

Forest Service FEVS Analysis & Recommendations

March 28, 2013



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Secondary Analysis Approach

Our approach to analyzing the FEVS data and developing recommendations included:

- Reviewing the data across the entire Agency to identify agency-wide trends, including the highest and lowest percentage scores.
- Identifying the top two key drivers for improvement which have the strongest correlation to employee engagement outcomes, using a method developed by Newmeasures. Efforts to improve top driver scores will maximize gains in both employee engagement outcomes and retention.
- Identifying differences between field units on key driver scores and interviewing a select number of staff in the highest scoring units to obtain more information.
- Recommending actions that will improve scores of the two key drivers and other low percentage scores, including best practices for employee engagement.

Overall Findings

1. Just over half of employees agree agency is successful at accomplishing its mission (55%) and is a good place to work (57%).
2. An overwhelming majority of employees like what they do (86%) and believe the work is important (89%).
3. Employees believe their work unit does good work (78%) and that people they work with cooperate (71%) and share job knowledge (71%).
4. A majority of employees are pleased with their immediate supervisors, saying their supervisor treats them with respect (81%); they have trust and confidence in their supervisors (66%); feel their supervisors are doing a good or very good job (67%) and that their supervisor listens to what they have to say (76%), gives them opportunities to demonstrate leadership skills (68%), and supports their need for work/life balance (83%).
5. Senior Leaders are not well-respected (only 37%), and not viewed as generating high-levels of motivation and commitment in the workforce (only 30%), or as standards of honesty and integrity (only 45%); an overwhelming majority of employees do not agree with their policies and practices (only 27%).
6. Employees are not satisfied with recognition received for doing a good job (only 44%), for providing high-quality products and services (only 40%), including being rewarded for creativity and innovation (only 29%).
7. A minority of employees agree they have sufficient resources (only 29%), their units are able to recruit people with the right skills (only 30%), they have a reasonable workload (43%), and are personally empowered with respect to work processes (33%).
8. Few employees agree that pay raises depend on how well employees perform their jobs (10%), promotions are based on merit (25%), awards depend on how well people perform their jobs (34%); that differences in performance are recognized in a meaningful way (24%); that steps are taken to deal with poor performers (20%); and that arbitrary actions are not tolerated (51%).

Top 2 key drivers for improving employee engagement

Our analysis identified the following as the top 2 key drivers for improving employee engagement scores in the Forest Service

Driver 1

- How satisfied are you with the policies and practices of your senior leaders? (Q66)
- *Percent positive score = 27%*

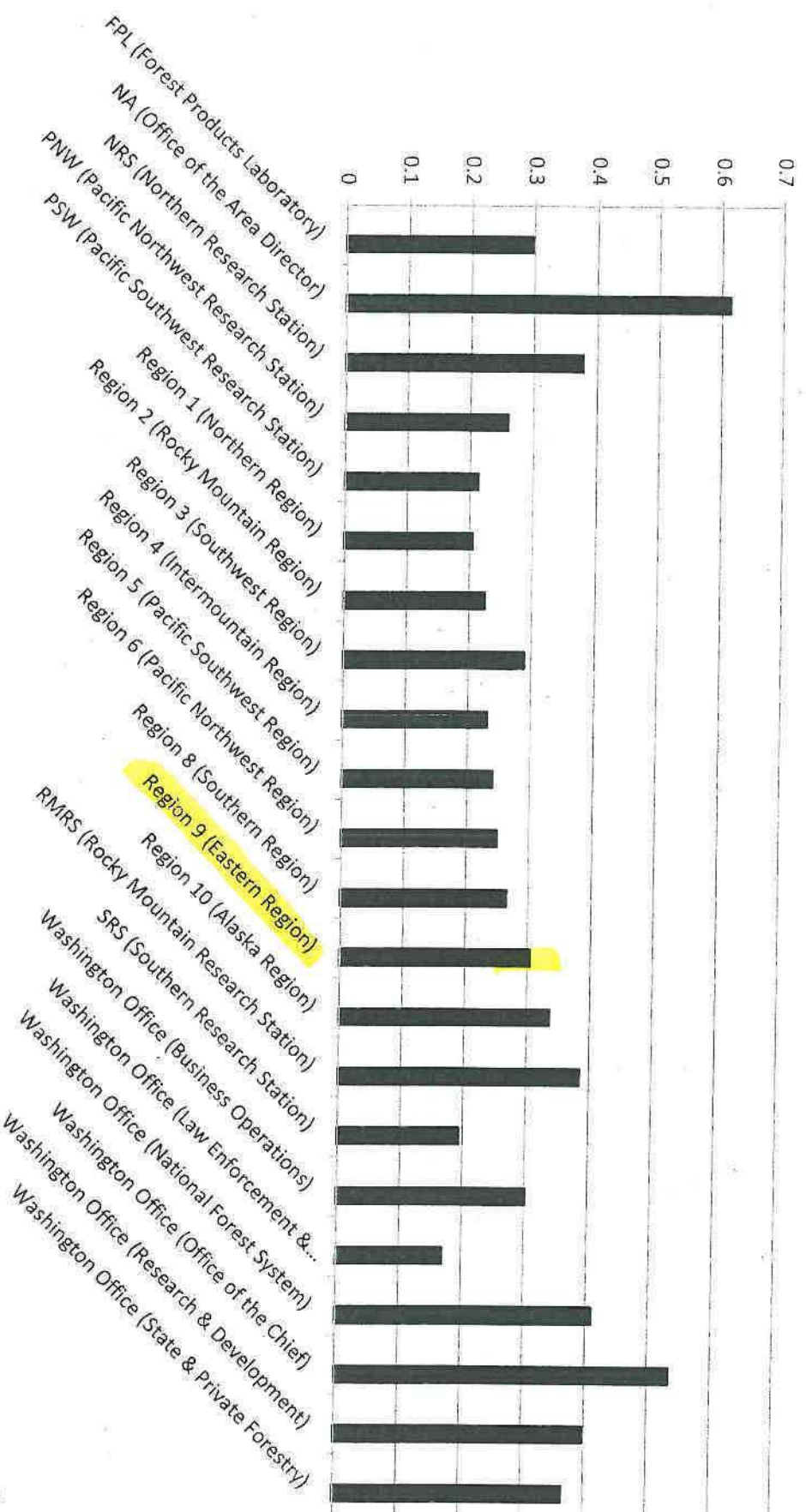
Driver 2

- In my organization, leaders generate high levels of motivation and commitment in the workforce. (Q53)
- *Percent positive score = 30%*

*Newmeasures developed a method that identifies the top two key drivers for change which have the strongest relationship to employee engagement outcomes. Their analyses of over 1 million surveys from 2,600 organizations over the past 12 years have shown that when organizations focus on the drivers identified by their *SolutionPath™* method, they consistently experience improvement in employee engagement and satisfaction.

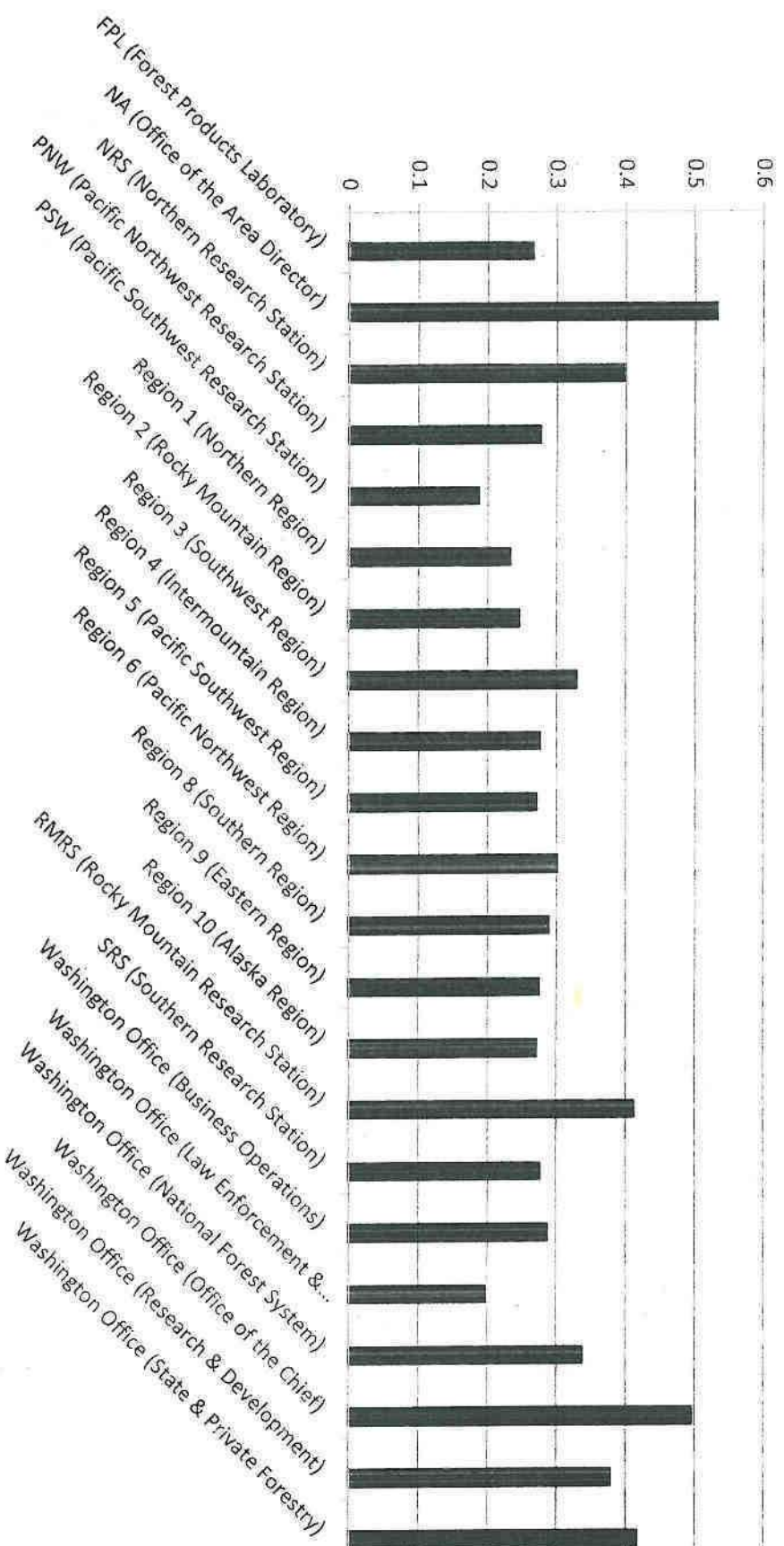
How satisfied are you with the policies and practices of your senior leaders?

Only 27% are satisfied with the policies and practices of their senior leaders



In my organization, leaders generate high levels of motivation and commitment in the workforce

Only 30% agree leaders generate high levels of motivation and commitment in the workforce



Potential reasons for some differences by unit in these key driver scores

The highest positive key driver scores were from NA, Office of the Chief, WO NFS, WO R&D, RMRS, NRS, and WO S&PF. It is our belief from experience with various organizations, past experience with the Forest Service itself, and through interviews performed as part of this project that the following are possible reasons for the differences in these units' scores:

- In general, units that are smaller in overall size and/or where senior leaders may be visibly seen more often makes it easier for employees and senior leaders to engage one another. Notwithstanding, these particular units' senior leaders must also be actively involving and engaging their employees in a personal way.
- The stand-alone nature of NA, the unique work of research stations, and the kind of work and geographically compact nature of WO units compared to regional offices could also be factors. More information is required.
- The NA Director holds quarterly all employee video-teleconferences where questions are taken from anyone, and everything is open for discussion. Also, NA leadership makes at least one trip to each field office each year.
- The NRS Director consistently sends notes from senior leadership meetings to employees, keeping them informed and giving them a feeling that their leader is watching out for them and taking a risk to be transparent.
- The RMRS Director holds a video-teleconference every 6-8 weeks with all employees to discuss current issues and provide employees the opportunity to be engaged and ask all the tough questions.
- Staff describes leaders in most of these units as approachable and open to engaging with employees.

Overall Recommendations

- *Each R/S/A unit and leader must take ownership for improvement. Each unit should convene its senior leadership to discuss potential factors that are contributing to lower scores, review the recommendations provided, and develop an employee engagement improvement plan.*
- *Address potential communication breakdowns between organizational levels. The Forest Service may want to consider the possibility of a communication breakdown happening between the WO, RO, and Forest/District employees. It is likely that Forest Supervisors are not equipped or culturally willing to explain support for WO/RO decisions to their Forest employees, creating a lack of understanding and trust in senior leadership.*
- *Empower employees to develop and implement solutions. The deep cultural element of line authority may be contributing to employees blaming senior leadership and expecting them to fix things. Senior leadership needs to strongly encourage employees in the R/S/As to be innovative and politically savvy in identifying solutions.*
- *Executive Leadership must be seen as providing value and promoting engagement. The larger an organization is in size the more difficult it is for the rank and file employees to see the value of those at the top who “don’t really understand what we do in the field.”*

Recommended Actions to Improve Key Drivers The 3 Most Important Based on Best Practices

“The direct relationship with one’s leader is the strongest driver of employee engagement.”

“Effective performance management requires a willingness to genuinely know the person you’re leading...”

“Full appreciation of work done and the feeling of being in on things are the top two things that employees want from their work.”

Sharon Armstrong and Madelyn Appelbaum, Stress Free Performance Appraisals

Interview Input on Key Drivers

Key Driver #1: Potential senior leader policies and practices with which employees may disagree	Key Driver #2: Potential reasons leaders aren't generating motivation and commitment in the workforce
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Top-down restrictive policy edicts • Indecisiveness and analysis paralysis • Closed-door decision-making process of the NLC • Addition of burdensome administrative work processes • Continued inefficiencies related to ASC HCM work processes • Increasing budgetary constraints • Reduced resource allocation • Diversity recruitment quotas trumping "most skilled person" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders are not connecting with the rank and file staff on a personal level • Lack of consistent and transparent communication • The prevailing promotion of a "can do" culture in a time of continually diminishing resources • Lack of recognition for quality work performed • Inability to effectively take steps to deal with poor performers

Key Driver #1 Top Recommendations

How satisfied are you with the policies and practices of your senior leaders?

1. Always tell the complete truth (“straight talk”) with transparency, explaining the big picture, why and how decisions are made, what employees can expect, and how decisions help meet goals (no spin).
1. The NLC does not need to add more decision-makers but it must fully utilize and then call attention to the use of in-house experts in informing key decisions that involve their area of expertise. NEVER ever exclude these key people from the decision-informing process.
1. Hold quarterly or semi-annual all employee video calls with the ELT and/or NLC and have employees submit questions. Senior leaders need to tell employees how they spend their time, how they are addressing issues and going about solving problems, and answer questions. Send a summary to all employees and thank them for their engagement.
1. As leaders, strongly and vocally object to unnecessary bottlenecks, gate-keeping, and broken processes – demand breakthrough and that everyone focus on “keeping it simple.” Remove the fear that employees have of making mistakes if they try new and creative ways of doing things; leaders must talk AND demonstrate their support for creativity and innovation.

