

# **What to Expect When You're Expecting a Charette Pre- and Post-Charette Communication Plan**

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# What to Expect When You're Expecting a Charette

## Pre- and Post-Charette Communication Plan

The intended audience for this document is the Charette Advocate, a representative assigned to lead the Project Delivery Team (PDT) as it prepares for its charette. The Charette Advocate is an individual well acquainted with SMART Planning who can advocate for both the charette itself and the SMART Planning process. This document works hand in hand with the *SMART Planning Charette Handbook (Draft August 2012)*. The *Charette Handbook* is an instruction manual for facilitators and charette participants, whereas *What to Expect When You're Expecting a Charette* is information to convey to the PDT to help them prepare and get the most from their charette. The communication plan is divided into two parts – a pre-charette section and a post-charette section – and is accompanied by a presentation and exercise.

### Section I. Pre-Charette Communication Plan

#### (How to Lead a Pre-Charette Workshop)

#### 1. Introduction

This communication plan is designed for the Charette Advocate to use as a guide for leading a mandatory Pre-Charette Workshop with the PDT. The purpose of the Pre-Charette Workshop is to prepare the PDT for their charette. Often team members do not have a full or accurate understanding of the charette process or its intent, and this workshop helps to educate the PDT, clarify expectations and build energy and enthusiasm. This plan works hand-in-hand with *The SMART Planning Charette Handbook* hereinafter referred to as the *Charette Handbook*.

The Pre-Charette Workshop is a half-day session ideally given in person. The workshop should occur approximately two weeks before the charette, in conjunction with the planning conference call as referenced in the *Charette Handbook*. It would be useful for this workshop to lead into the Seven Pieces of Paper exercise that will be requested of the PDT. The basic workshop specifications are summarized below:

##### **Pre-Charette Workshop Specifications**

**Information Format:** Power Point with handouts.

**Length:** The estimated time for the workshop is 4 hours, dependant on the PDT's experience with SMART Planning.

**Timing:** 2 weeks before the charette, in conjunction with the planning conference call as referenced in the *Charette Handbook*.

**Material covered:** See Section 4.

**Attendees:** Mandatory for the PDT. Others may be invited, as described below.

## **2. Pre-Charette Workshop Roles**

Participants and non-participants of the Pre-Charette Workshop are described below.

### **Advocate**

The Charette Advocate is a representative of the SMART Planning Charette process who is assigned to lead the PDT as it prepares for its charette. The Advocate role is a rotating position, depending on the charette, that can be filled by any SMART Planning Charette expert. This person should be able to advocate for both the charette and for SMART Planning in general. There should be at least one Advocate at each District, and as more people learn SMART Planning, this could expand to a cadre of Advocates.

### **PDT**

The PDT is considered to include the non-federal sponsor. Although the PDT is the primary audience for the workshop, it may be beneficial for others to attend including other District employees and even other agency representatives. This will help spread the word about SMART Planning.

### **PDT District Liaison**

A liaison local to the District should be a point of contact for the Advocate. Each PDT should assign a liaison when they schedule their charette. This person may be a project manager, study manager, lead plan formulator, or any other person who can manage basic pre-charette communication and hosting logistics for the PDT.

### **Facilitators (not workshop participants)**

Charette facilitators run the charettes. They serve a very different role from that of the Advocate. While the Advocate prepares the PDT for their charette, dispelling fear and generating excitement, facilitators manage the mechanics of the actual charette process. Facilitators do not need to participate in the Pre-Charette Workshop. They do need to collect feedback at the charette and provide it to the Advocate. The role of the facilitators is explained in detail in the *Charette Handbook*.

## **3. Resources and Information to Access before the Pre-Charette Workshop**

Prior to a Pre-Charette Workshop, the Advocate will collect the following data and resources:

- Lessons Learned from the Lessons Learned Clearinghouse
- Background on the charette subject study, e.g., Seven Pieces of Paper (if available)
- Biographical information on charette participants
- Logistics for the workshop and charette

### **Lessons Learned**

The Advocate will access the Lessons Learned Clearinghouse to find the most current information and update the workshop accordingly. Each Advocate must have a password and the website must be kept up to date by the Charette Advocates and Facilitators. More detail on the Lessons Learned process is in the Post-Charette section below.

