

New CRS business has holistic approach

WSP USA, a leading professional services consultancy, has created a new Climate, Resilience & Sustainability business line to partner with companies, government agencies and communities across the U.S. to solve the dynamic challenges of equitable climate mitigation, asset and infrastructure adaptation and emergency management. The Climate, Resilience & Sustainability (CRS) business line centralises a wide range of services within WSP, differentiating the company in its ability to provide complete lifecycle sustainability and climate mitigation, adaptation and response solutions, as Tom Lewis, who leads the CRS Business line, and Michael Mondshine, Senior VP, explain. "Our mission is to help our customers grow through better sustainability and resilience."

Mr. Lewis previously was President of Louis Berger's N.Y. professional engineering corporation, where he also led the company's environmental practice. WSP acquired Louis Berger in 2018. "My background actually is in environmental management and disaster recovery, and I am a career long advocate of sustainability," he says. "So I'm very excited about leading this new business line."

Joining Mr. Lewis' leadership team as Senior VP will be Michael Mondshine, whose responsibilities will include

sustainability, energy and climate change. "I'm very excited to be working alongside Tom," he comments. "The new CRS organisation will give us the chance to leverage our cutting edge work in sustainability across our corporation."

The CRS business capabilities will provide best-in-class solutions in four areas: Environmental, Social and Corporate Governance (ESG); Sustainability, including carbon and resource reduction strategies and sustainability reporting, climate action and energy planning and adaptation strategies;

Community/Infrastructure Resilience, including the identification of opportunities for ecological restoration and nature-based solutions; and Emergency/Disaster Response, with WSP offering full-service logistics and emergency management and grant administration services to national, state and local recovery teams across all four phases of emergency management (preparedness, incident response, long-term recovery and mitigation).

Both Lewis and Mondshine point out that while the CRS team is newly formed, sustainability and responsibility have been an integral part of WSP for more

than a decade. "But it resided in different vertical organisation elements," Mr. Lewis said. "Now we can bring all capabilities together in one team, and elevate the stature of these capabilities, not just internally but also within the business community. With all capabilities under one roof we can brand it and expand it." The timing of the launch of this new business line could not be better, according to Mr. Lewis. "In the U.S. and globally, significant commitments and funds have been made available for sustainability, and that will raise everybody's game."

In August 2020, FEMA (the Federal Emergency Management Agency in the U.S.) notably announced two hazard mitigation grant programs for more than \$660 million. The two grant programs, the Flood Mitigation Assistance grant and the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities, or BRIC, will provide funds to states, local communities, tribes and territories for eligible mitigation activities to strengthen the nation's ability to build a culture of preparedness. These programs allow for funding to be used on projects that will reduce future disaster losses. In other parts of the world governments make similar grants available. "We can help clients leverage these grant programs," says Mr. Lewis.

WSP is uniquely positioned in this space, in his view, as their toolbox covers all aspects of sustainability and resilience, from climate risk analysis to economics, and these are now all combined and blended together in one business line. "We provide a holistic set of services, from the earliest stages of the sustainability journey to full maturity," Mr. Mondshine adds. "As a baseline, we





guide our clients in setting goals and targets, but we can also work in more detail on product lifecycle analysis, environmental justice considerations, or renewable power purchases. We can also help them to identify climate change risk, for example.”

Mr. Lewis elaborates: “Other firms are active in this space, but they look at this from either an engineering or a consultancy perspective. We at WSP bring the best of both worlds. We have expertise in engineering and planning, and a deep understanding of full building lifecycles. Having that level of engineering and operational know-how and combining that with high-level management and consultancy expertise is distinct. It is rare for one company to have that many high-end experts in all fields. We deliver a holistic approach that other companies can’t.”

Sustainability has entered the mainstream in both the public and

private sector, and the pandemic hasn’t slowed down this development. If anything, it has accelerated efforts on many levels, as people realise that the framework conditions for markets are changed. In addition, Covid-19 has made clear just how important resilience is, for companies and organisations as well as for individuals. “People generally do not readily accept change, but the pandemic has made people accept change more readily on all levels, from social justice and equality to environmental,” says Mr. Lewis. “These are all issues that our clients may be grappling with, and where WSP can help. Companies and organisations need to be ready for our changed world, where they are expected to not only increase energy efficiency and lower their carbon footprint, for example, but also to engage with stakeholders and ensure that what they’re doing benefits the community at large. This is where we can help.”

Mr. Mondshine emphasises that the development of this business line comes at “the perfect time to meet the moment.” He adds, “I have been working on this for 27 years. Partly due to the pandemic, I see a changing





mindset in the corporate community where sustainability is no longer seen as cost but as part of the business model. Government is also seeing it.”

Mr. Lewis emphasises that they look at these issues from a business perspective. “Our aim always is to provide value to clients, also from an equity and justice standpoint. We want to help the world improve itself. And we believe that the time is right for organisations with an engineering background such as ours to be present at these big meetings about sustainability. By asserting ourselves

more, we can contribute to real, positive change. The debate should not just be about policies and science; it also needs to be taken to the functional and practical level. There’s a lot of talk about goal- setting but not a lot of practical actions and plans. We can fill that void.”

In December 2020, WSP entered into an agreement to acquire Golder Associates, a leading global engineering and consulting firm with more than 60 years of experience in providing earth science and environmental services. The acquisition, which is aligned with WSP’s 2019–2021 Global Strategic Plan, will

further strengthen WSP’s capabilities in the CRS space. The acquisition is expected to be completed in the first half of 2021.

About WSP USA

WSP USA is the U.S. operating company of WSP, one of the world’s leading engineering and professional services firms. Dedicated to serving local communities, the company employs engineers, planners, technical experts, strategic advisors and construction management professionals. WSP USA designs lasting solutions in the buildings, transportation, energy, water and environment markets. With more than 10,000 employees in 170 offices across the U.S., it partners with its clients to help communities prosper.



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