Key Driver #2 Top Recommendations

In my organization, leaders generate high levels of motivation and commitment in the workforce.

1. Senior leaders must improve their leadership narrative that articulates how they have been where employees are today and how they value the hard and difficult work each employee does. You must personally connect and relate to the rank and file staff.
1. STOP asking for more and more of the “can do” with less and less resources. Identify and be decisive on what work and initiatives can be *stopped, postponed, or lessened in quantity*, and *set priorities* on work that must continue. Encourage this also take place at each level (R/S/A, Forest, District, Work Team/Group, Employee). Define and accept lower targets based on a reduced budget.
1. Recognize others (individuals and units) for their contributions to results and focus on their strengths – make them feel like heroes. Don’t be afraid of praising more often than providing constructive feedback. Provide unexpected gestures, such as thank you emails, announcements in meetings, thank you cards or gift cards and cite the specific actions.
1. Strongly support managers and supervisors in addressing poor performers head on. “EARLY and OFTEN” is essential to improve the employee’s performance and to avoid diminishing the performance of the most creative and productive employees. Employees should never have to guess how their leader feels about their level of performance.

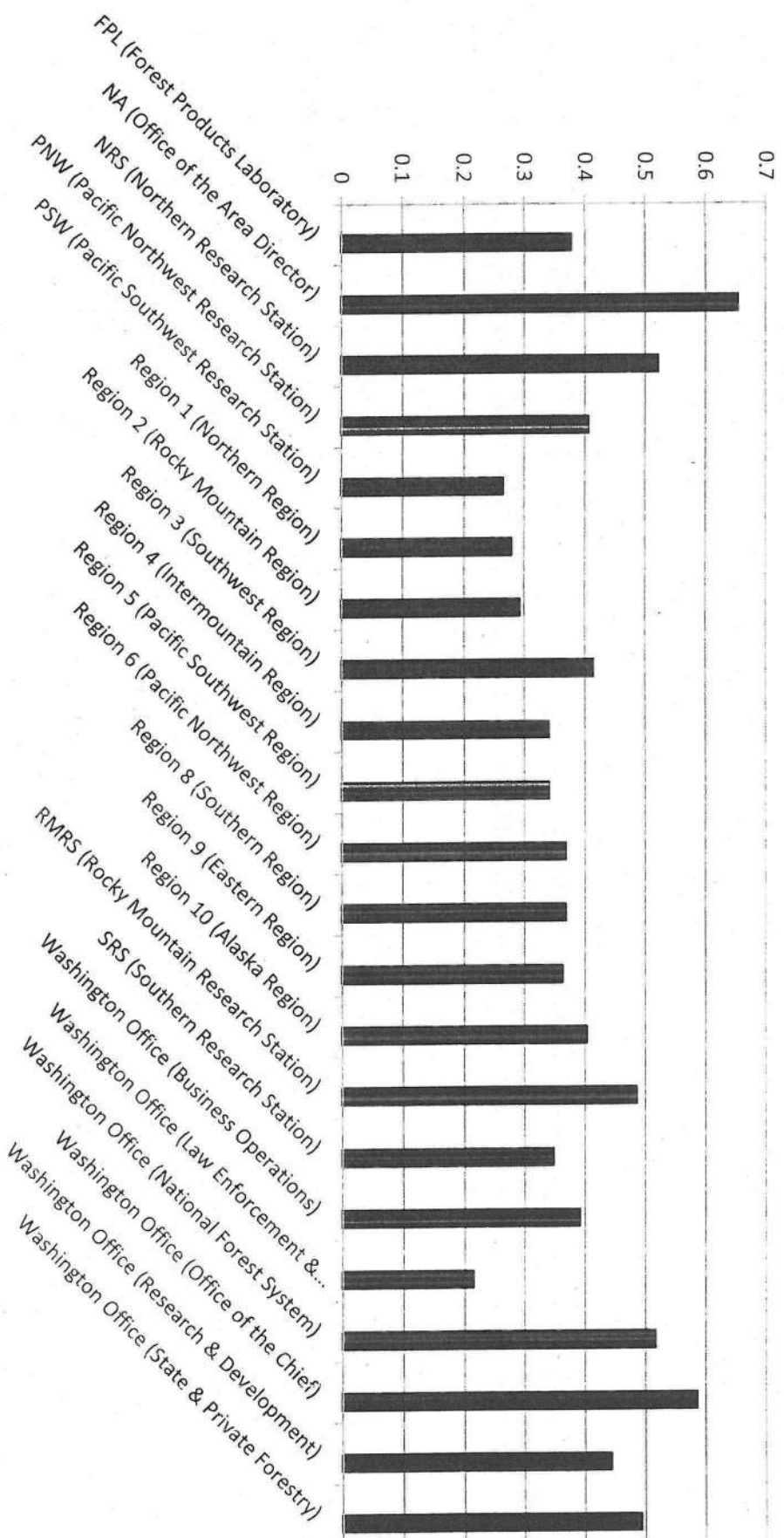
Other Senior Leadership Findings

Two other FEVS scores are also in the senior leadership category and appear to have similar scores by unit as the two key drivers, with almost the same units scoring the highest in percent positive scores:

- *I have a high level of respect for my organization's senior leaders:* NA, Office of the Chief, WO NFS, NRS, WO S&PF, and RMRS had the six highest scores.
- *My organization's leaders maintain high standards of integrity and honesty:* WO S&PF, NRS, NA, WO NFS, RMRS, and WO R&D had the six highest scores.

I have a high level of respect for my organization's senior leaders

Only 37% have a high-level of respect for their senior leaders



My organization's leaders maintain high standards of honesty and integrity

Only 45% believe organization's leaders maintain high standards of honesty and integrity



Additional Suggestions to Improve Leadership Scores

- ✓ Address the issue of honesty and integrity – convene as leaders and openly discuss what it is you may need to come clean about, apologize and right any existing “wrongs.”
- ✓ Create consistent and honest messages about future vision and initiatives, resource realities, and their connection to the day-to-day work and vision; explain how decisions are made and consistently ask for employee feedback.
- ✓ Do not surprise employees with bad and/or last minute news; be completely transparent about upcoming and ongoing changes and share more information.
- ✓ Always keep the commitments you make with employees and the organization as a whole.
- ✓ Develop real people relationships with line staff; “seek first to understand and then to be understood” -- you don’t always have to be the one talking to develop a relationship of trust and be seen as a leader.
- ✓ Find your most engaged and motivated leaders and turn them into examples and coaches for others to learn from and follow.
- ✓ Recognize people’s strengths and reduce the focus on “problems” – look at how individual and organizational strengths can be used to overcome challenges.
- ✓ Dedicate time and energy to learning about employees, showing them you care and participating actively in the workplace. Get out of the walled office and get your hands dirty by tackling the business with employees. Visit more unit meetings to gain more exposure to employees. Be warm, open and engaging.
- ✓ Invite employees visiting DC to the Chief’s daily briefing and to have a picture taken with the Chief, which they can then take back with them to their unit and can be shared on social media sites.
- ✓ Learn how to coach, asking employees questions that will help them reach their own conclusions about how to improve instead of as a leader feeling you have a responsibility to explain your views and give edicts from on high.
- ✓ Create a short list of values and behaviors that senior leaders commit to holding themselves accountable and to which they will hold their direct reports accountable.
- ✓ Model the behaviors you’d like to see in all supervisors and employees.
- ✓ Deliver results individually and always “walk your own talk.”

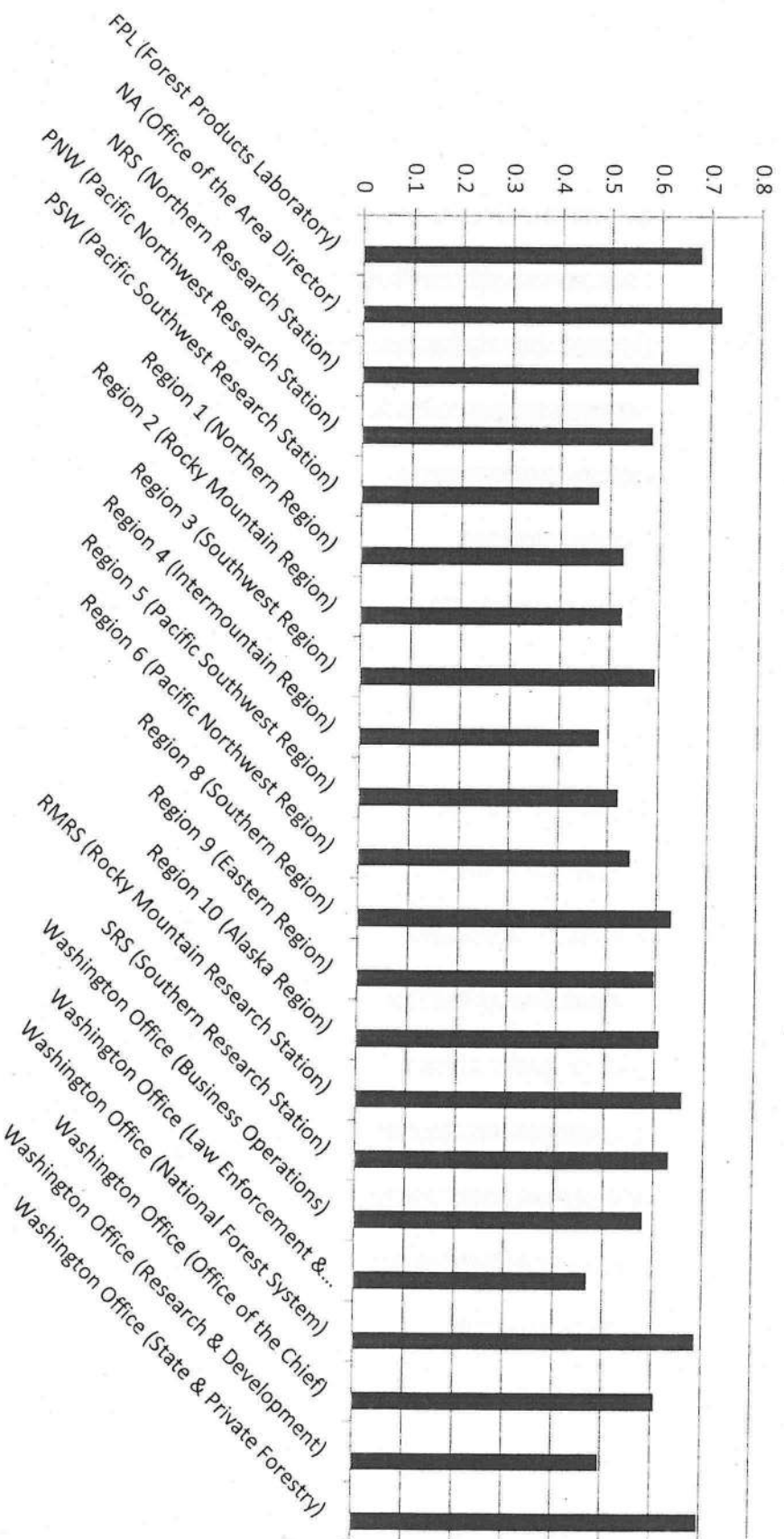
Other Findings

Finding 1

Just over half of employees agree the agency is successful at accomplishing its mission and is a good place to work

I recommend my organization as a good place to work

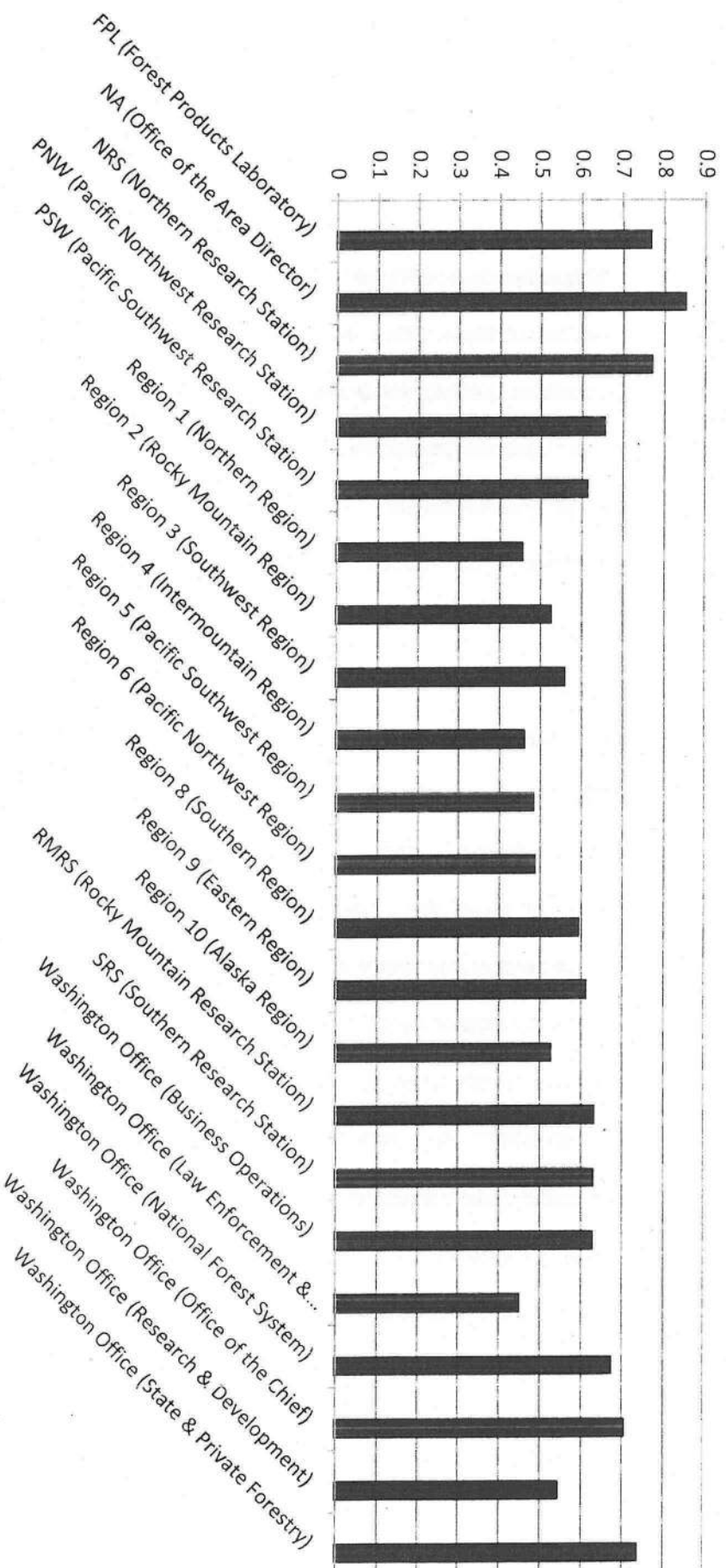
57% recommend the Forest Service as a good place to work



