seeking out best practices from both private industry and other Air Force installations.

Direct and open communication with 55th Wing employees, stakeholders, neighbors, and competitors was pivotal in their success. The senior leaders of the organization used all venues of communication to keep their employees informed, including access to a web-site hosting general A-76 information, the study schedule, and a listing of every position in the study. This web-site afforded an avenue for employees to provide their feedback and suggestions, as well as their concerns. Furthermore, the Wing sponsored a contracting web-site that included the Request for Information, the draft Performance Requirements Document, draft solicitation, and other questions and answers. Throughout the process the Wing kept local political and business leaders apprised of the study's process, parameters, milestones, and projected impacts.

The 55th Wing realized they must establish procedures to ensure sustainment of their efficiencies and continue to improve their performance beyond the cost comparison. To ensure its continued success, the 55th Wing chartered a Performance Management Council, supported by the Performance Management Branch in the Manpower and Organization Office, providing quality surveillance to assure adherence of performance standards. Moreover to ensure the senior leadership knowledge base was not diminished through reassignment of key senior military personnel, the Wing developed a systematic approach for providing all new commanders and customers an education and training program on the organizational structure and service capabilities of the new organization.