



American Battle Monuments Commission

FY 2010 – 2015

Strategic Plan

December 22, 2009

Foreword

The American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) FY 2010-2015 Strategic Plan focuses the organization on honoring the competence, courage, and sacrifice of the United States armed forces.

This plan has been prepared in accordance with requirements laid out in the Government Performance Results Act (GPRA). The sections of the document outline ABMC's strategic priorities, as informed by our staff and agreed upon by our leadership, and direct how we intend to accomplish our goals and measure our performance in upcoming years.

This plan reflects recent efforts to evaluate the Commission's strategic direction, including our mission, vision, core values, and goals. Each goal is visited in a separate section of this document; these sections include a description of the goal, a discussion of challenges and opportunities, along with the corresponding strategic objectives.

The implementation of the strategic plan reflects our commitment to continuously improve the way we serve our constituents and honor the sacrifice of those who served our country. The strategic plan is not a static document; as the ABMC operating environment changes, we will continually update and refine our priorities and performance measures.

Secretary's Statement

Since 1923, the American Battle Monuments Commission has honored the competence, courage, and sacrifice of America's Armed Forces. The Commission's 24 cemeteries and 25 memorials, monuments and markers are shrines that stand as testament to our great nation's values and our willingness to defend our freedoms and the freedoms of others.

To ensure that the Commission continues to honor and maintain these shrines to a standard that befits these brave men and women, we assembled the following strategic plan to serve as our guide toward telling the story of those we honor, maintaining the facilities we administer, managing our workforce, and providing stewardship for our resources.

It is extremely important that each of us understands the Commission's mission, vision, core values, goals and objectives and their importance to the noble work we do in this agency. There is still much work that remains to be done to continue the momentum of our strategic planning sessions.

One of the imperatives is to ensure this plan is value-added, supporting and improving our operations. At the same time, we need to minimize disruption to our employees who strive daily to maintain our sites to the world class standards for which they are known.

We appreciate and value the trust the nation has placed in us as the "guardian of America's overseas commemorative cemeteries and memorials." We pledge to do our utmost to continue to be worthy of that trust and our noble mission.

Max Cleland

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ABMC Mission, Vision & Core Values

Our mission communicates the essence of the Commission to our stakeholders and to the public. We believe it is a full and inspirational expression of our purpose:

- Mission - The American Battle Monuments Commission – guardian of America’s overseas commemorative cemeteries and memorials – honors the competence, courage, and sacrifice of United States armed forces.

Our vision statement originates from words of our first Chairman, General of the Armies John J. Pershing, over seventy years ago. These words connect the very beginning of the Commission to our vision of the future:

- Vision - Fulfill the promise that “time will not dim the glory of their deeds.”

Our core values represent the Commission’s priorities, culture, and the way in which our team members act within the organization:

- Core Values:
 - Excellence – We strive for excellence in everything we do;
 - Integrity – We do what is right: legally, morally, and ethically;
 - Stewardship – We are careful and responsible guardians of the sacred mission entrusted to our care;
 - Commitment – We are dedicated to our mission, each other, and the public we serve; and
 - Respect – We treat others with high regard and one another as valued members of our team.

ABMC Overview

History and Background

Recognizing the need for a federal agency to be responsible for honoring the fallen members of American armed forces where they had served abroad and for controlling the construction of military monuments and markers on foreign soil by others, the Congress enacted legislation in 1923 creating the American Battle Monuments Commission.

The American Battle Monuments Commission is an independent agency of the Executive Branch of the U.S. federal government. It is responsible for commemorating the service, achievements, and sacrifice of American armed forces in the United States and where they have served since April 6, 1917 (the date of U.S. entry into World War I), through the erection of suitable memorial shrines; for designing, constructing, operating, and maintaining permanent American military burial grounds in foreign countries; for controlling the design and construction of U.S. military monuments and markers in foreign countries by other U.S. citizens and organizations, both public and private; and for encouraging the maintenance of such monuments and markers by their sponsors. In performing these functions, the Commission administers, operates and maintains twenty-four permanent American military burial grounds and twenty-two separate memorials, monuments and markers on foreign soil,

and three memorials in the United States.