### **Background**

While the Pre-Charette Workshop is not designed to address specific issues of the project undergoing reformulation, it is to the Advocate's advantage to know something about the study itself so that he or she can gear the workshop towards specific concerns that the PDT may have about their charette. Information will be gathered from both the Lessons Learned Clearinghouse and from the PDT's Seven Pieces of Paper to be incorporated into the workshop.

### **Biographical Information**

The Advocate will solicit the PDT Project Manager, Study Manager, Lead Plan Formulator or other PDT District Liaison to gather information about PDT members and others who will attend the charette. Information for each participant should include:

- name
- role within the PDT
- level of experience with the Corps
- familiarity with the SMART Planning process

This information will help the Advocate assess the workshop audience and the level of training the team will find most useful. This information will be shared with the Charette Facilitator prior to the charette for the same purpose.

### **Logistics**

The PDT District Liaison will be responsible for securing a meeting room for the Pre-Charette Workshop and for inviting the PDT and others to attend. It is incumbent upon the Advocate to ensure these arrangements are made and to be aware of the details ahead of time so that he or she can arrive in a timely manner and have the room set up before the PDT arrives. If the workshop is to be held virtually, the District Liaison must secure the appropriate call-in line and/or video conference site and communicate these details to the Advocate and participants. Finally, the Advocate should get as much information as possible about the logistics of the charette itself – including details on lodging, building access, start and finish times, etc., and pass those along during the workshop. This provides an opportunity for questions to arise and be addressed before the charette participants arrive.

Information on preparing for the Pre-Charette Workshop and the Exercise can be found in Appendix II.

## **4. Pre-Charette Workshop Topics**

The following describes the basic elements that should be covered during the Pre-Charette Workshop.

### **4.1 Charette Expectations**

A very important function that the Advocate plays is to help set the Charette expectations for the PDT. The PDT needs a well-defined idea of the charette intent, process, and utility before attending the event. The Advocate should use the Pre-Charette Workshop to set those expectations as well as to inspire positive energy around the upcoming charette. A clear understanding of the charette process and expectations for the charette will help prepare the PDT to take best advantage of the charette.

The Advocate can set the PDT's expectations through the following:

- Describe the purpose of the charette.
- Explain the intent is to fit project into SMART Planning (rather than 3x3x3).
- Inspire enthusiasm.
- Emphasize that the charette is NOT just an exercise.

#### **Charette Purpose**

The underlying objective of all planning charettes is to help the PDT collaboratively move forward toward completing a SMART feasibility study and ensure that the Vertical Team is aligned with the proposed direction. It is also an opportunity to retrain our Planning culture and other Communities of Practice in better understanding risk-informed decision making while managing uncertainty.

#### **SMART Planning (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Risk-Informed, and Timely)**

SMART Planning, in essence, is decision based planning focused on making the next decision while scoping for the decision after that. This requires managing uncertainty (and budgets and schedules) to allow for making planning decisions under uncertainty. It is the Advocate's responsibility to know the most up to date information on SMART Planning, the Decision Management Plan and Risk Register and ensure that the PDT has a thorough understanding of how these products are incorporated into the project study.

#### **Generate Enthusiasm**

The successful implementation of SMART Planning will depend in part on how the message is received. While mandated change can elicit fear and resistance, the right presentation of the information can generate excitement and energy. The Advocate is in a position to support the good communication that is crucial for the propagation of SMART Planning and to head off misunderstandings before they take hold. The Pre-Charette Workshop is a great time for the Advocate to share his or her enthusiasm for SMART Planning with the PDT and help them see the opportunities afforded by their charette.

### **The charette is NOT just an exercise.**

The Advocate should emphasize that the charette is not just an exercise or a hoop to jump through. As more stringent time and budget constraints have mandated a cultural shift for the Corps, PDTs must embrace a streamlined process and develop a new understanding of acceptable risk. SMART Planning is a response to the mandated cultural shift, and the charette process is intended to benefit the team as they work to bring their study into alignment with SMART Planning. The charette process can boost a thriving study's inertia or realign a stalled study. It is an opportunity to get approval from the Vertical Team on the current status and next steps, and it should have a lasting influence on the rest of the study life.