WO LE&I, PSW, R4, and WO R&D scores are below 50%; NA, WO S&PF, WO NFS, NRS, RMRS are over 65%

My agency is successful at accomplishing its mission

55% agree the Forest Service is successful at accomplishing its mission



WO LE&I, R1, R4, R5, and R6 are below 50%; NA, NRS, FPL, WO S&PF, Office of the Chief are above 70%

Finding 2

An overwhelming majority of employees like what they do and believe the work is important

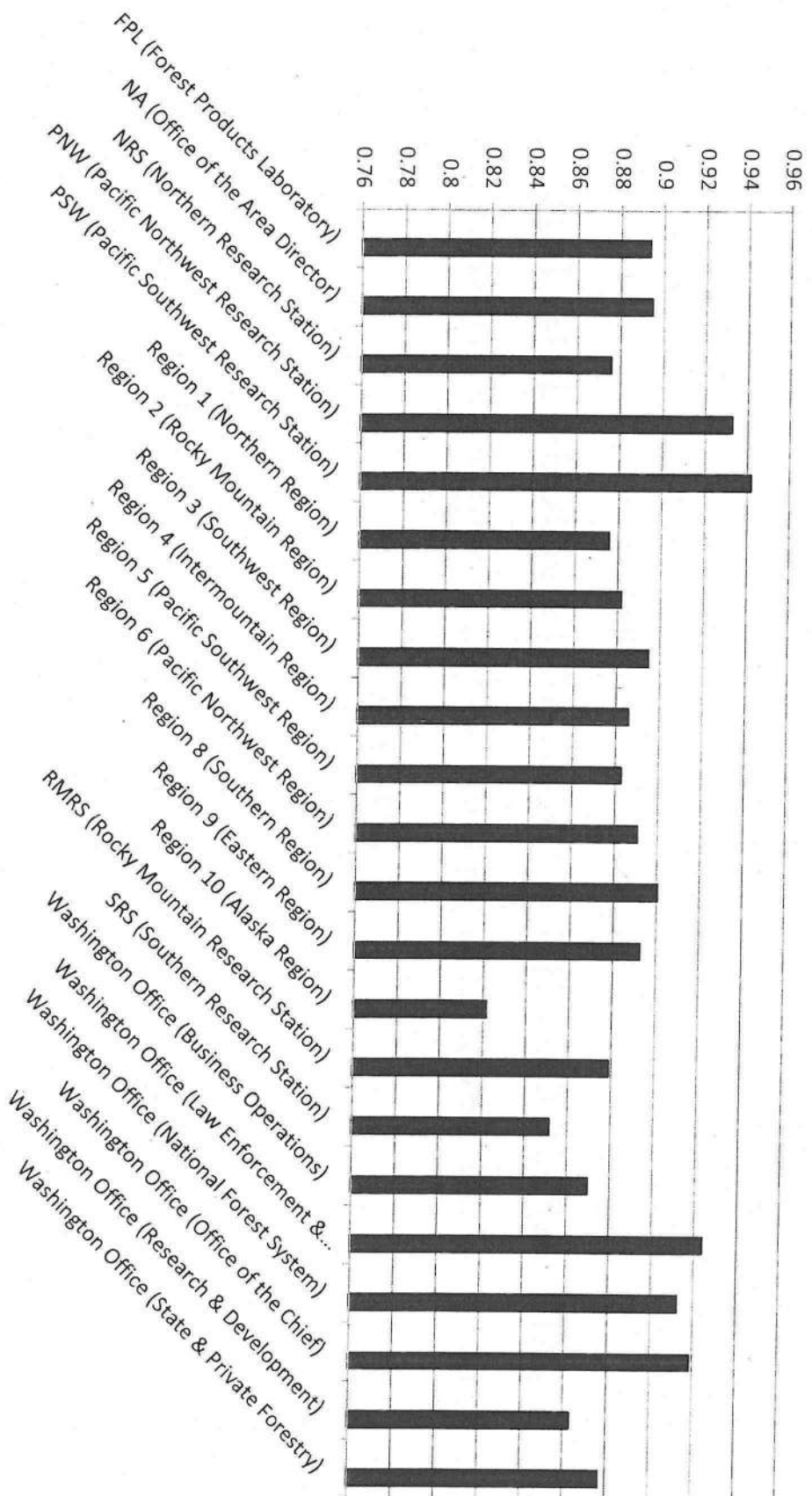
I like the kind of work I do

86% of employees surveyed like the kind of work they do



The work I do is important

89% agree the work they do is important

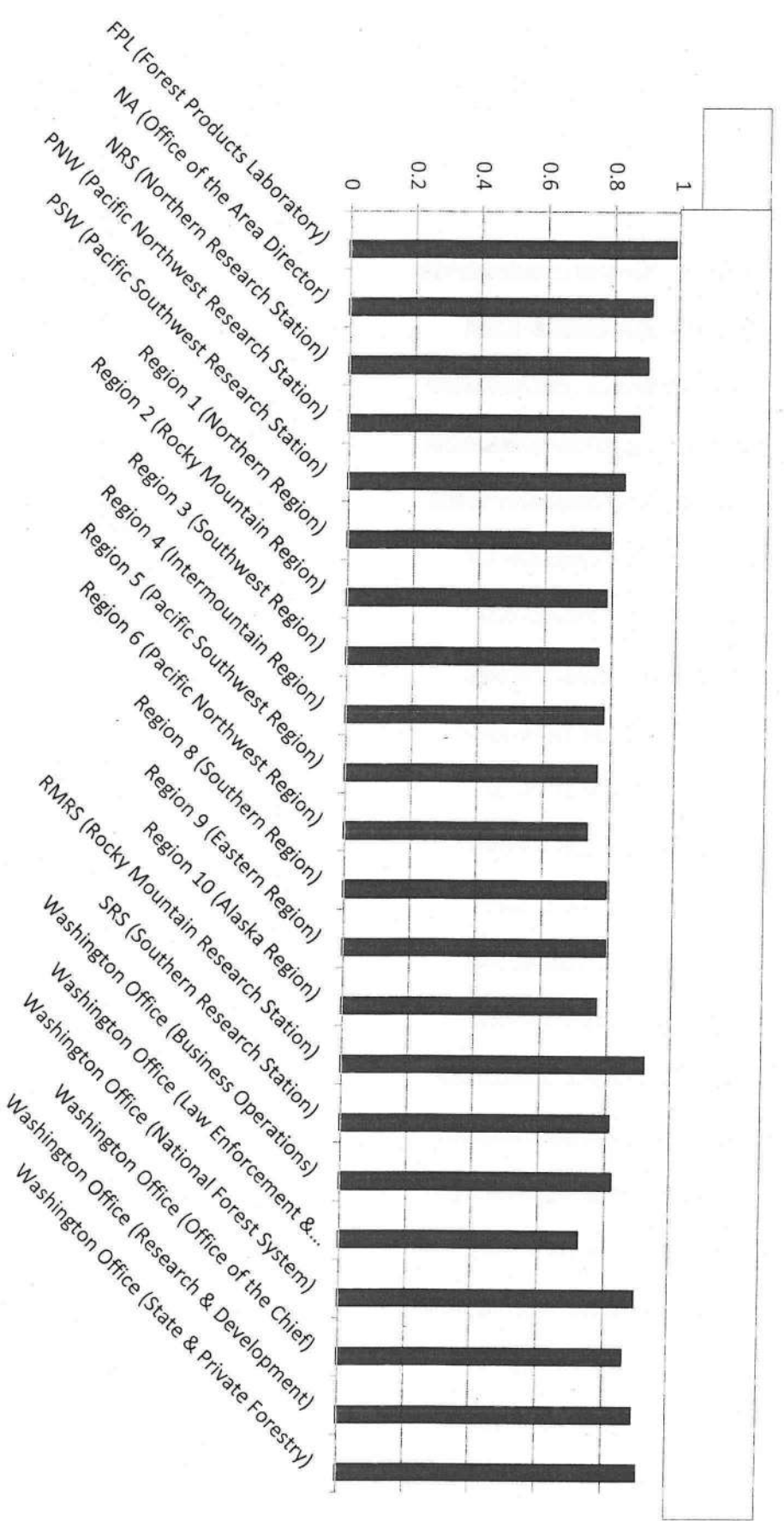


Finding 3

Employees believe their work unit does good work
and that people they work with cooperate and
share job knowledge

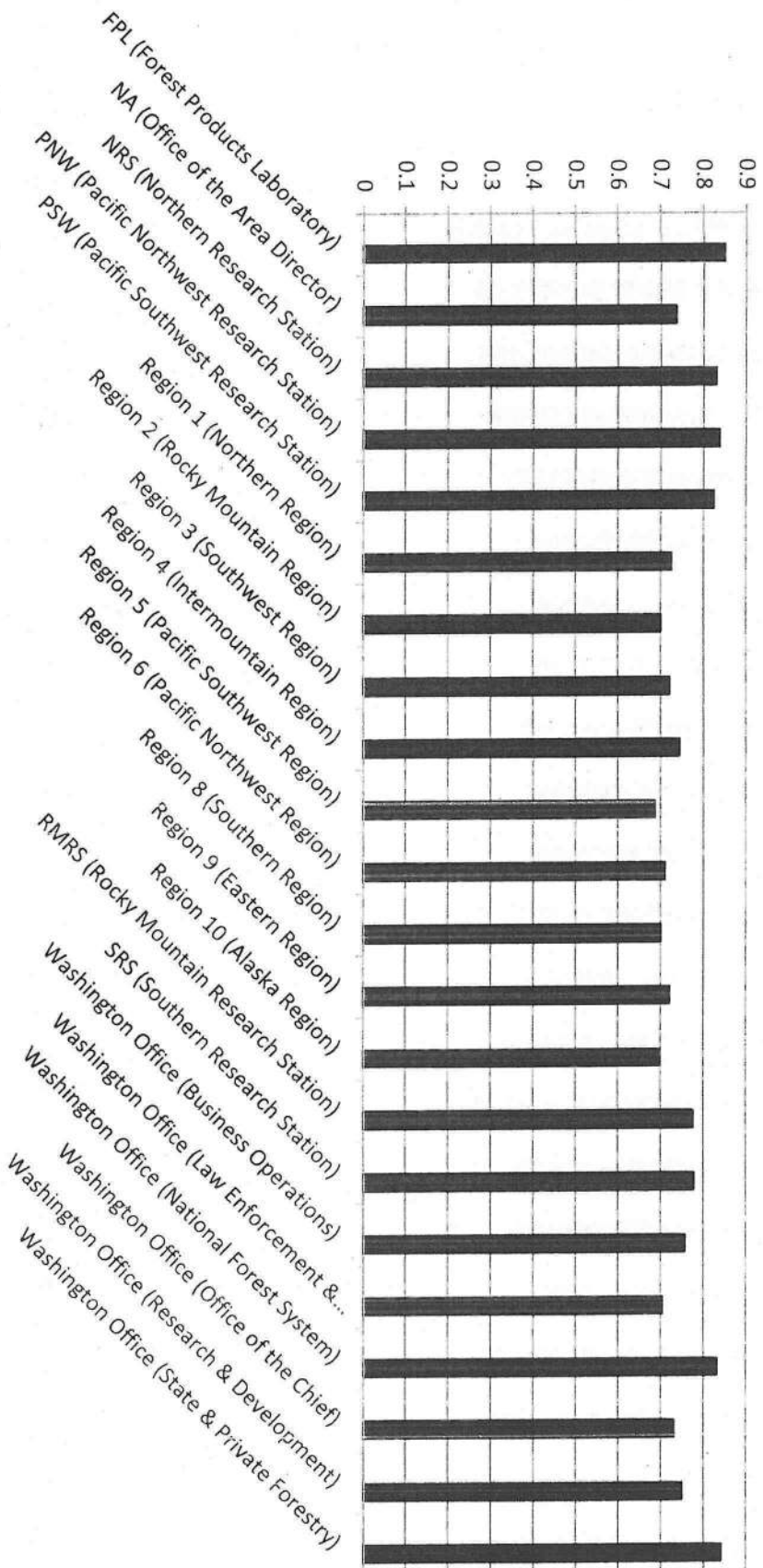
How would you rate the overall quality of work done by your work unit?

78% rate the quality of work done by their unit is good or very good



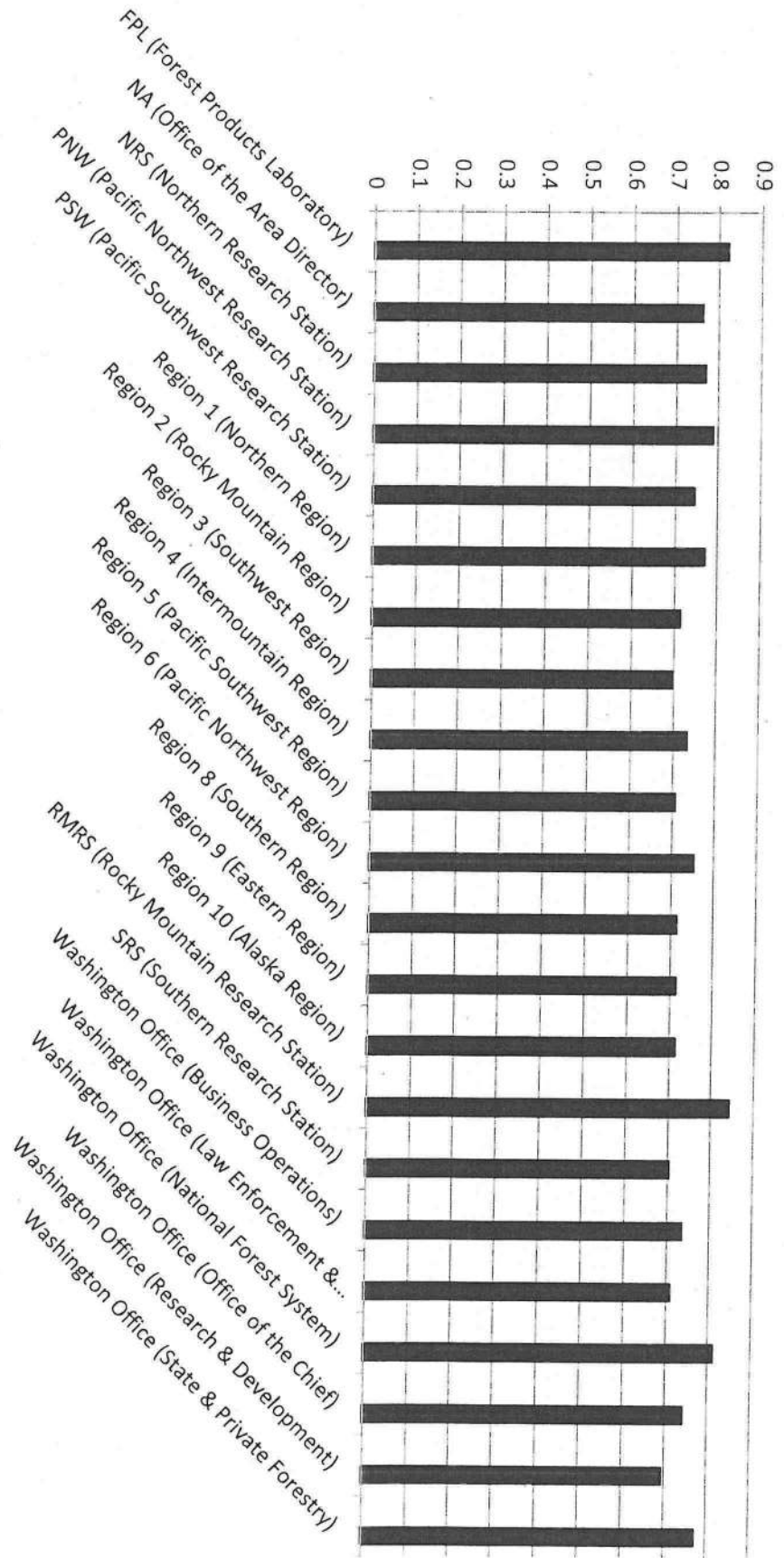
The people I work with cooperate to get the job done

