Overview of SMART Planning

Fay V. Lachney
New Orleans District
Why is the Corps of Engineers Changing its Feasibility Studies?

• Studies were overly detailed, expensive & time-consuming.
• Detailed data generation for multiple alternatives was not consistently leading to a better product or decision.
• Reports were too long with too much technical detail.
• Sponsors, Congress and the Corps were increasingly frustrated with the situation.
Turning Ideas into Action
Planning Modernization

- Improve Planning Program delivery and instill accountability across all functional elements.

- Develop a sustainable National & Regional Planning operational and organization model.

- Improve Planner knowledge and experience.

- Modernize Planning Guidance and Processes.
Five Imperatives for Change

• Manage and balance an appropriate level of detail and acknowledge uncertainty.
• Ensure that vertical integration and engagement of decision makers takes place early and throughout the planning process.
• Identify Federal Interest in resolving a problem up front.
• Recognize there is no single “best” plan and there are quantitative and qualitative methods of alternative comparison and selection.
• Ensure that all resources needed for study: funding, human resources, data and information are identified and available for the duration of the study.
MG Walsh Memo (3x3x3)

• Introduces aggressive approach to improve feasibility study program management, performance, execution & delivery.

• Establishes a **disciplined approach** for reducing current feasibility study portfolio.

• Holds all Civil Works functional elements responsible & accountable.

• Effective **8 Feb 2012**.

• Applies to all planning studies with transition to new planning paradigm by **2014**.

3x3x3 Rule:

- $3M
- 3 years
- 3 levels of enhanced vertical teaming
- 100 page main reports (w/ appendices 3” binder)
The SMART Planning Feasibility Study Process

It is…

- Specific
- Measurable
- Attainable
- Risk-Informed
- Timely

• Studies completed in a more reasonable amount of time.
• Studies cost significantly less.
• Decision documents high quality and concise.
• Decisions informed by managing risk and acknowledging uncertainty.
• Strong, viable Civil Works Project portfolio developed.
SMART Planning

• Focuses on incremental decision making in a progressive 6-step planning process.
• Identifies next decision to be made and manages uncertainty in making it.
  ▪ Only collect data needed.
  ▪ Make decision.
  ▪ Move on to next decision.
• Incorporates quality engineering, economics, real estate and environmental analysis.
• Fully compliant with environmental law (NEPA, etc...)
• Includes public involvement.
Feasibility Study Process

**Focus on alternatives evaluation to identify a tentative plan for more detailed design.**

**Focus on scaling the measures and features for the recommended plan/LPP.**
What’s Different?

• Process and outputs are **decision focused.**
• Risk and uncertainty are **acknowledged and managed.**
  ▪ Collect data needed to make the decision.
  ▪ Evaluate the risk of using that data.
  ▪ Make decision or collect more data if risk is not tolerable.
  ▪ Level of detail (of data / decision) grows over time.
  ▪ Vertical Team agreement on “acceptable” level of uncertainty and path forward to manage it.
• Report developed from the beginning of the study, **documenting the decisions.**
What’s Not Different

• Focuses on decision making in a progressive 6-step planning process.
• Incorporates quality engineering, economics, real estate and environmental analysis.
• Fully compliant with all laws & policies.
  – Includes public involvement.
The Results

• Studies completed in a more reasonable amount of time.
• Studies cost significantly less.
• High quality and concise decision documents.
• Decisions informed by managing risk and acknowledging uncertainty.
• Strong, viable Civil Works Project portfolio developed.
Learning More

- Planning SMART Guide on the Planning Community Toolbox – www.corpsplanning.us
- Basic information about the SMART Planning process
- Planning Guidance
- Webinars and Q/A, Frequently Asked Questions