## **4.2 SMART Planning Education in an Interactive Way**

The SMART Planning methodology was developed in response to the Planning Modernization directive to facilitate more efficient, effective and consistent delivery of quality Planning Decision Documents. SMART Planning is designed to reduce the amount of time a feasibility study takes to complete (three years or less), to require less money (\$3 million per study) to get to a final report, and to involve three levels of vertical team buy-in throughout the study process. As a result, the report should be smaller (approximately 100 pages, or 3 inches with appendices). However, SMART Planning is more about the process of making decisions under uncertainty and managing risk than it is about fitting a project into a predetermined formula. The Advocate will help ensure that the PDT has a good grasp of SMART Planning and how it will be used to achieve these goals.

### **Preparation**

Please refer to Appendix II for a description of the necessary preparation for the workshop and the exercise.

### **SMART Planning Basics**

The Advocate will introduce the PDT to SMART Planning, which will ensure that everyone has had at least some exposure to the new process and language before attending the charette. In order to teach SMART Planning basics, the Advocate will use a fun and innovative exercise entitled *The Island of Modernania*. This exercise is about acknowledging and facing our agency's current situation, while walking through the 6 Step Planning Process. The exercise parallels our Civil Works Transformation and Planning Modernization to being stranded on a deserted island. The PDT must complete the 6 Step Process to get off the island and survive.

In this casual workshop format, the Advocate will create for the PDT a positive exchange around SMART Planning, the 6 Step Planning Process and its iterative nature. It is the goal of this exercise to take the complex task of project planning at the Corps, and make it tangible, understandable, and implementable. The exercise will revitalize and awaken the PDT's skills as planners and resurface their "free flow" for generating planning decisions using professional judgment, conversations, and exchange.

### **Decision Management Plan and Risk Register**

It is the Advocate's responsibility to ensure that charette participants understand the purpose and value of the Decision Management Plan (DMP) and Risk Register. The overarching strategy is to continually ask whether added detail will change the next decision. One of the biggest challenges facing technical members of the PDT and management team is understanding what information is relevant to and critical in making a good decision. **In order to effectively communicate the latest guidance on DMPs and Risk Registers, it is the Advocate's responsibility to remain current on these tools.**

In the Pre-Charette Workshop, the Advocate will help the team prepare for the charette by walking them through a mock DMP and Risk Register<sup>1</sup>, using the group exercise, *The Island of Modernania*. In the exercise, the team will develop a DMP that will identify their most immediate planning decision(s) and the criteria for making those decisions (what data is needed/what data is not needed). After the team has developed their mock DMP, they will complete a risk register for that DMP. The risk register will identify tolerable risks and risk management/mitigation strategies.

Over the course of the exercise, the Advocate will help the team identify:

- the minimum amount of work they need to do to meet decision criteria
- the minimum length of time necessary to make the decision
- the tasks they must do (and not do) in order to meet their DMP

### **4.3 Charette Logistics**

The District Liaison is responsible for setting up the charette logistics. The Advocate must gather as many details about the charette logistics as are available at the time of the workshop to relay to the PDT during the workshop. The Advocate should explain the roles of everyone involved in the charette as defined in the *Charette Handbook*. It would be ideal if the Advocate can identify by name the individuals who will fill those roles for that charette, including the names of Vertical Team participants.

### **4.4 Lessons Learned from Previous Charettes**

Lessons Learned are a valuable tool for both the Advocate and Facilitator. As such, it is essential to establish a central clearinghouse so that all Lessons Learned are together and easily accessed by all Facilitators and Advocates. This site should have a permanent point of contact responsible for ensuring the links work correctly and that new Advocates and Facilitators are given access in a timely manner.

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<sup>1</sup> See the SMART Planning website for the latest guidance on DMPs and Risk Registers.