71% agree that people they work with cooperate to get the job done



Employees in my work unit share job knowledge with each other

71% agree employees in their work unit share job knowledge with each other

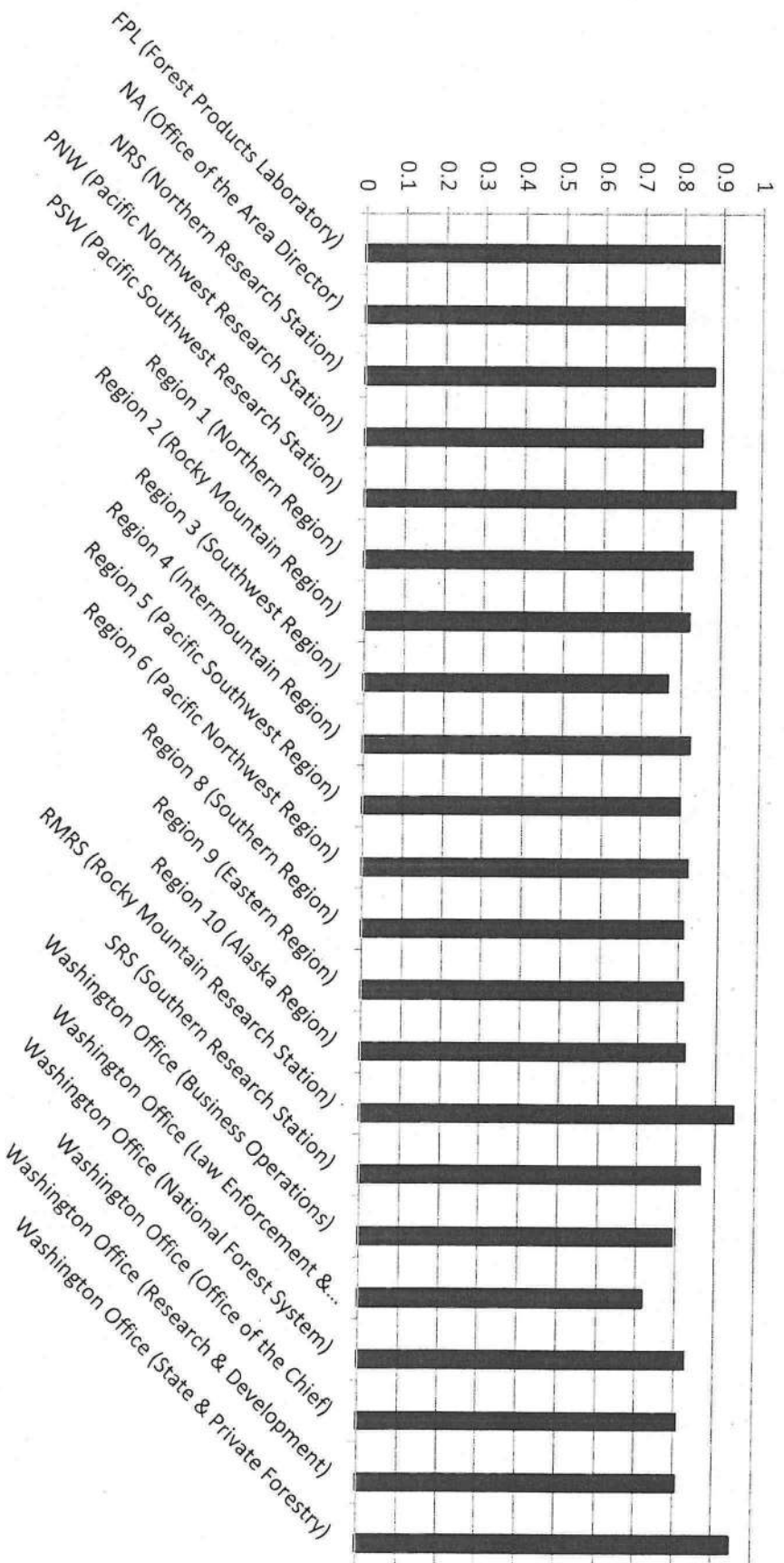


Finding 4

A majority of employees are pleased with their immediate supervisors, saying their supervisor treats them with respect; they have trust and confidence in their supervisors; feel their supervisors are doing a good or very good job and that their supervisor listens to what they have to say, gives them opportunities to demonstrate leadership skills, and supports their need for work/life balance

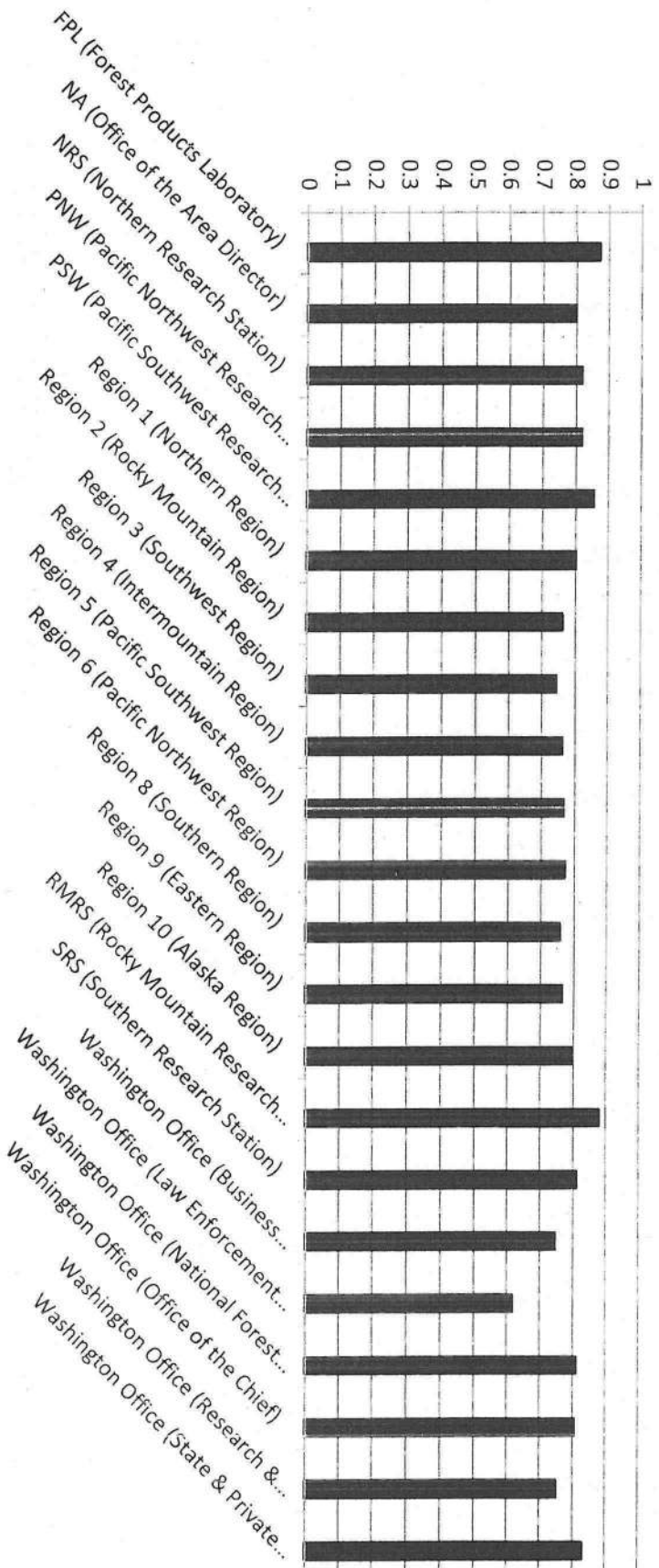
My supervisor/team leader treats me with respect

81% agree their supervisor/team leader treats them with respect



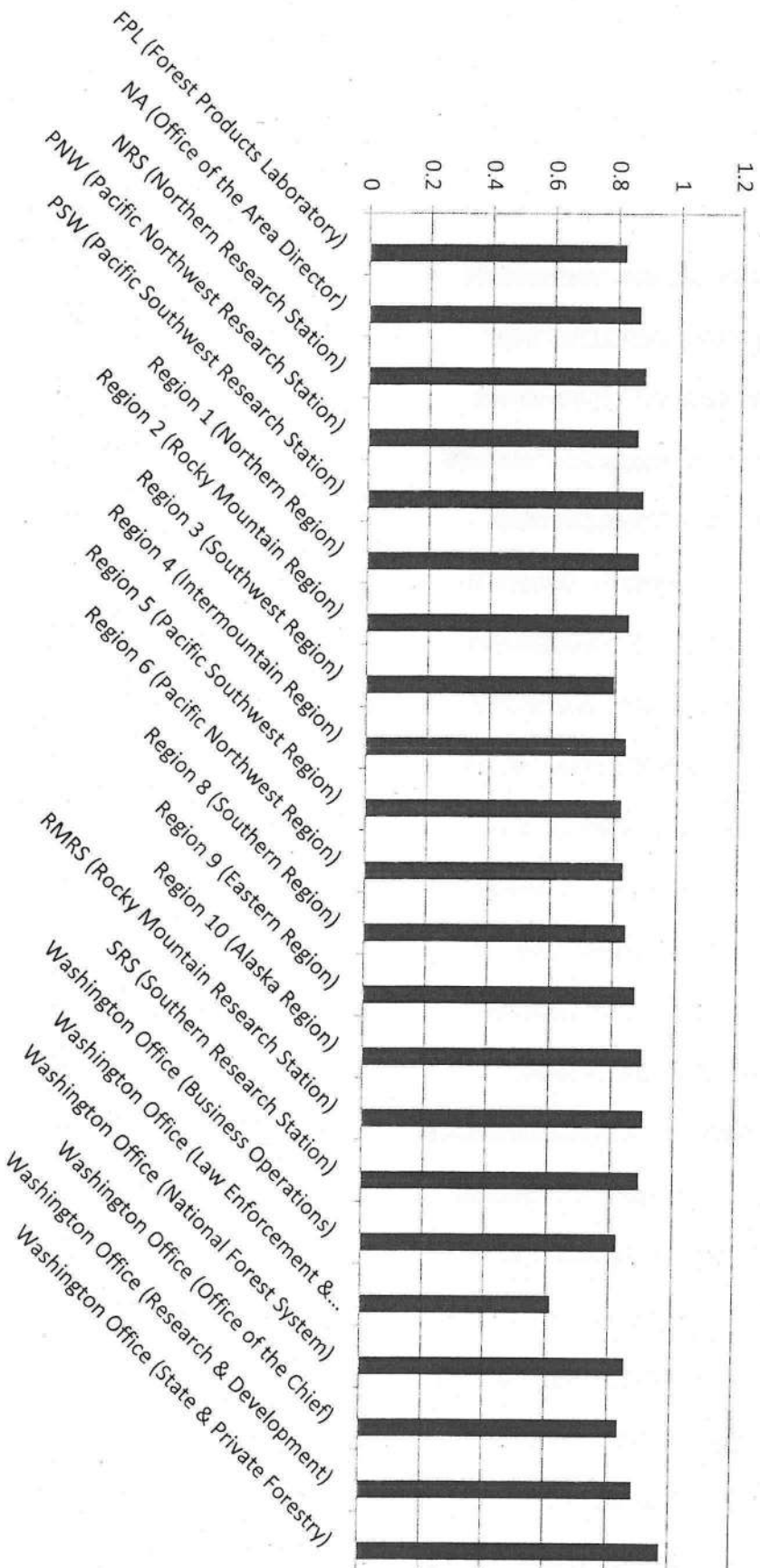
My supervisor/team leader listens to what I have to say

76% agree their supervisor/team leader listens to what they have to say



My supervisor supports my need to balance work and other life issues

83% agree supervisor supports need to balance work and other life issues



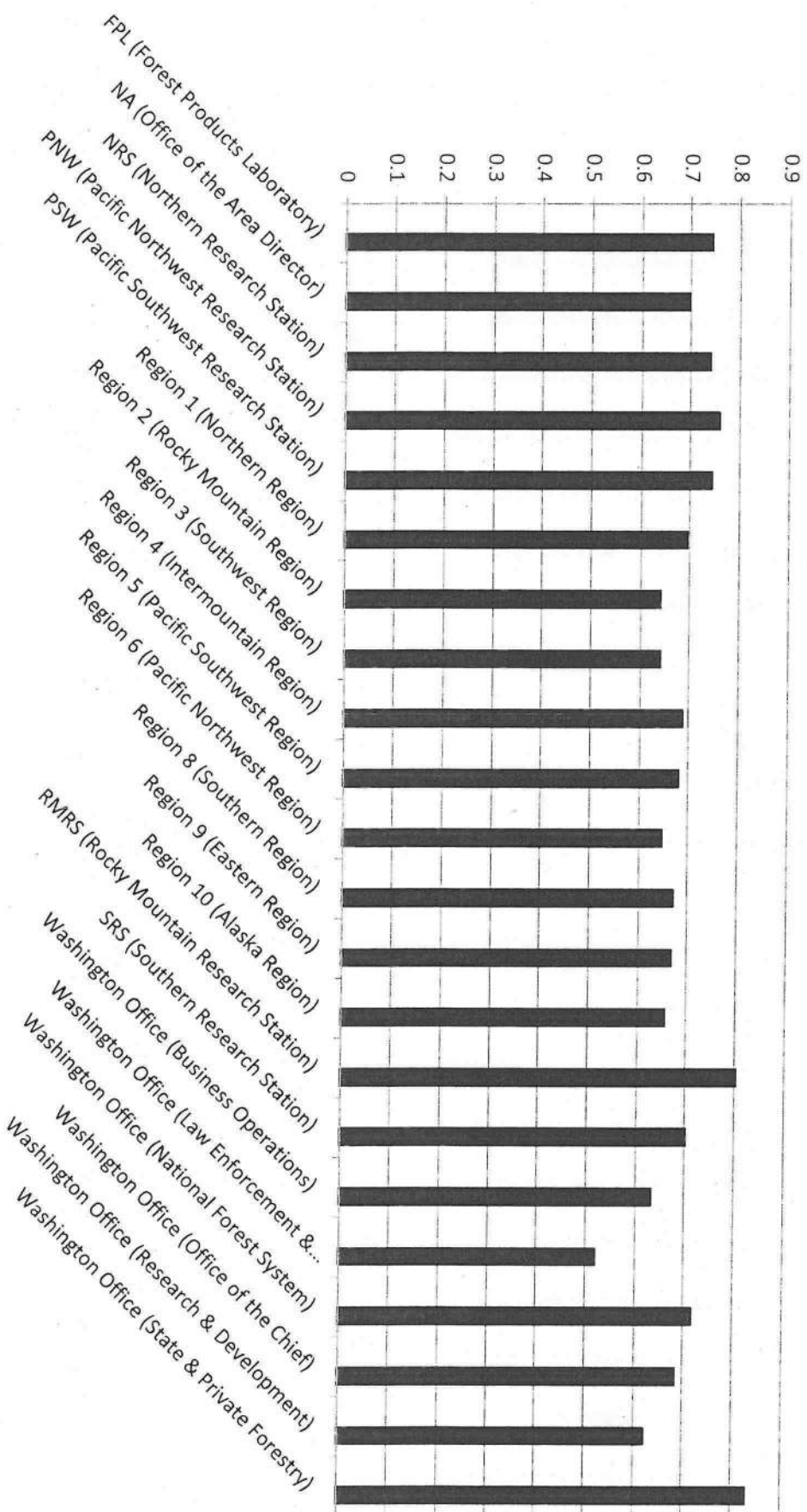
My supervisor/team leader provides me with opportunities to demonstrate my leadership skills

