

USACE Civil Works Transformation: Planning Modernization

Talking Points

Background

- The Nation's aging infrastructure, increased demands, and limited funding compel us to assess our ability to deliver studies and projects that meet the Nation's water resources needs. We must focus our limited resources on the highest performing programs and projects within the main water resources missions of the Corps: commercial navigation, flood and storm damage reduction, and aquatic ecosystem restoration, as well as hydropower.
- The USACE Civil Works Program is undergoing a transformation initiative to better align our project development processes with national priorities to better address the water resources challenges and needs of the Nation.

What is Planning Modernization?

- Planning Modernization is one of the four pillars of the Civil Works Transformation initiative which addresses all aspects of the USACE Civil Works project delivery cycle. Planning modernization is focused on improving delivery of quality planning products in order to make timely decisions regarding our Nation's water resources needs.
- The top four Planning modernization performance priorities are:
 - Improve Planning Program Delivery
 - Develop a Sustainable National & Regional Planning Operational and Organization Model
 - Improve Planner Knowledge and Experience
 - Modernize Planning Guidance and Processes

The New Planning Paradigm

- A new Planning Paradigm was introduced in January 2011 that is focused on risk-based scoping to define pertinent water resources needs and opportunities and the appropriate levels of detail for conducting investigations, so that recommendations can be captured and succinctly documented and completed in a target goal of 18 months. Guidance has been issued mandating all typical feasibility studies should be completed in 18-36 months.
- While not every study initiated by the Corps will be able to be completed in 18 -36 months, the proposed process should dramatically shorten the amount of time and cost of conducting planning studies and increase corporate and individual accountability for decisions. This process will save time and money for both the federal government and the project sponsors.

- The new paradigm involves all functional elements required to conduct a feasibility study.
- The new paradigm consists of five fundamental concepts that can be implemented in large part without modifications to guidance or legislation. These concepts are:
 - a. Uncertainty and Level of Detail. Balancing the level of uncertainty and risk with the level of detail of the study;
 - b. Vertical Team Integration. Ensure early vertical team engagement of decision makers, and as the study process progresses;
 - c. Determine Federal Interest. Identify the Federal interest early in the study, including the level of Federal interest and level of Federal investment looking beyond National Economic Development (NED) and National Ecosystem Restoration (NER);
 - d. Alternative Comparison and Selection. This concept recognizes that there is no single “best” plan, and there are a variety of approaches (quantitative and qualitative) to multi-criteria decision making, and
 - e. Funding and Resourcing. Ensure that all resources needed for the study – funding, human resources, data and information – are identified and available for the duration of the study.

National Pilot Program for Feasibility Studies

- The National Pilot Program for Feasibility Studies is being conducted to develop sustainable and replicable processes and methodologies to improve planning practice and we will begin to share lessons learned for application on all feasibility studies.
- To date, five pilot studies have been selected: Jordan Creek (Springfield) MO; Sutter County, CA; Lake Worth Inlet (Palm Beach County), FL; West Side Creek (San Antonio), TX; and Central Everglades, FL.
 - Jordan Creek (Springfield), MO
 - Flood Risk Management and Ecosystem Restoration Study
 - Partner: City of Springfield, MO
 - Sutter County, CA
 - Flood Risk Management, Ecosystem Restoration and Recreation Study
 - Partners: State of California Central Valley Flood Protection Board and the Sutter Butte Flood Control Agency (SBFCA)
 - Lake Worth Inlet (Palm Beach County), FL
 - Deep Draft Navigation Study
 - Partner: Port of Palm Beach

- West Side Creek (San Antonio), TX
 - Flood Risk Management, Ecosystem Restoration and Recreation Study
 - Partner: San Antonio River Authority (SARA)
- Central Everglades, FL,
 - Ecosystem Restoration
 - Partner: South Florida Water Management District
- Lessons learned from Pilot Program:
 - New Paradigm concepts are good and in large part can be applied to all Planning studies
 - More definitive direction and guidelines on how to conduct the new paradigm are needed
 - Critical thinking is required by all members of PDT
 - All CW functional elements must participate
 - To effect cultural change – New Paradigm must be implemented more broadly

Reset and Reclassification of Feasibility Studies

- In accordance with current regulations, a thorough review of the 653 individual feasibility studies was performed to remove all studies with no funding, no sponsor interest, or a lack of positive outcome, from the active feasibility portfolio. Significant progress was made to reduce the Feasibility Study Portfolio and this effort will continue into 2012. (288 inactive; 365 active)
- The classification of studies (active, inactive) is an annual requirement and an inactive classification does not jeopardize a study from continuing at such time that sponsor, and Federal funding become available and the sponsor and Corps agree to reactivate a study.
- All Districts will complete reclassification of all identified inactive, terminated or completed feasibility studies and reprogram remaining funds to appropriate active feasibility studies, subject to current reprogramming law.
- In accordance with the 3x3x3 rule all active Feasibility studies will be “reset” or rescoped within the guidelines of the New Paradigm to be completed in 3 years in a target goal of 18 months but no more than three years; cost not greater than \$3M; and require three levels of vertical coordination

Conduct of Ongoing Feasibility Studies

- Effective immediately all Feasibility studies (that have not reached the FSM milestone) will follow a 3 x 3 x 3 rule and will be completed in a target goal of 18 months but no more than three years; cost not greater than \$3M; and require three levels of vertical coordination.

- The target length of the main report for feasibility studies will be 100 pages or less. The environmental document should conform to guidance in ER 200-2-2. The entire feasibility report and appendices shall not exceed 1- three inch binder.
- All studies that have been funded for greater than five years will be reviewed and assessed by USACE vertical tem and sponsor to determine if they should proceed or terminate. If it is determined a study should continue it will be re-scoped in accordance with new paradigm concepts and within the 3 x 3 x 3 rule.
- Any study that exceeds the 3-years and \$3M will require justification and approval by the DCG-CEO. These studies are expected to be the exception.
- The Planning CoP is developing a thorough and comprehensive training approach that will address transition and implementation to the new Planning Paradigm by FY2014. Planning Workshops are anticipated for FY12.