As of the end of FY 2008, 124,909 U.S. war dead are interred in these 24 cemeteries: 30,921 of World War I; 93,238 of World War II; and 750 of the Mexican War. Additionally, 6,164 American veterans and others are interred in the Mexico City National Cemetery and Corozal American Cemetery in Panama. Commemorated individually by name on stone tablets at the World War I and World War II cemeteries and three memorials on U.S. soil are 94,135 U.S. servicemen and women who are missing in action or were lost or buried at sea in their general regions during the World Wars and the Korean and Vietnam Wars.

Each grave site in the permanent American World War I and World War II cemeteries on foreign soil is marked by a headstone of pristine white marble. Headstones of those of the Jewish faith are tapered marble shafts surmounted by a Star of David. Stylized marble Latin crosses mark all others. Annotated on the headstones of the World War I war dead who could not be identified is the phrase, "HERE RESTS IN HONORED GLORY AN AMERICAN SOLDIER KNOWN BUT TO GOD." In the World War II cemeteries, the words "AMERICAN SOLDIER" were replaced with the words "COMRADE IN ARMS" on the headstones of those who could not be identified.

The Commission's World War I, World War II, and Mexico City cemeteries are closed to future burials except for the remains of U.S. war dead found from time to time in the World War I and World War II battle areas. The Corozal American Cemetery outside Panama City, Panama, is the only active cemetery the Commission maintains.

Most of the Commission's facilities range in age from 48 to 94 years old, with the Mexico City National Cemetery being over 150 years old. The permanent structures and plantings, which make the Commission's facilities among the most beautiful memorials in the world, are aging and require increased funding levels to maintain them. Accordingly, the Commission prioritizes the use of its maintenance and engineering funds carefully to ensure the most effective and efficient utilization of its available resources. All of the plantings, including the lawns and to some extent the meadows, must be cut and shaped, fertilized, and treated with insecticides and fungicides at regular intervals during the growing season. The plantings also must be replaced when their useful lives are exhausted or they receive major storm damage.

The Commission also administers trust funds to (1) build memorials authorized by Congress, but financed primarily from private contributions, commemorative coin proceeds, or investment earnings; (2) decorate grave sites with flowers from private contributions; and (3)

maintain and repair nonfederal war memorials with private contributions.

Organization

The Board of Commissioners constitutes the policy-making body of the Commission and consists of eleven members, who are appointed by the President of the United States for an indefinite term and serve without pay. They meet with the Secretary and professional staff of the Commission twice annually. The Commissioners establish policy and ensure proper staff functioning for the Commission to carry out its mission. During inspections, they observe, inquire, comment upon, and make recommendations on any and all aspects of the Commission's operations. The Commission's daily operations are directed by an Executive Level Secretary, appointed by the President, who is assisted by a Deputy, a member of the Senior Executive Service.

The Commission is staffed by 409 full-time equivalent (FTE) U.S. General Schedule and Foreign Service National civilian employees. Cemetery superintendents are selected for their ability; knowledge of horticulture, vehicles, equipment, structures maintenance and construction; and their ability to employ compassion and tact in serving the public.

Who We Serve

Since ABMC was founded in 1923, the success of our mission has depended on the engagement of our stakeholders. Over time, our approach to accomplishing our mission has evolved to meet the changing needs of these various individuals. This section outlines the major groups that we have traditionally served and the types of activities we have provided.

Veterans, Family, and Friends Honored for Their Service or Their Loss

We honor the veterans, family members, and friends of United States military who have served our country or endured the loss of a loved one who served. This group has the closest ties to our sites, and we strive to provide them with the most positive experience possible. For immediate family members who want to visit a family member's site, we provide letters authorizing fee-free passports for traveling overseas to visit the memorial site. We also provide color lithographs and headstone photographs to relatives of those interred or memorialized in our cemeteries and monuments. In addition, we offer a variety of other services, including placement of floral decorations on a grave or marker, information on an individual buried or honored, and escort services for relatives to grave and memorial sites within the cemetery.

Military and Public Officials

We host a variety of special events and commemorations throughout the year, including Memorial Day and Veterans Day holidays, to honor the freedom preserved and restored and the lives lost. Host country and United States government officials, diplomats, and military attend these events. In addition, military units hold ceremonies to their fallen comrades, and foreign host organizations pay tribute to those who died while liberating their regions.