68% say their supervisor/team leader provides employees with opportunities to demonstrate their leadership skills



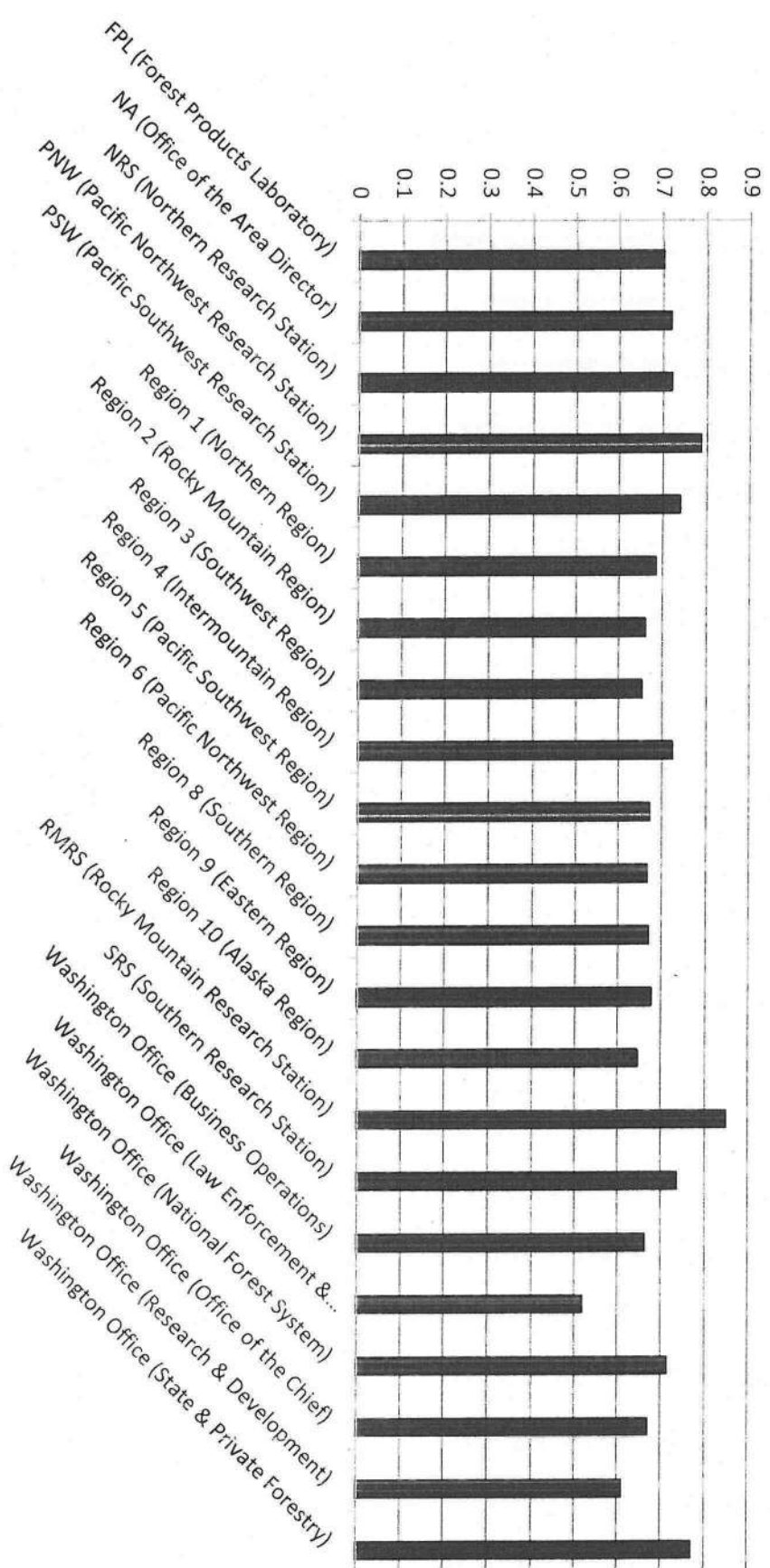
I have trust and confidence in my supervisor

66% have trust and confidence in supervisor



Overall, how good a job do you feel is being done by your immediate supervisor/team leader?

67% say immediate supervisor/team leader is doing a good or very good job



Finding 5

Senior Leaders are not well-respected, and not viewed as generating high-levels of motivation and commitment in the workforce, or as standards of honesty and integrity; an overwhelming majority of employees do not agree with their policies and practices

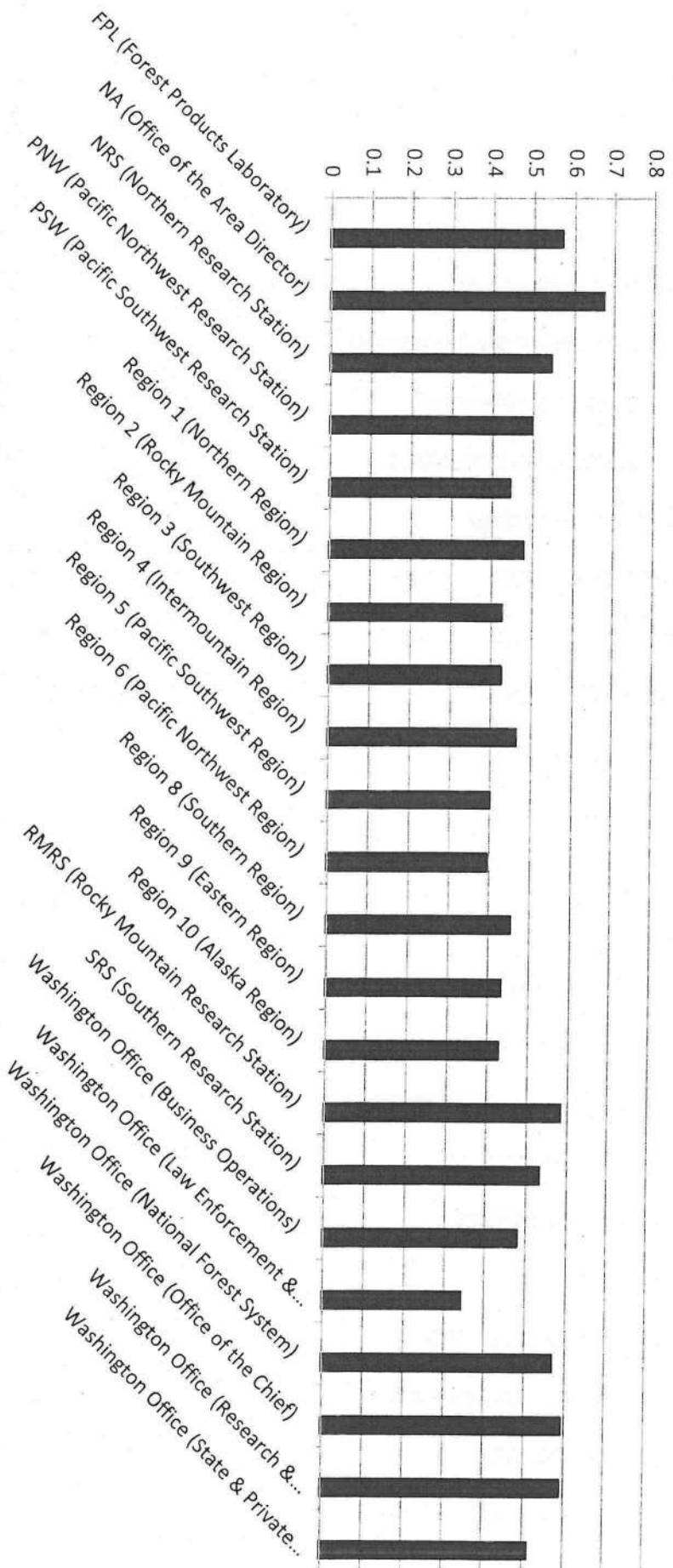
(see slides 5-17)

Finding 6

Employees are not satisfied with recognition received for doing a good job, for providing high-quality products and services, including being rewarded for creativity and innovation

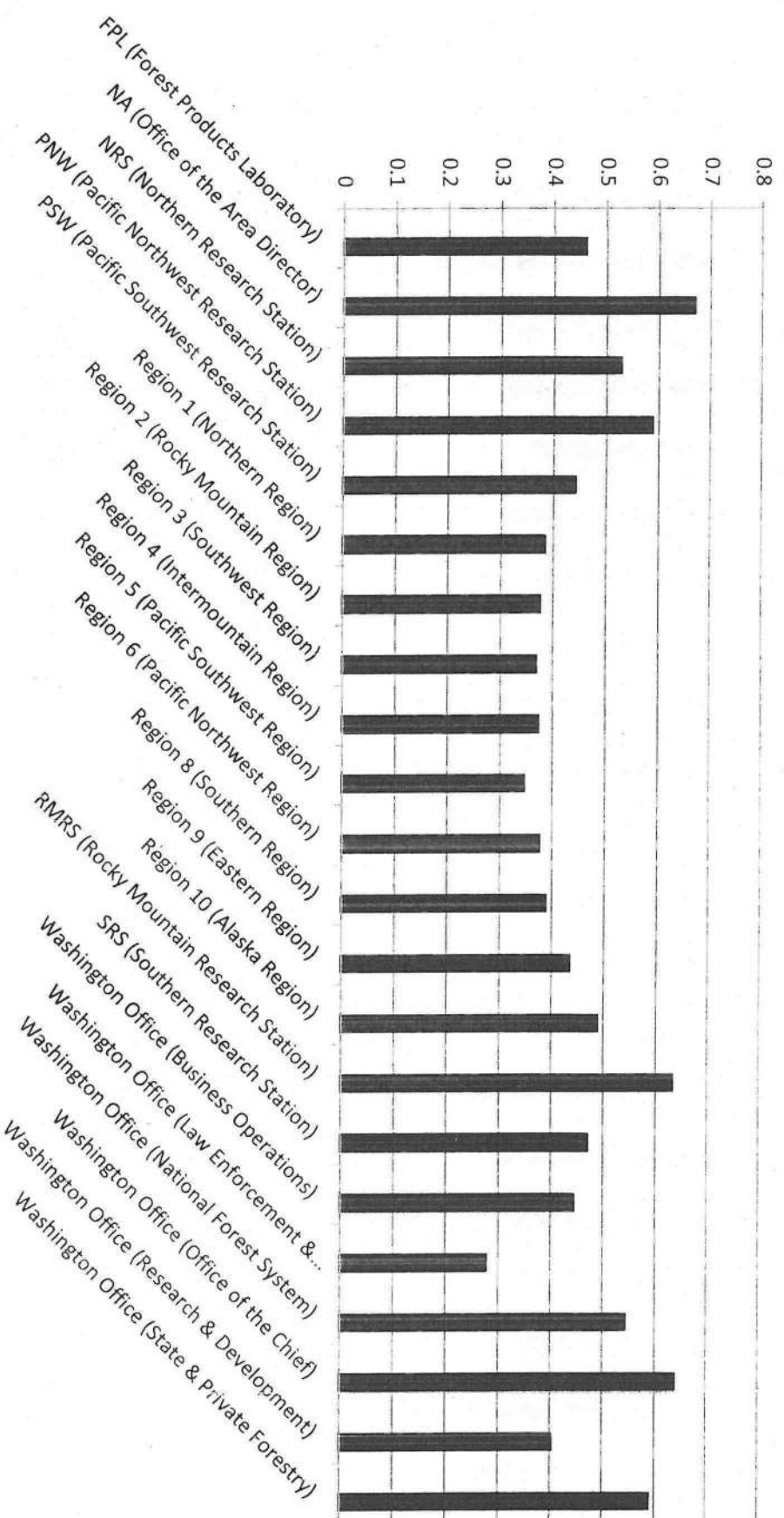
How satisfied are you with the recognition you receive for doing a good job?

