



CASE STUDY: STAFFING AT A LARGE, DEVELOPED GARDEN – THE MORTON ARBORETUM

Excerpted from:

Rakow, D. A., and S. A. Lee. 2011. Public Garden Management. John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Hoboken, New Jersey. p. 89.

The Morton Arboretum provides a good example of staffing and organizational structure at a large, fully developed garden. The Arboretum was established in 1922 as a private, nonprofit organization dedicated to the planting and conservation of trees. It is a scientific, educational, and public service organization located in the western suburbs of Chicago, Illinois (www.mortonarb.org).

The Arboretum consists of 1,700 acres of land, on which are located plant collections, gardens and horticultural landscapes, research facilities, natural areas, buildings, and support facilities. Attendance in 2009 amounted to 831,000 visitors, and 34,000 members helped to support an operating budget of \$24 million in that year.

In 2009, the Arboretum employed 143 full-time employees, 103 part-time staff, and 100 seasonal workers. This staffing level equates to a full-time equivalent of 206 employees. Together with more than 940 active volunteers, the Morton Arboretum is supported by a substantial human effort that is managed and organized for optimal achievement of its mission.

Six vice presidents report to the president and CEO, who is accountable to a board of twenty-five trustees. Plant collections, science, and education functions are each supported by a vice



president, as are the fund-raising, marketing, and financial enterprises. Vice presidents partner with the president to provide strategic leadership for their area of responsibility, and they are active in external relationships and resource development for their programs.

Directors and heads of program areas work with the vice presidents to lead specific operations, and a series of managers, coordinators, specialists, and other employees carry out the objectives of the organization. Given the importance of an effective and well-supported staff, the director of human resources at the Morton Arboretum reports directly to the president and CEO.

To ensure effective leadership and integration in this large public garden, the president and CEO, vice presidents, and directors of the Morton Arboretum work together as a leadership team, addressing matters of strategy, planning, administration, and operation. Working teams of employees from different departments are organized to advance institutional strategic themes (e.g., climate change, community greening, tree health) and are also used to gather multiple perspectives for special initiatives (e.g., art exhibition planning).

Effective staff communication is essential, especially in a large organization. The Morton Arboretum uses a variety of means for information exchange, including regular staff meetings, an intranet for staff, email communications, personal interaction, social media, and quarterly employee forums with the president and CEO.