Guests and Visitors

We receive millions of American and foreign visitors of all generations at ABMC cemeteries and memorials, where they can learn and be inspired by the meticulous stewardship of the memorials and careful interpretation of the stories of our armed forces. We provide a variety of services to these visitors, including direction, advice on modes of transportation, and information on local accommodations.

ABMC Partners

We support and provide information to our partners that help us further our mission, including other government agencies, historians and educators, the travel and tourism industry, and the media. Through these partnerships, we promote our mission, encourage visits to our commemorative sites, and help educate and inspire the public.

ABMC Goals

The pages that follow introduce the four strategic goals to which the ABMC leadership is committed. These goals are the result of a strategic planning effort, and are informed by our staff and agreed upon by our leadership. The pursuit of these goals will help us accomplish our mission in the coming years.

While distinct from each other, these goals are interrelated in a number of ways. Our goals to manage personnel and resources strongly support our goal to maintain our sites, which empowers us to meet our goal to provide an excellent visitor experience.

For each goal on the following pages, we outline the corresponding strategic objectives, multi-year actions, and performance measures. To provide the context for our strategic direction, each goal includes the following sections:

Introduction

This section provides an overview of the goal topic, including a discussion of the core areas addressed by the goal and specifically how it relates to the Commission and other organizations in general. In this section, we also explore the importance of the goal to ABMC, and how it will help accomplish our mission. Lastly, this section explores where ABMC is today, where we expect the goal to take us, and how we plan to successfully accomplish it.

Challenges/Opportunities

This section describes the core environmental obstacles that the Commission expects to face while trying to accomplish each goal – including the external challenges for which we must prepare, and the internal opportunities that we can address ourselves. Each challenge/opportunity is presented by stating the current environment and the actions ABMC must take in order to succeed within this environment.

Our Strategic Response

This section includes a description of the Commission's approach to accomplishing each goal. It begins with an overview of steps that we will take throughout the next several years, is followed by each of the objectives and their supporting multi-year actions, and ends with the performance measures that we will use to measure success.

Goal 1 – Interpretation

Provide an inspirational and educational visitor experience through effective outreach and interpretive programs

Introduction

Each day, a new visitor makes his or her first and perhaps only visit to one of our sites. If we have carried out our mission successfully, that visitor leaves with a sense of inspiration and a deeper understanding of the heroic deeds performed by the armed forces.

As time passes and takes the older generation with it, we face a new challenge of preserving the stories of those who can no longer tell them. Today, our visitors are largely from a younger generation who are visiting ABMC sites with less direct connection to, or knowledge of, the events that occurred. This changing visitor pool is driving a fundamental shift in the way we approach our mission. Meticulously maintaining our memorials is our core mission, but that alone is no longer enough to honor our heroes; we must also preserve and communicate their stories of competence, courage, and sacrifice.

Telling the story of those who fought and died through the creation of visitor and interpretive centers began with the opening of the Normandy Visitor Center in May 2007. With its success, we plan to continue expanding our outreach and interpretive programs so that we can attract future generations to our sites, help them better understand the gravity of what happened, and more fully honor those who fought and died.

Challenges/Opportunities

The passage of time and generations is changing the demographics of our visitors; fewer people have direct ties to the heroes honored in our cemeteries. We must work not only to attract a new generation of visitors to our sites, but also to educate and inspire them once they arrive.

Technological advances provide the opportunity to reach a wider audience, provide easier access to information, and bolster our outreach effort. We must leverage interactive programs and virtual tours on our website, as well as onsite interactive displays and exhibits to help us communicate, educate, and inspire both our onsite and website visitors.

The opportunity to gather firsthand accounts of past wars is disappearing.

Our Strategic Response

We will continue our effort to inspire and educate visitors by expanding our interpretive and outreach programs, making efforts to increase visitation, ensuring that our visitor contact employees are adequately trained, leveraging

international events and anniversaries, and improving the timeliness of our constituent operations.

Objective 1: Educate the public about the ABMC mission, and the competence, courage, and sacrifice of those honored at ABMC commemorative sites

We will develop educational materials and new technology capabilities to improve visitor education programs, both onsite and on our website.