Only 44% of employees are satisfied with recognition received for doing a good job



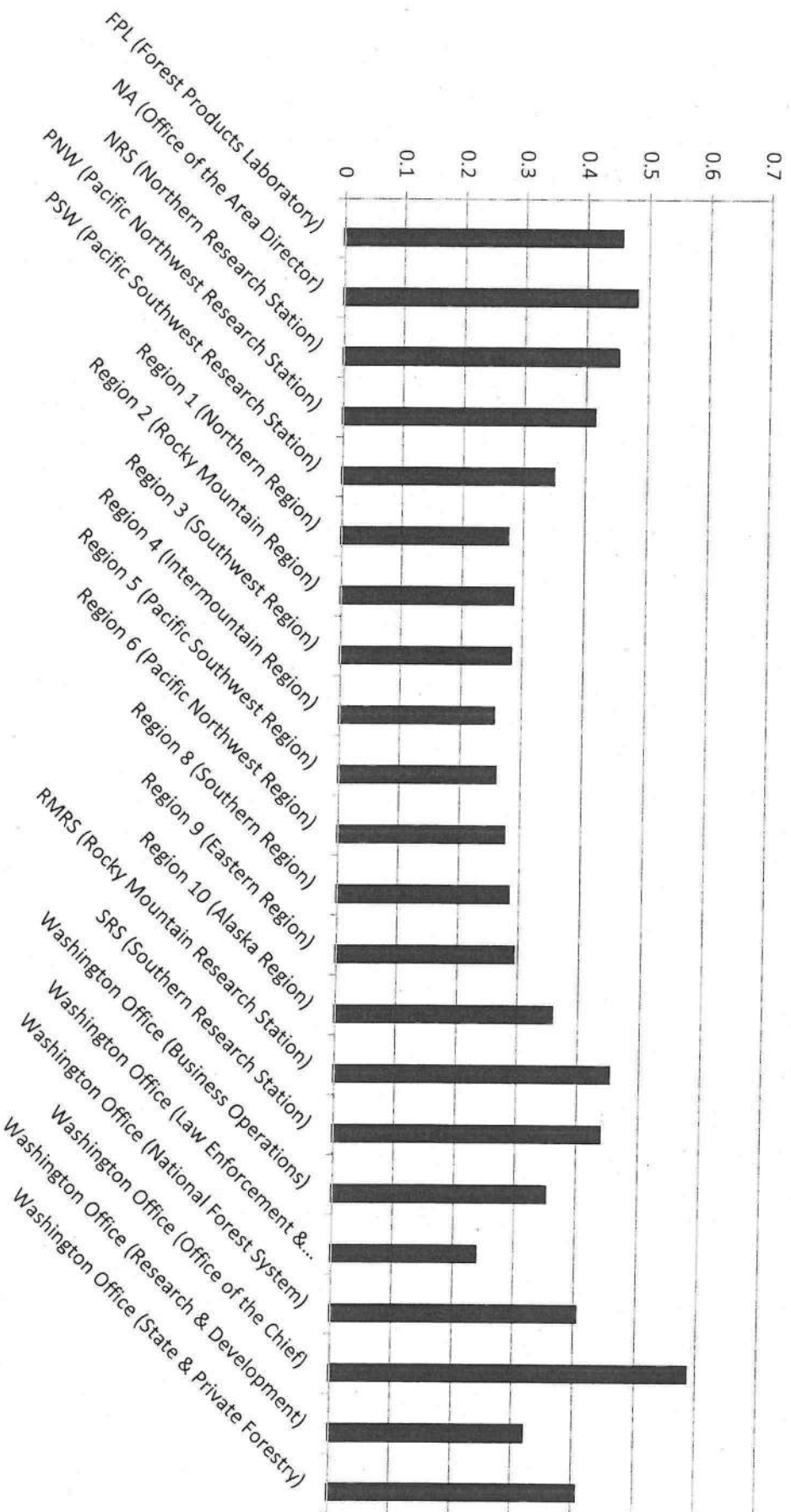
Employees are recognized for providing high quality products and services

Only 40% agree employees are recognized for quality work products and services



Creativity and innovation are rewarded

Only 29% agree that creativity and innovation are rewarded



Recommendations for more effectively recognizing employees' **quality work, creativity and innovation**

- ✓ Focus on employees' strengths and always verbally recognize an employee's contribution. Don't be afraid of praising more often than providing constructive feedback.
- ✓ Give the praise as soon as possible after something occurs and do it face-to-face whenever possible (management by walking around).
- ✓ Encourage leaders to see performance planning as a year-round process and to set-up regular meetings (not just at year-end and mid-year) to discuss employee work and provide feedback on strengths and developmental areas.
- ✓ Demonstrate that you are personally interested in and care about the Agency's employees, and elicit employee input and opinions regularly.
- ✓ Recognize smaller actions/results that will contribute to larger results.
- ✓ Recognize others for their contributions to results – make them feel like heroes; provide unexpected gestures (thank you cards, gift cards - cite specific actions); these create relationships while pay raises and bonuses are purely transactional.
- ✓ Remove the fear that employees have of making mistakes if they try new and creative ways of doing things; leaders must talk and demonstrate their support for creativity and innovation.
- ✓ Incorporate creativity and innovation into performance goals and reviews; celebrate creativity/innovation by announcing recognitions to entire agency and providing "spot" or special awards; take advantage of existing government awards for innovation.
- ✓ Provide training for leaders on motivation, recognition, and feedback.
- ✓ Verbal recognition goes a long way. Learn what kind of recognition each of your employees needs in order to be motivated around creativity and innovation.

Recommendations for **promoting creativity and innovation** in the workplace

Stifles Creativity & Innovation	Promotes Creativity & Innovation
A lack of open and honest communication	Open and honest communication
Too much red tape	Giving people more autonomy Simplify every rule and process possible
A risk-adverse attitude and culture	Avoid pointing fingers or assigning blame = allow for mistakes in the effort to be creative and innovative
Inaccessible leaders	Accessible and open leaders
Teams working in isolation	Teams that interconnect with other teams
Idea-killing language ("We tried it in 1985")	Leaders inspiring with idea championing language
Leaders who take credit for others' ideas	Leaders recognizing innovators
A conflict-adverse culture	Embracing healthy conflict and debate focused on ideas not personalities
Analysis paralysis	Recognizing that "80-90% good" is sometimes all you can ask for to move forward on an idea

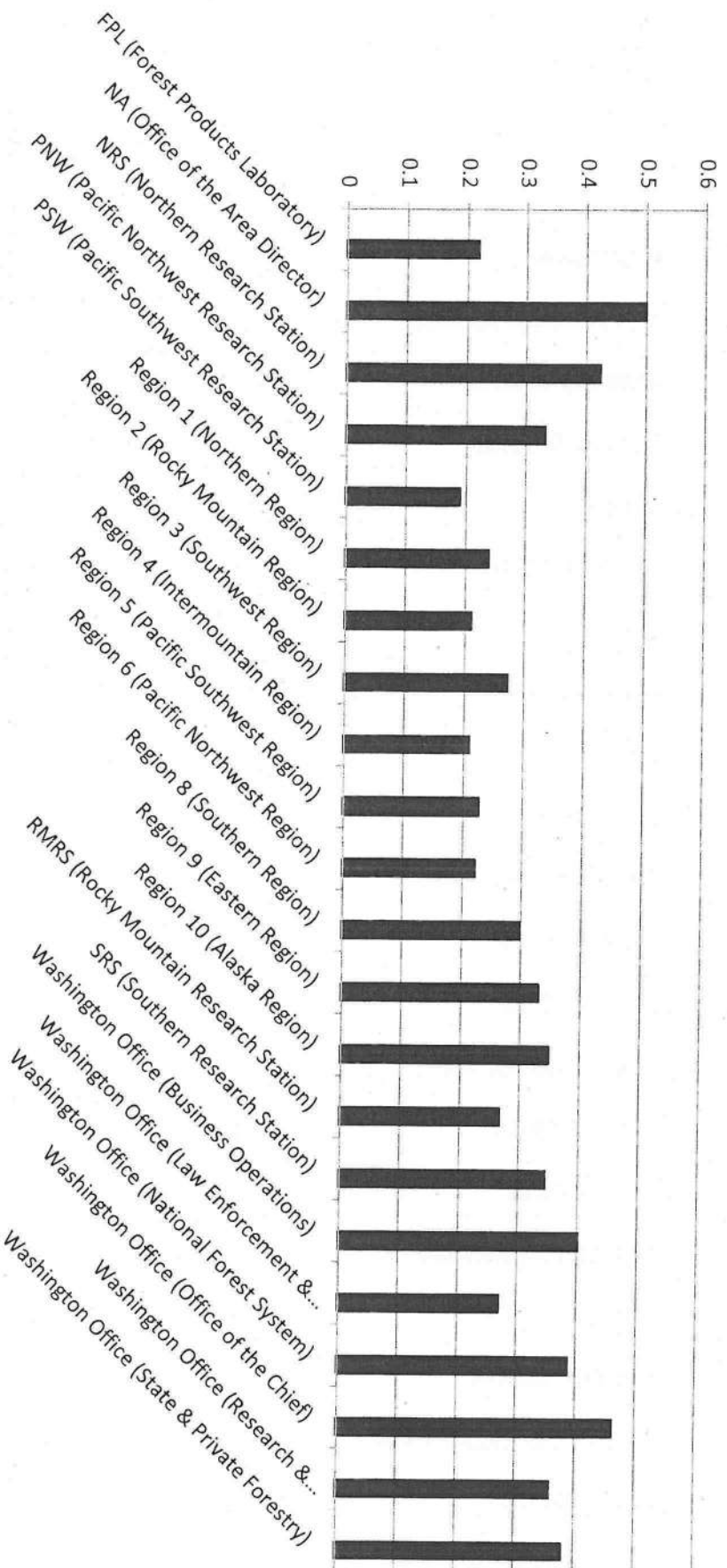
From "25 Ways to Keep Ideas Flowing in Your Workplaces," Copyright 2011, Michael Kerr

Finding 7

A minority of employees agree they have sufficient resources, their units are able to recruit people with the right skills, they have a reasonable workload, and are personally empowered with respect to work processes

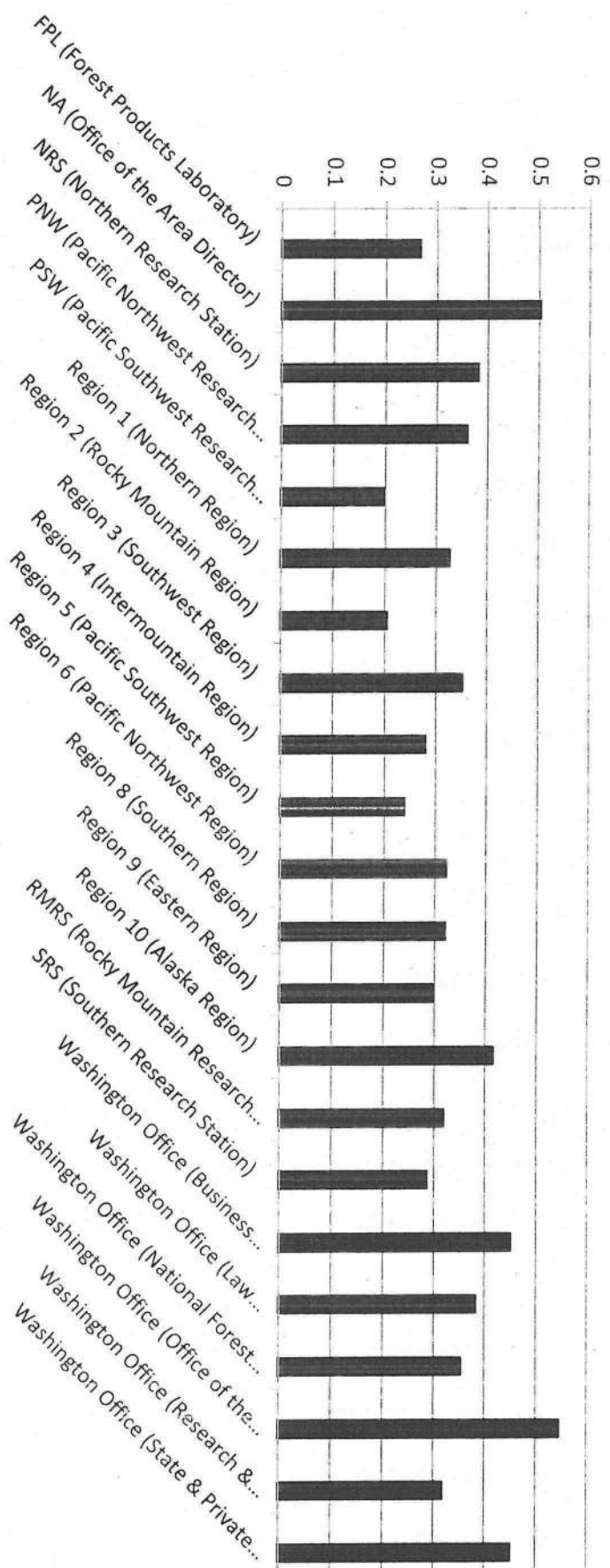
I have sufficient resources (for example, people, materials, budget) to get my job done

Only 29% agree they have the sufficient resources (people, materials, budget) to get their job done



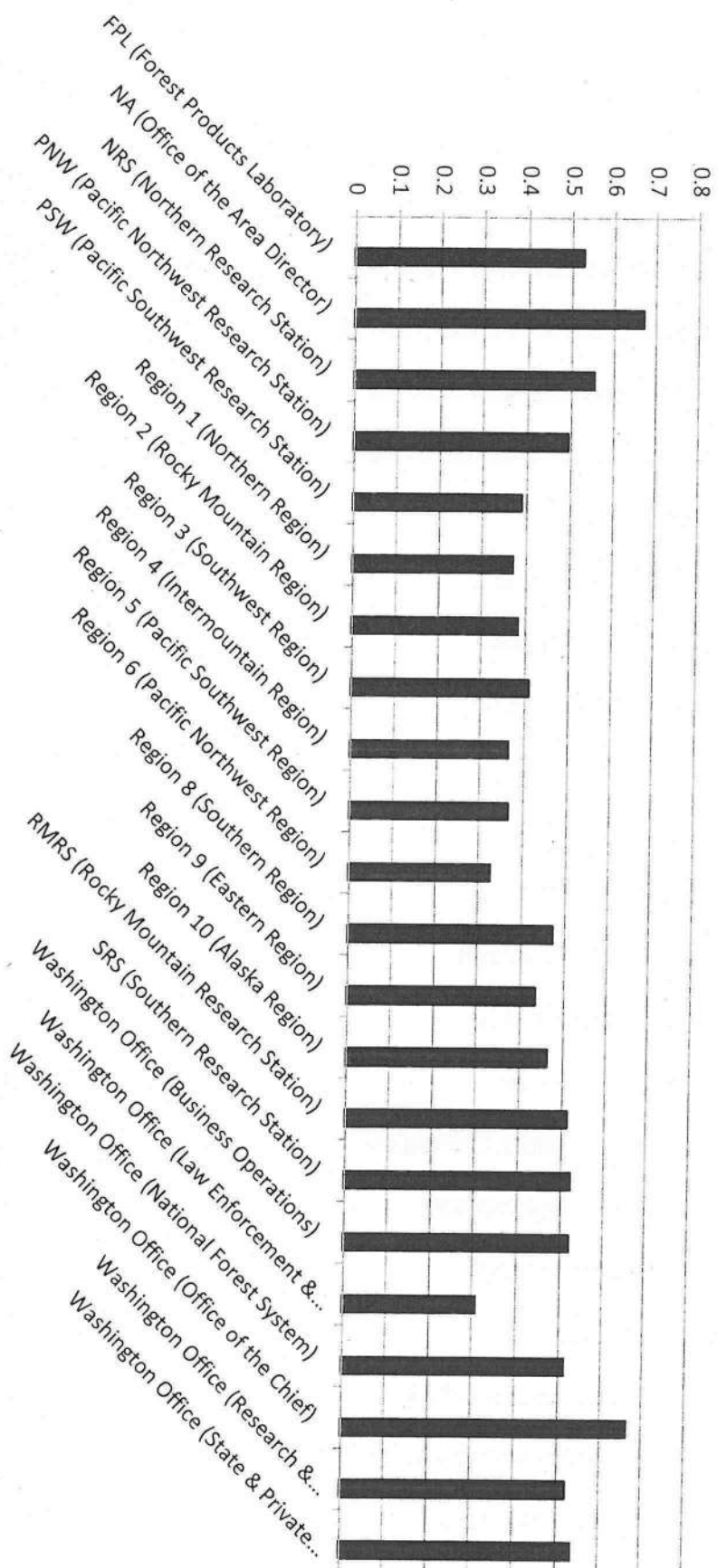
My work unit is able to recruit people with the right skills

