



**US Army Corps
of Engineers®**

PLANNING BULLETIN

No. PB 2012-02

Issuing Office: CECW-P

Issued: 31 May 2012

Subject: Planning SMART Guide

Applicability: Guidance

1. Improving feasibility study execution and delivery through Planning Modernization is one of the four pillars of the broader Civil Works Transformation underway at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Planning modernization emphasizes execution, instills accountability, and improves the organizational and operational model regionally and nationally to ensure consistent quality products. The effort will improve planner knowledge and experience through additional mandatory training, professional certification, and an update of planning processes and planning guidance. On 8 February 2012, Major General Michael J. Walsh, Deputy Commanding General for Civil and Emergency Operations issued a memorandum on feasibility study program execution and delivery. This memorandum issued guidance for scrutiny of the current portfolio of feasibility studies and the conduct feasibility studies to produce more efficient, effective, and quality decision documents and introduced a 3x3x3 rule for all feasibility studies that have not had a Feasibility Scoping Meeting (FSM) by 31 Dec 2011. In accordance with the 3x3x3 rule, all feasibility studies should be completed within a target of 18 months but no more than three years, at a cost of no more than \$3 million, utilize 3 levels of vertical team coordination, and be of a "reasonable" report size. The Planning SMART methodology and framework were developed in response to this directive to facilitate more efficient, effective and consistent delivery of Planning Decision Documents.

2. SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Risk Informed, Timely) Planning is a modernized methodology and framework for conducting USACE civil works planning. The methodology applies critical thinking and vertical team engagement at the beginning and throughout the study process. SMART Planning is decision focused planning rather than task oriented planning. It reorients the planning process away from simply collecting data or completing tasks and refocuses it on doing the work required to reduce uncertainty to the point where the team can make an iterated sequence of planning decisions required to complete a quality study in full compliance with environmental laws and statutes. SMART Planning identifies a series of specific decisions to be made throughout the planning process in a timely manner. It measures progress toward planning objectives and constraints that are realistically attainable. The decisions made are relevant to the planning process and the objectives pursued are relevant to solving the problems and attaining the opportunities of the study area.

3. Planning SMART Framework - Milestones: The SMART Planning Framework has new milestones that address and confirm different degrees of detail for the entire planning process versus milestones to evaluate the outcomes associated with one or two steps of the iterative planning process. A feasibility study works progressively through the six-step planning process, with five key decision points or milestones. These milestones are not the same as the Feasibility Scoping Meeting (FSM), Alternative Formulation Briefing (AFB), or Civil Works Review

Board. You will not see those terms in the SMART Planning Guide, and there is no direct translation between the checkpoints of the old process and the way forward to developing feasibility reports. The new milestones are:

a. Alternatives Milestone – The Vertical Team and Project Delivery Team agree on the final array of alternatives and the criteria that will be used to evaluate and compare the alternatives to select the agency recommended plan. In addition, there is Vertical Team agreement that the objectives of the study are consistent with Corps authorities and priorities.

b. Tentatively Selected Plan Milestone – The Vertical Team and Project Delivery Team agree on the plan that will be published as the Tentatively Selected Plan for public review. Concurrent public, technical, policy, and legal reviews will occur.

c. Agency Decision Milestone – The Project Delivery Team and Vertical Team bring forward the TSP to Senior Leadership, including the Deputy Commanding General of Civil and Emergency Operations (DCG-CEO) for confirmation. With confirmation, this plan becomes the agency recommended plan that will be the focus of increased engineering and cost design / detail sufficient to complete the feasibility study report.

d. Final Report Milestone – The DCG-CEO approves the final report for state and agency review, convening a Civil Works Review Board as deemed necessary.

e. Chief's Report Milestone – The Chief's Report is developed for signature, and ultimately, a Record of Decision after Administration Review.

4. The Planning SMART Guide is an online guide that provides an overview of the tips, tools, and techniques to implement feasibility studies in a more effective manner and consistent with the Deputy Commanding General of Civil and Emergency Operation's 8 February 2012 memorandum. The Guide is not a replacement for ER 1105-2-100, the Planning Guidance Notebook or other Planning Guidance, but rather provides examples, tips, best practices, and lessons learned from the National Pilot Program for Feasibility Studies that have applied five key principles in conducting feasibility studies:

- Identify the Federal role early in the study and apply critical thinking at all phases of the study.
- Focus on identifying and then reducing key areas of uncertainty throughout the study, balancing the level of uncertainty and risk with the level of detail in the study.
- Issues of concern are identified early and throughout the iterative process with Vertical Team engagement and appropriately timed and scoped agency review including District QC, MSC QA, technical (including IEPR, if necessary), policy and legal reviews.
- Seamless feasibility studies depend on ensuring that all resources: funding, human resources, and data are available for the duration of the study. The development of the feasibility study report should begin from the early stages of the study, without unnecessary products developed specifically for process milestones.

5. A collaborative group of District, Division, and Headquarters cross functional members have been working together since March 2012 to create the Planning SMART Guide.
6. The Planning SMART Guide is the first step in the transition to update the PGN Appendices G&H and future Planning and Engineering Regulations. The feasibility study process outlined in the Planning SMART Guide can be accomplished under current laws and in most part under current guidance; the SMART Guide annotates where existing guidance is modified. The SMART Planning framework milestones replace those in PGN Appendices G&H, and the Planning SMART Guide will continue to evolve as concepts are tested and replaced.
7. The Planning SMART Guide should be utilized immediately; the methodology and critical thinking applies to all Planning Studies. Studies subject to the 3x3x3 Rule must utilize the new milestone framework. Guidance on which studies are considered Legacy and which must be 3x3x3 compliant is provided in Planning Bulletin 2012-02. The Planning SMART Guide can be found on the Planning Community Toolbox at www.corpsplanning.us.
8. Point-of-contact for the Planning SMART Guide is Ms. Susan B. Hughes, 202-761-4121.



THEODORE A. BROWN, P.E.
Chief, Planning and Policy Division
Directorate of Civil Works

Superseded on 11 Jan 2013