Objective 2: Increase visitation to ABMC cemeteries, memorials, and website

We will expand web marketing and public/media outreach to increase visitation to our website and memorial sites. We will also develop a methodology to count visitors so that we can document both onsite and website visitation.

Objective 3: Educate and train all employees who provide visitor services in interpretive skills

We will expand training and mentoring opportunities to enhance professional and personal development of our employees. We will also create historical reference libraries to assist in the interpretive mission.

Objective 4: Leverage international events and relevant anniversary dates to interpret ABMC cemeteries

We will leverage upcoming milestones to increase the public reach of the interpretive initiative, including D-Day, Memorial Day, Veterans Day, 100th anniversary of WWI, 70th anniversary of WWII, and the 2012 London Olympics.

Objective 5: Satisfy constituents' needs through timely distribution of information and products

We will automate frequently requested services for our constituents in order to improve onsite and website customer service

Goal 2 – Facilities Management

Develop, operate, maintain, and improve ABMC facilities as the world's best commemorative sites

Introduction

The high quality of the commemorative sites we maintain demonstrates our careful commitment to our fallen heroes. ABMC's cemeteries and memorials are among the most beautiful and meticulously maintained sites in the world, and they truly honor the competence, courage, and sacrifice of the United States armed forces.

Our ability to inspire and educate our visitors through the beauty and upkeep of our sites is critical to accomplishing our mission. Because every day there will be a visitor who makes their first and possibly only visit to one of our sites, we strive to keep every site in like-new condition. We are the stewards of our sites, and the site's condition reflects the degree to which our organization has achieved excellence.

We will continue to develop our ability to sustain a high standard. However, as time reduces the number of visitors who have direct connections to our cemeteries and memorials, we plan to expand our efforts beyond the traditional "green grass and white stone" approach. We will preserve the stories of those who fought and died through the use of interpretive centers at our sites. These interpretive efforts are becoming increasingly important to achieving our mission, and our staff plans to develop, operate, and maintain the physical infrastructure to support it.

Challenges/Opportunities

While we are increasing our activities in interpretive efforts, we must not overlook the importance of maintaining the meticulous quality of our sites. Increased emphasis on the interpretive mission should not occur to the detriment of the maintenance of our sites.

Major anniversaries and international events, including milestone anniversaries of WWI and WWII, are approaching. We must develop processes to improve our ability to handle the surge demand of major events.

Loss of craftsmanship has resulted in issues involving the maintenance of heritage assets, such as mosaics. ABMC must continue to seek skilled craftsmen to support the maintenance needs of ABMC facilities.

Visitor expectations are increasing, requiring ABMC to constantly improve in order to maintain an "exceptional" standard.

Technological advances help us perform our maintenance in a less manpower-intensive way through better equipment, better data management, and a more sophisticated workforce.

Our Strategic Response

We will continue to operate, maintain, and improve ABMC facilities in like-new condition, and implement our evaluation processes to ensure compliance with our high standards. We will also be ready to create new interpretive centers to respond to changing visitor needs and will be prepared to support new memorial design discussions.

Objective 1 - Review and evaluate existing facilities and execute approved maintenance, repair, and improvements

We will continue operating, maintaining, and improving ABMC facilities to ensure that they continue to be among the most beautiful and meticulously maintained sites in the world.

Objective 2 - Develop new interpretive centers

We will explore options for developing new interpretive centers through modification of existing facilities or new construction, which meet changing visitor needs and improve the experience of visiting ABMC memorials and cemeteries.

Objective 3 - Evaluate the need for new memorials

We will establish a policy for evaluating and presenting the need for new memorials to honor those servicemen and women who fought and died.

Goal 3 – Personnel Management

Attract and retain quality employees through personal and professional investment and development

Introduction

In any organization, employees are essential resources and are critical to mission success. When an organization understands its employees' needs and expectations, as well as those of the modern workforce as a whole, the organization increases its ability to attract and retain top quality personnel. As an organization like ABMC retains personnel for longer periods of time, it becomes increasingly important that personnel are given opportunities to fulfill their personal and professional needs, including continuously developing their skill sets.