Only 30% agree that their work unit is able to recruit people with the right skills



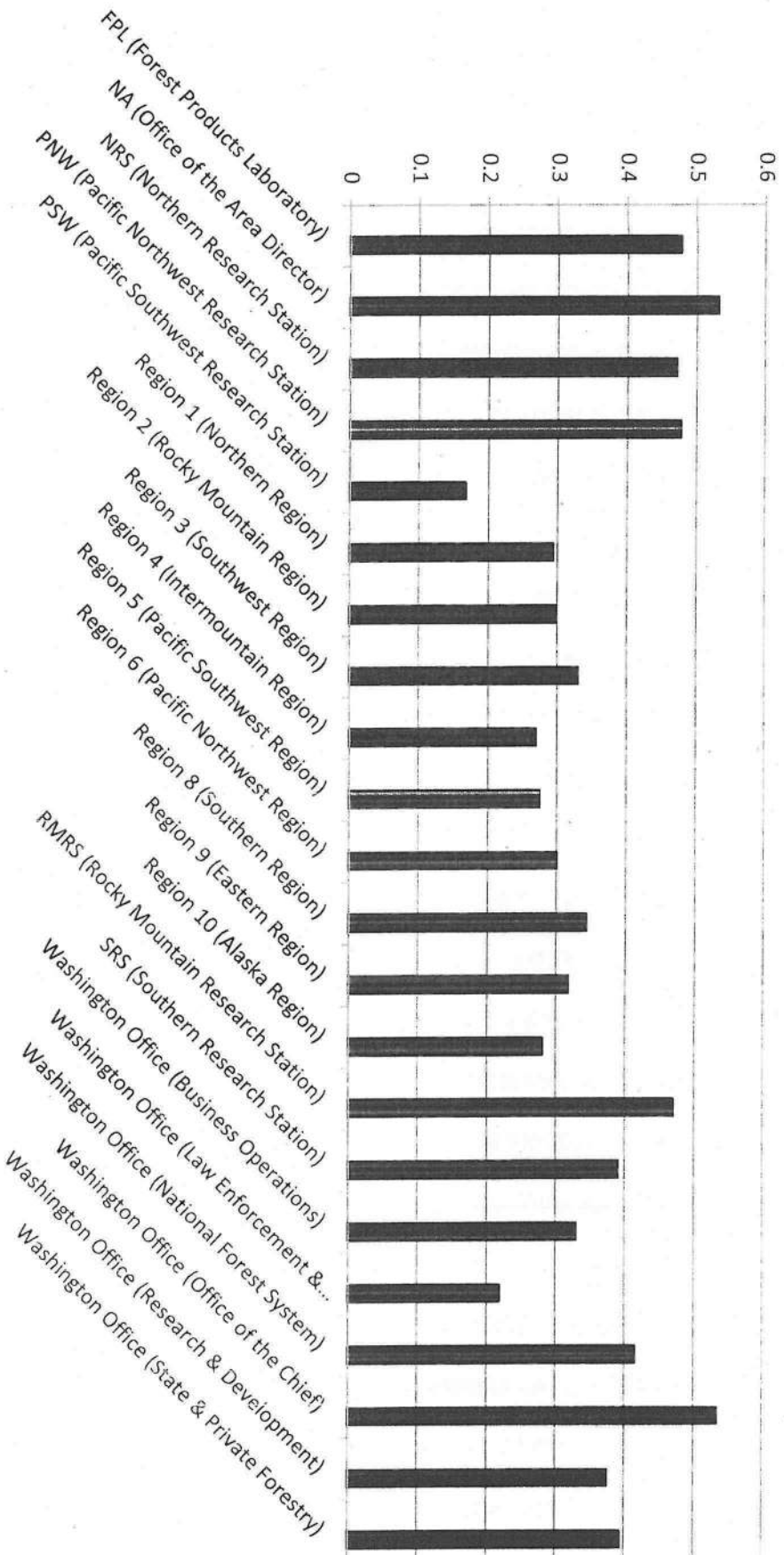
My workload is reasonable

Only 43% agree that their workload is reasonable



Employees have a feeling of personal empowerment with respect to work processes

Only 33% of employees have a feeling of personal empowerment
with work processes



Recommendations for addressing resource, workload, recruiting, and process challenges

Chief's
Call question

As senior leaders, STOP asking for more and more of the "can do" with less and less resources. Identify and decide on what work and initiatives can be *stopped, postponed, or lessened in quantity*, and *set priorities* on work that must continue. Encourage this also take place at each level (R/S/A, Forest, District, Work Team/Group, Employee). Define and accept lower targets.

- ✓ Request that every supervisor meet with each employee to prioritize work and identify activities/tasks that can be eliminated or reduced (as outlined in the next slide).
- ✓ Train every employee on effective prioritizing, goal setting, and time management.
- ✓ Empower employees to solve process problems and unravel bureaucracy when it impedes action; recognize and reward them for breakthroughs and simplicity.
- ✓ Leaders must let employees know that when they see a problem they are empowered to fix it and leaders must not stop them out of fear of mistakes during the innovative process.
- ✓ As leaders, strongly and vocally object to unnecessary bottlenecks, gate-keeping, and broken processes – demand breakthrough and that everyone focus on "keeping it simple."
- ✓ Stop creating more complex frameworks, standards, rules, and regulations.
- ✓ Aggressively pursue the sharing of resources across traditional unit or program boundaries and find opportunities to cross-train employees.
- ✓ Identify areas of major resource constraints and any potentially under-utilized resources and redeploy or use as "go to resources."
- ✓ Determine how the new Pathways' program will address challenge of recruiting the people with the right skills.
- ✓ When skills are lost with departing employees consider if the work that requires those skills can be eliminated instead of giving the work to unskilled employees.
- ✓ Increasing diversity in recruitment must never sacrifice the most important criteria of "most skilled person."
- ✓ Address remaining HR recruiting and other HR process issues with urgency – once and for all.

Have all supervisors discuss workload and clarify priorities with each employee

Employees often feel it is difficult to **balance their workload and prioritize their work** and often feel uncomfortable disclosing this to their supervisors.

Take the opportunity to talk with employees about their current workload and priorities:

1) Discuss with employees how they spend their time and consider the following:

- *Are there work activities that can be postponed or lessened in quantity?*
- *Are there work activities that can be stopped/cancelled?*
- *Are there work activities others can help them do?*
- *Are there work activities that can be done more efficiently?*

2) For employees who appear to be really struggling, have them prepare an outline of all the work they are doing and how they spend their time. Ask them to come prepared to discuss the questions listed above.

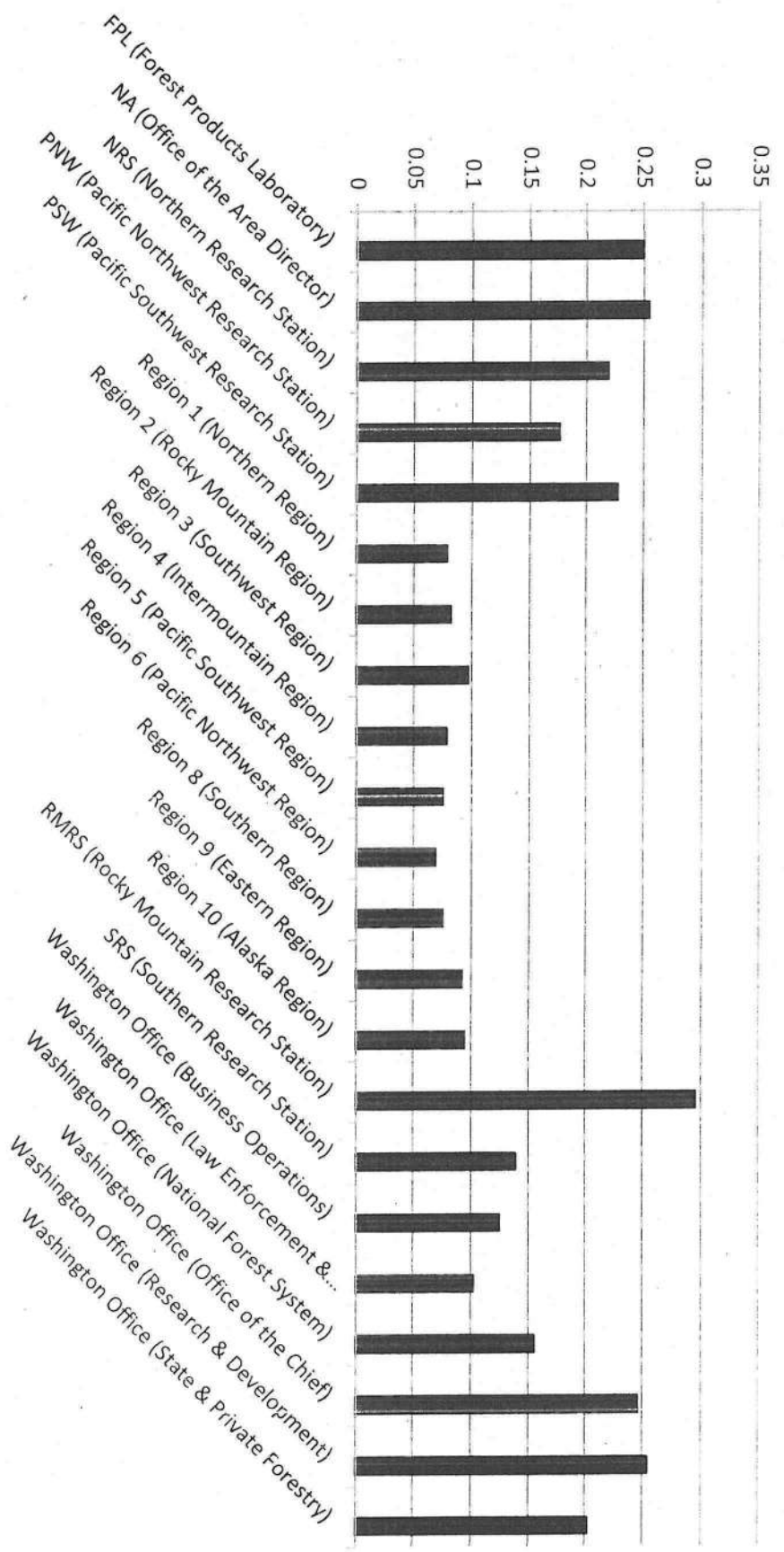
3) Review the employee's work activities and provide clear direction, where needed, on which activities are top priority and which are not.

Finding 8

Few employees agree that pay raises depend on
how well employees perform their jobs,
promotions are based on merit, awards depend on
how well people perform their jobs; that
differences in performance are recognized in a
meaningful way; that steps are taken to deal with
poor performers; and that arbitrary actions are not
tolerated

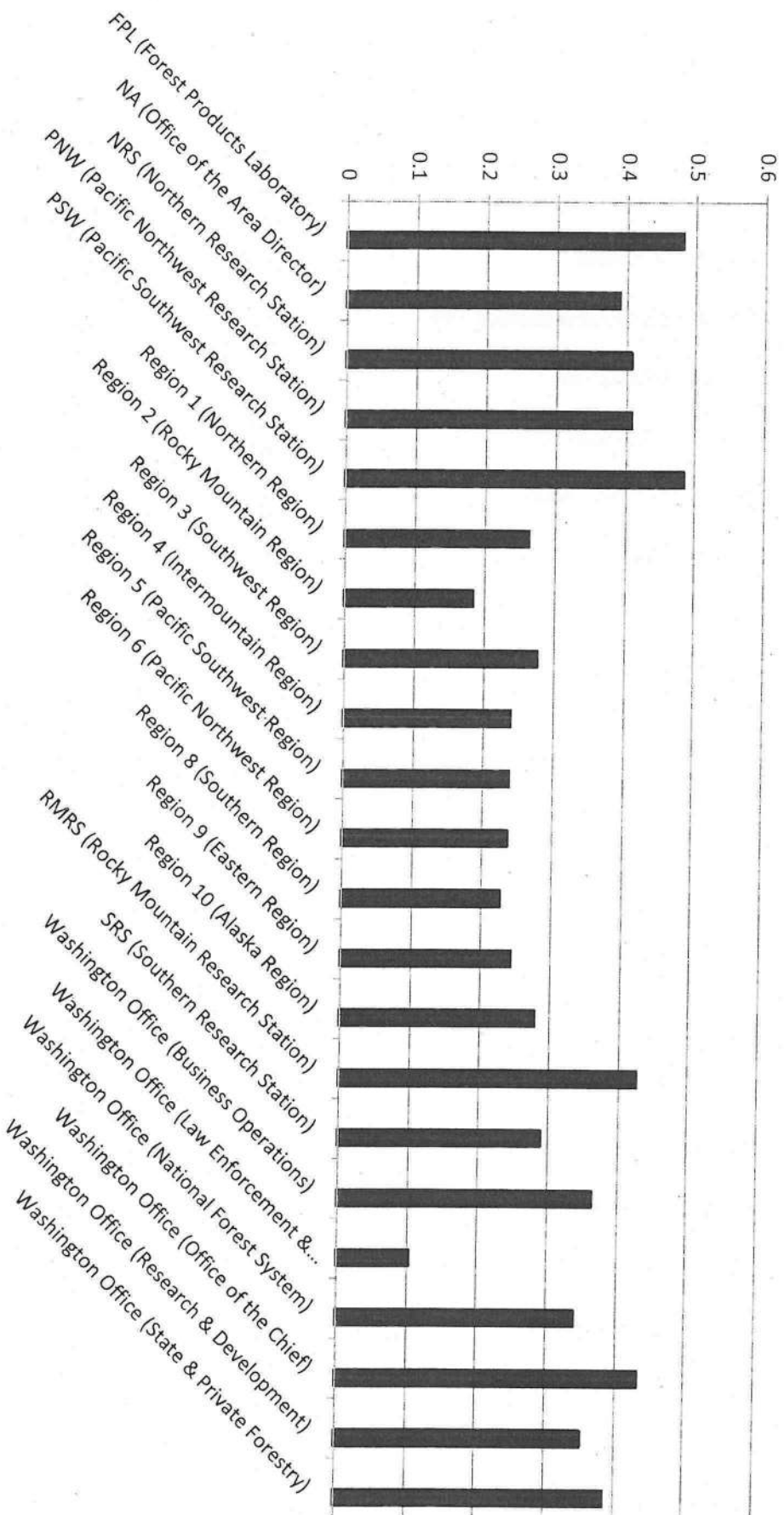
Pay raises depend on how well employees perform their jobs