The Lessons Learned Clearinghouse should be clearly organized according to phase in the planning process and according to business line. Thereby, Lessons Learned from a given charette may be located in more than one folder within the clearinghouse. A naming convention will be established so that documents in the clearinghouse are easily identifiable. Lessons Learned will be filled out on a standardized form within the clearinghouse website to keep information consistently organized and allow Advocates and Facilitators to find the information they want quickly. The Lessons Learned format is based on the standardized Feedback sheets (Appendix I) the Facilitators will collect during the charette and should reflect both participant and Facilitator comments.

Prior to a Pre-Charette Workshop, the Advocate must access the Lessons Learned Clearinghouse to find any information related to the type of study for which he or she is preparing the workshop (e.g., ecosystem restoration, FRM, etc.). Additionally, the Advocate should look at other studies that are at a similar point in the planning process, regardless of the business line under which the study falls. The Charette Facilitators will be tailoring the charette exercises to best suit the project's place along the planning timeline, and the workshop will be most effective when it closely anticipates the content of the specific charette the PDT will experience. By integrating the Lessons Learned into the workshop, the Advocate ensures that the most relevant information is presented to the PDT.

After a charette is over, the Facilitator is responsible for turning over all Feedback Forms (or copies) to the Advocate. It is the Advocate's responsibility to transfer that information to the Lessons Learned forms and to ensure they are posted in the correct folders on the Clearinghouse website for future use. This must be done within a week of the end of the charette so that information is available for the Facilitator and Advocate of the next charette.

#### **4.5 Explain the value of the Seven Pieces of Paper**

Generally two weeks before the charette takes place, the PDT will be asked to develop the Planning Seven Pieces of Paper. These papers establish the basis for the project through the statement of the problems and the study objectives as well as measures and alternatives. The Facilitation Team will use these pieces of paper to tailor the charette to the study's place along the planning timeline so that the team can get the most out of the charette. The Advocate will assist the PDT in understanding how to properly prepare their Seven Pieces of Paper. He or she will emphasize that the Seven Pieces of Paper should be compiled by the full PDT, not just one person. Ideally, the Pre-Charette Workshop will be timed in such a way as to introduce these ideas to the PDT before they prepare their Seven Pieces of Paper, but if they are further along in the process, it will still be useful information for the team.

## 4.6 Explain the Charette Outcome

Charette attendees can sometimes lose sight of the purpose of their efforts. In order to avoid the mistake of believing the workshop is only an exercise, it is imperative for the Advocate to emphasize the full vision and outcomes of the charette. The PDT must gain a clear understanding that the work they do during the charette will have a life after the charette and should inform the next steps in their process. Ideally, the charette clarifies and streamlines the general study process and results in products that are employed in the next phases.

The Advocate should clearly describe that, during the charette, products will be generated from the discussions. It is important that the Advocate explain to the PDT the significance of these products and that they need to be prepared to make use of them. Each product will receive vertical team buy in during the charette. The Advocate should relay to the team that each charette is different; therefore there is no way to foresee what products will be generated on which day. By the end of the charette, they will have products that document the outcomes of the discussions and decisions generated during the week.

Every project is different. Differences in project complexity, scope, stage and the personalities within the PDT have an impact on the daily progress throughout the charette. Therefore, the Advocate cannot say with certainty what products will be developed, but they can offer a good idea of what is possible. A range of potential and definite products is listed in the *Charette Handbook*.

Charette products may include:

- Clear Planning Objectives
- A focus on Tentatively Selected Plan and Locally Preferred Plan only
- A Decision Management Plan
- A Risk Register

## Section II. Post-Charette Communication Plan

### 1. Introduction

The goal of the Post-Charette Communication Plan is to make every subsequent charette more effective and efficient for the Advocate, the Facilitator, the PDT and the Vertical Team. It creates a process by which we gain and incorporate feedback and a forum for implementing lessons learned.

The implementation of the Post-Charette Communication Plan will involve evaluation tools incorporated into the Pre-Charette Workshop and the charette. Additionally, the PDT will produce an After Action Review (AAR). The output from these tools and the AAR will be

aggregated and input into a common repository where the results and/or suggestions can be reviewed and incorporated into the next charette.