Preserving the stories of our armed forces' deeds and telling them to newer generations is becoming an increasingly large part of our mission, and we need to develop the capabilities of our employees to operate in this new environment. By identifying clear roles and responsibilities of each employee in accomplishing our mission, we will ensure that each component of our strategy is addressed, preparing the Commission to continue guarding the sacred mission entrusted to its care. We have made this commitment to each other and to the public we serve.

ABMC's workforce is dedicated, capable, and committed to accomplishing our noble mission. The productivity, high work satisfaction, and low turnover rate of our personnel is a testament to active management of our employees and our concern for their well being. Going forward, we plan to expand the skills of our workforce to help them fulfill their roles and responsibilities. We will achieve this by both developing our current employees and attracting new talent to fill the gaps in our capabilities. We plan to improve how we help our employees manage their careers, so that they can obtain their own personal and professional goals. It is critical that we know how to invest in our employees to maintain the standard of performance that we have set.

Challenges/Opportunities

Generational changes in both the ABMC workforce and our cemetery visitors require new approaches to managing our internal operations and communicating to the public. We must ensure that our personnel have the ability to execute this new approach, and that they are provided with the opportunity to develop the new skills required.

Strategy execution requires that employees understand their expected contribution to accomplishing the strategy. We must clearly map the

components of our strategic plan to the roles and responsibilities of our workforce and communicate these expectations.

The geographic dispersion of our sites and employees increases the importance of establishing organized training and communication mechanisms. We must find innovative ways to make the required training available to all employees, including developing the technology infrastructure to support increased training and to manage personal and professional development.

Personnel development requires the individual support and commitment of all of our employees. We must communicate the importance of individual development to employees, and obtain their support and participation in our development initiatives.

As we expand our mission to include interpretation, we expand the roles, responsibilities, and expectations that we place on our employees. We must clearly define what truly outstanding performance is so that our employees know what to work toward, and we must reward our top performing employees accordingly.

Our Strategic Response

We will implement a professional training and development program, clearly map employee roles and responsibilities to the components of our strategic plan, develop a better understanding of employee needs and satisfaction, and make sure that truly outstanding performance is appropriately recognized.

Objective 1 - Establish baseline employee satisfaction through ABMC employee survey

We will identify the current level of employee satisfaction in key areas, and regularly survey employees to understand the effects of agency initiatives on employee happiness.

Objective 2 - Ensure timely and effective employee recognition

We will create standardized recognition of truly exceptional performance and use it as the basis for awards. We will also explore opportunities to use an electronic appraisal program to facilitate timely and relevant performance evaluations that tie to awards.

Objective 3 - Implement an enhanced performance management program with annual performance work plans tied to the strategic plan

We will implement a performance management process that ties components of the strategic plan to individual employee performance.

Objective 4 - Balance employee personal and professional responsibilities through work/life initiatives

We will continue to support work/life balance planning by implementing a tailored work/life initiative that meets the ABMC mission and employee needs.

Objective 5 - Implement a professional development program responsive to agency and employee needs

We will continue to strengthen and improve current professional development initiatives to improve the ability and satisfaction of our workforce.

Goal 4 – Business and Resource Management

Continually improve business and resource management practices

Introduction

As public servants, the efficient management of resources is the embodiment of excellence – and as an organization, we continually strive to improve how we administer the resources entrusted to us. Success in achieving efficiency will have a far reaching impact on the Commission, from the individual memorial sites to our headquarters. The efficiencies will be realized throughout all parts of the organization, including our finance, human resources, public affairs, and operations divisions.

Process efficiencies that we are able to create in our daily operations provide an opportunity to redirect funding from back-office operations to mission-related efforts. Reinvesting this funding in our sites and our people allows us to maintain excellent commemorative sites and provides a more inspirational and educational experience for our visitors.

We have successfully and continuously managed our resources, having achieved clean audit opinions for the last 13 years. As we move forward, we plan to maintain this high level of performance while continuing to identify and take advantage of opportunities to further streamline and automate our business and resource management processes. We plan to carefully maintain a balance between efficient business processes and effective internal controls so that we do not create efficiencies at the cost of process integrity.