Only 10% agree pay raises depend on how well employees perform their jobs



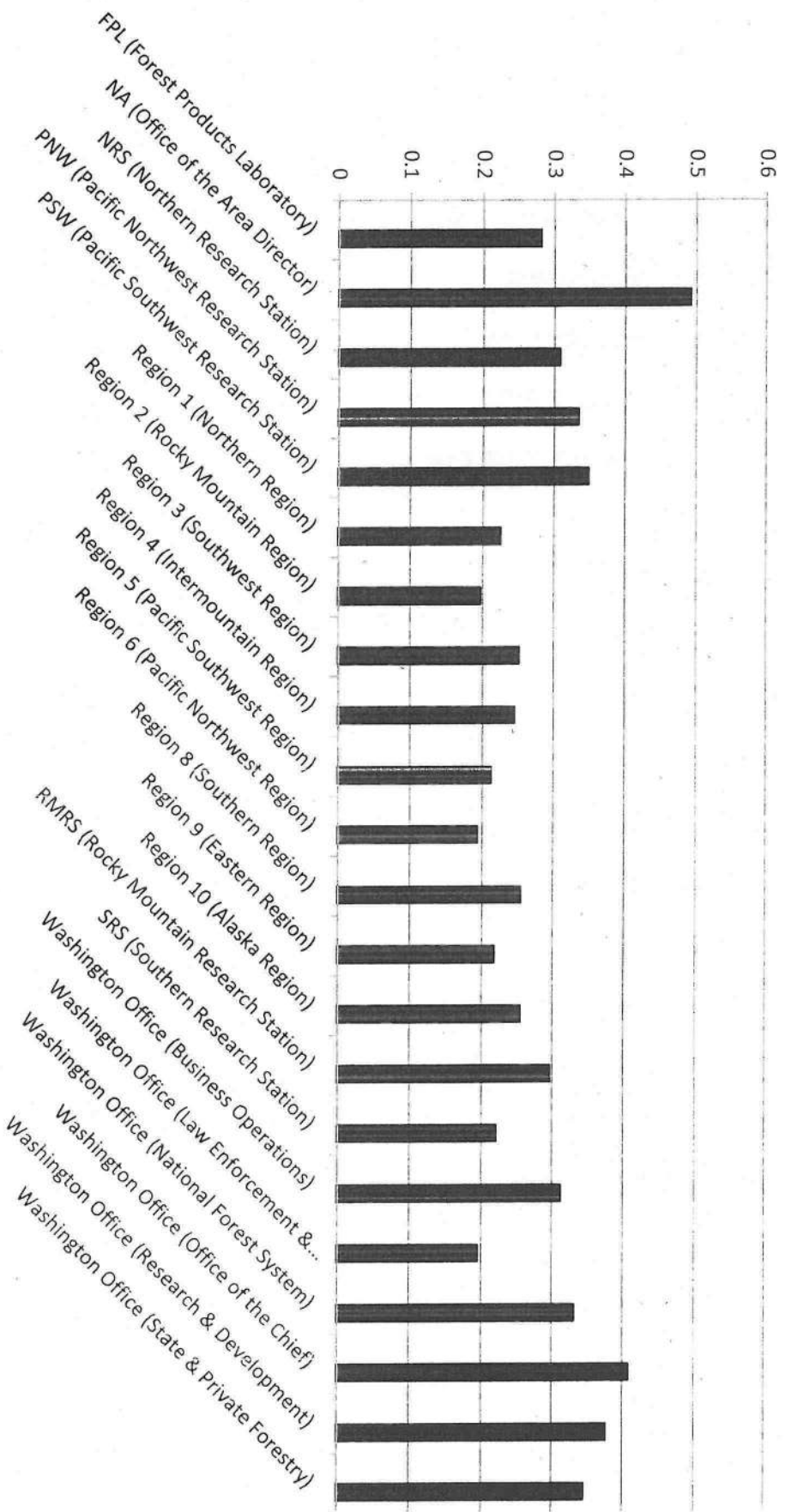
Promotions in my work unit are based on merit

Only 25% agree that promotions are based on merit



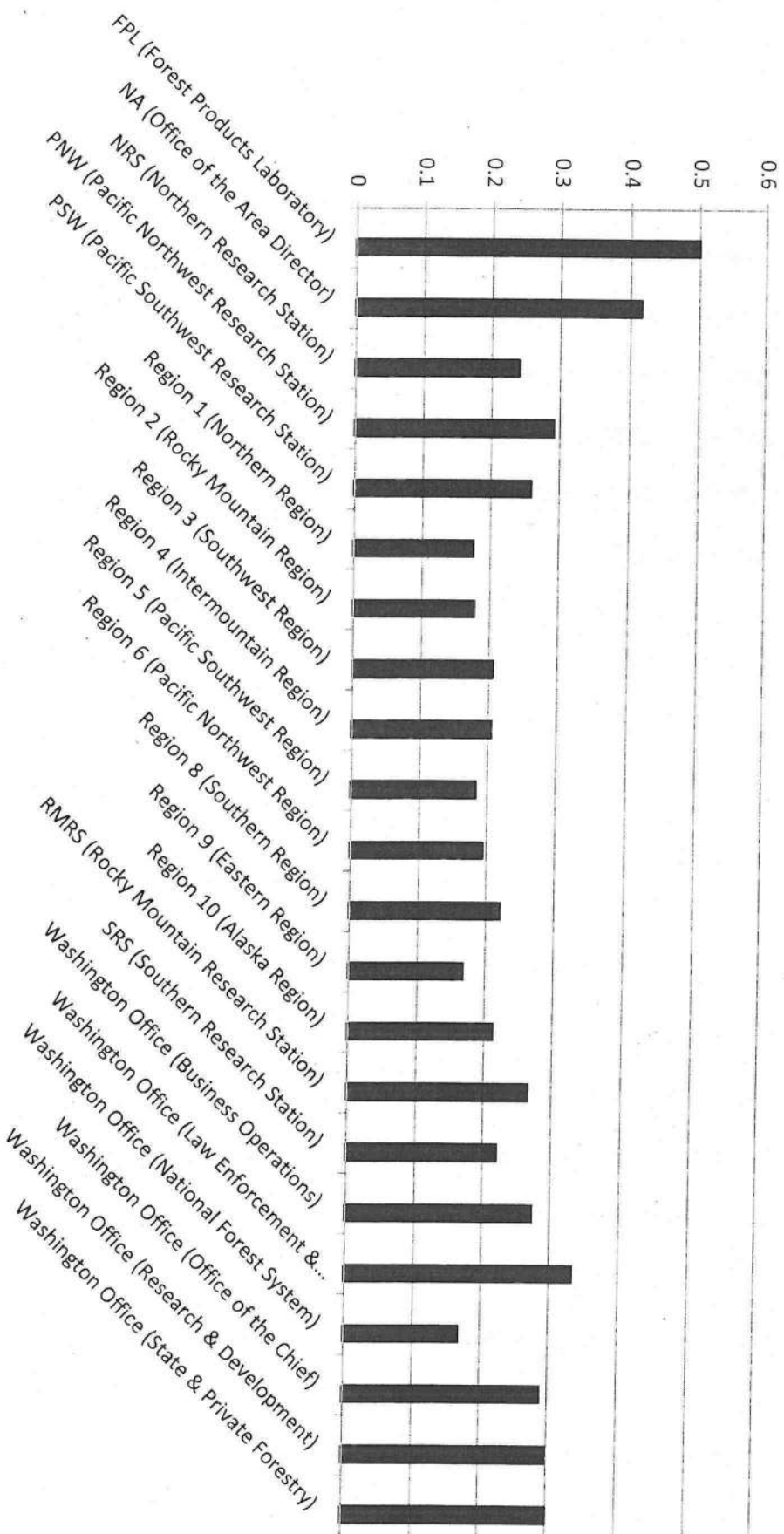
In my work unit, differences in performance are recognized in a meaningful way

Only 24% agree differences in performance are recognized in a meaningful way



In my work unit, steps are taken to deal with a poor performer who cannot or will not improve

Only 20% agree that steps are taken to deal with a poor performer who cannot or will not improve



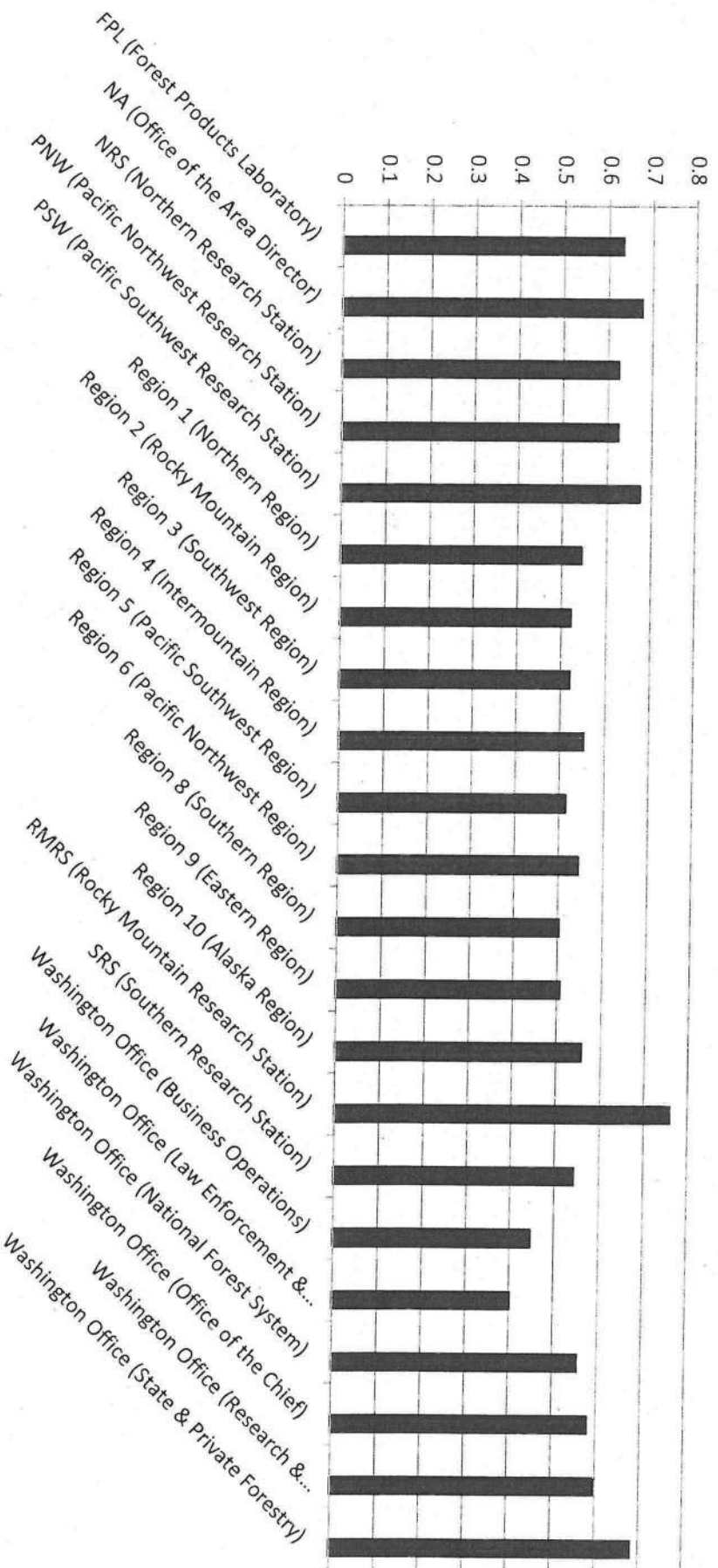
Awards in my work unit depend on how well employees perform their jobs

Only 34% agree that awards in their work unit depend on how well employees perform their jobs



Arbitrary action, personal favoritism and coercion for partisan political purposes are not tolerated

Only 51% agree that arbitrary action, personal favoritism and coercion for partisan political purposes are not tolerated



Recommendations for improving consistency in performance accountability, evaluations, and awards

- ✓ Provide coaching to leaders/supervisors/managers so they learn how to better understand what an employee needs to feel like they are recognized for their contributions, are contributing and performing as expected, and connected at a higher level to helping meet the goals of the Agency.
- ✓ Teach leaders/supervisors/managers how to provide feedback, especially positive feedback and establish standards for frequency of performance discussions (not just year-end and mid-year).
- ✓ Tie all performance cash awards to performance ratings and standardize by unit the percentage of award given for each rating (e.g. Superior = 1%, Outstanding = 2%); other awards are for extra effort and would be small gifts, time-off, etc.).
- ✓ Train managers on the formal process for dealing with poor performers; unit leaders must also demonstrate the will and provide strong support to supervisors who need to work through the cumbersome and time-consuming employee relations process.
- ✓ Hold managers accountable for addressing poor performers head on (EARLY and OFTEN!) to improve the employee's performance and to avoid diminishing the performance of the most creative and productive employees.
- ✓ Change the performance management paradigm from a mandatory HR activity to an essential business process that guides the monthly, weekly and daily work of each employee.
- ✓ Hold managers accountable for conducting on-schedule, complete, and accurate performance management activities including regular reviews of IDPs.
- ✓ Never rate employees higher than they deserve. Hold your ground and stick with the OPM definitions (see table below) of performance (e.g. Fully Successful = A grade not a C (average) grade).
- ✓ Incorporate additional feedback providers into the performance evaluation process and have promotions, pay raises, and awards grounded by other leaders to ensure fairness, actual merit, and absence of favoritism.
- ✓ Address HR process issues that make it more complicated now to to give an award, create a vacancy to promote a person, etc.

Never rate employees higher than they deserve

Hold your ground and stick with the OPM definitions of performance

Fully Successful = A grade not a C (average) grade

Outstanding: At the outstanding level, the employee's level of performance demonstrates outstanding contributions to the accomplishment of the Department, Agency, and/or Staff Office mission. At this level, the employee demonstrates a mastery of the required technical skills and a thorough understanding of the mission of the organization. The employee's efforts have a fundamental impact on the completion of program objectives. The employee produces an exceptional quality and quantity of work significantly ahead of established schedules or deadlines and with very little or no supervision. Performance for each element consistently exceeds the meets "Fully Successful" level.

Superior: At the superior level of performance, the employee demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of the objectives of the job and the procedures for accomplishing them. At this level, the employee produces a very high quality and quantity of work ahead of established schedules or deadlines and with minimal supervision.

Fully Successful: At the fully successful level of performance, the employee demonstrates quality work in support of the Department, Agency, and/or Staff Office mission. At this level, the employee effectively applies technical skills and organizational knowledge to successfully complete work products. The employee successfully carries out regularly assigned duties as well as difficult special assignments. The employee produces the expected quality and quantity of work and meets deadlines or schedules for completion of work.

Marginal: At the marginal level of performance, the employee demonstrates the need for improvement to achieve a rating of "fully successful." At this level, the employee's work products frequently need revision or adjustments, often requiring assistance from the supervisor and/or peers. Organizational goals and objectives are only met because of close supervision.

Unacceptable: At the unacceptable level of performance, the employee does not meet the established performance standards for meets "fully successful" in one or more of the employee's critical elements. At this level, the employee's work products do not meet the minimum requirements expected and corrective action must be consistent with established procedures for unacceptable performance.