## **2. Charette Feedback**

The steps for collecting and processing Charette feedback are described below:

- Step 1. Facilitator provides and encourages use of blank feedback forms during charette.
- Step 2. Completed Feedback Forms are provided by Facilitator to the Advocate.
- Step 3. Feedback is compiled by Advocate via the Lessons Learned Outline.
- Step 4. Advocate posts Lessons Learned to the Lessons Learned Clearinghouse.

Each charette is unique and cannot be perfectly compared with other charettes, but as more of these meetings are conducted, we hope to learn and perfect the general process. Getting honest and meaningful feedback from the charette participants is an important aspect of this progression. The Advocate must explain to the PDT how important their feedback is and describe the different forms that it will take. Also, the Advocate should tell the PDT that there will be an AAR for each charette. The PDT's comments are necessary to develop this. There will also be feedback accepted by the charette facilitators, which will help them improve upon the hosting of the charette. Good feedback is critical.

### **Feedback Forms**

Facilitators will bring Feedback Forms to each charette and provide a collection box in the room. Attendees will be encouraged to fill out the form, or to use paper of their own as they prefer, at any time during the charette and to leave them in the box provided. Facilitators should collect any papers in the box at the end of each day (more frequently if the team has a lot of comments) and incorporate or address issues as they arise in the charette. All written feedback shall be retained and after the charette is over will be turned over to the Advocate who conducted the *Pre-Charette Workshop* for that study. The Advocate is responsible for organizing the feedback and creating Lessons Learned from the forms to the extent practicable. Lessons Learned will be placed in the appropriate folder(s) on the Clearinghouse website. An example of a standardized Feedback Form that can be copied and made available to charette participants is located in Appendix I.

## **Appendix I**

Below please find a draft feedback form that will be used during the charette. As the charette process is honed, the Facilitator or Advocate may improve upon the draft form. These completed forms will be collected by the Charette Facilitator and given to the Advocate.



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# Charette Feedback Form

The SMART Planning Charettes are being conducted to support the PDTs in adapting their projects to an evolving environment. Your feedback is important to this process and will be used to make the next charette better!

Please take a few minutes to provide your comments regarding the Charette and place your completed feedback form in the box provided by your facilitator.

Project: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Charette: \_\_\_\_\_

Did the charette help you develop a better understanding of the planning process?    Y    N  
...of critical risk-based decision-making?    Y    N

Please rate the effectiveness or strength of each category on a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being the best, and provide any comments below:

Facility:    1    2    3    4    5    \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Facilitator:    1    2    3    4    5    \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Products of Charette:    1    2    3    4    5    \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Time Management: 1 2 3 4 5 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Vertical Team Participation and Guidance: 1 2 3 4 5 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

PDT Participation: 1 2 3 4 5 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Clarity of Direction: 1 2 3 4 5 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Pre-Charette Workshop: 1 2 3 4 5 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Use this space to answer the following questions or provide other miscellaneous comments.  
What was missing? How can the DMP or Risk Register be improved for the next PDT and  
charette? What information would you like to see on Planning Toolbox, SMART Guide, and  
webinars? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## **APPENDIX II**

This appendix describes how to run the Pre-Charette Workshop, providing details on logistics including information to obtain and what to bring.

In preparation for the Pre-Charette Workshop exercise, the Advocate must print out and bring the *Island of Modernania 6 Step Planning Process* handout for the PDT to use during the workshop exercise. The Advocate must ensure the District provides an appropriate room for the workshop that will allow the Advocate to project the power point, have butcher block paper and pens. The Advocate needs an electronic copy of the Risk Register and may request the District Liaison to print a large scale (24" x 36") version before the workshop.

The following summarizes the actions to take and items to bring:

### **Action Items**

- Contact the District Liaison and get all information concerning the charette.
  - Location
  - Dates and Times
  - Participants, Facilitators, Vertical Team members
  - Seven Sheets of Paper if complete and any other summary info about the project
- Download and read the most recent and or relevant charette Lessons Learned

### **Bring to the Workshop:**

- A sample Decision Management Plan
- Decision Management Plan handout
- Risk Register forms
- *Island of Modernania 6 Step Planning Process* handout