Challenges/Opportunities

The implementation of technology solutions and the standardization of processes are heavily interrelated. Because system implementations often depend on one another, they must be planned in conjunction. We must make sure that our efforts are adequately coordinated to prevent delays.

Standardization of even a few processes and procedures can result in major benefits to an organization. We must explore which processes provide the best opportunity for standardization.

The geographic distribution of ABMC locations increases the importance of communicating standardized processes throughout all sites. We must develop a comprehensive communication tool to support this and other organization-wide initiatives.

To effectively manage the cultural shift from manual processes to electronic and/or automated systems, we will need to invest in retraining. We must work

to minimize the time and costs associated with training our employees to use the new systems.

Our Strategic Response

We will focus our efforts on standardizing core processes, identifying opportunities to use technology to streamline their execution, improving our organizational standards for site evaluation, and regularly reviewing each site for compliance with standards.

Objective 1 - Effectively manage resources

We will improve resource management throughout the organization to increase the percentage of funding that goes directly toward accomplishing our mission.

Objective 2 - Modernize business processes to utilize new technologies and IT practices

We will identify opportunities to map, standardize, and modernize business processes to streamline resource management and achieve efficiencies. We will do this in association with new system implementations.

Objective 3 - Formalize processes for development and promulgation of policies and procedures

We will review current processes for the development and promulgation of policies, and we will standardize them across the organization to more efficiently implement policy changes.

Objective 4 - Modernize the Financial Management System and fully utilize the capabilities of the new system

We will implement a new financial management system to streamline our financial processes and provide adequate internal controls.

Plan Development, Implementation, and Evaluation

ABMC has worked to develop a strategic plan that reflects the perspectives of all levels of the organization and sets a clear direction for the years ahead. The following sections describe the process undertaken to develop this plan, and the steps we plan to continue through its implementation and evaluation.

Development

ABMC initiated the strategic planning process to meet the standards outlined in the Government Performance Results Act of 1993. We began the process with an organization-wide survey, collecting perspectives from personnel at all levels of the organization. We supplemented the survey information by interviewing personnel on the leadership team, including the director of each functional division.

The leadership team then organized a four-day strategic planning session with executive representation from headquarters and the regional offices. Together, this group validated agency mission, vision, core values, and strategy, and then refined goals, objectives, and performance measures. The leadership team shared the draft strategic plan with a broader group of personnel for comment prior to publishing.

Implementation

Each of the four strategic goals in the FY 2010-2015 Strategic Plan has been assigned to a goal owner. Each goal owner, a director-level staff member who was part of the initial strategic planning process, leads the execution efforts necessary to accomplishing the goal.

Throughout implementation, we are focusing on key enablers – people, processes, and technology – to address challenges in the environment while executing our strategy.

- People: People will drive the successful implementation of this strategy. Internally, we need to develop our people and provide them with the necessary tools and skills. Externally, we need to continue to develop relationships with outside partners, including Congress, educators, historians, the media, and the tourism industry as they will continue to help us educate and inspire our changing audience.
- Processes: Efficient processes will support implementation of these goals. Effective outreach processes attract a larger audience of visitors. A standardized process for surveying our employees and our visitors allows us to determine the strategic areas that need

additional support, and it improves our accountability and ability to clearly define owners and responsibilities.

- Technology: Intelligent application of technology enables more efficient operations. Implementation of our management, operations, and resource systems defines the success of this effort. Using technology in our outreach programs will play a central role in attracting and educating new visitors.

Evaluation

Each goal is being evaluated for progress on an annual basis. Over the course of the strategic plan's implementation, the baseline metrics and annual targets for measures are regularly reviewed. New system implementations will also support the performance tracking of our goals.

Communications

Organization-wide communication is an important part of the Commission's strategy as we move forward. In addition to communicating each person's role in accomplishing our strategy, the leadership team provides regular progress reports to personnel at all levels.

Conclusion

This strategic plan reflects the commitment of our leadership and employees in a continuous effort to improve our services to all who come to honor the competence, courage, and sacrifice of those who have fallen in service to our nation and the cause of freedom and who are at rest in our 24 cemeteries in 10 foreign countries. Our commitment is total and our efforts will be unceasing.