



Join the Conversation

Partnering Program Profile:  
Nevada Department of Transportation (NDOT)  
February 2<sup>nd</sup> 2017, 8-9am (Pacific)  
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## **Program History and Practices**

NDOT kicked off their program in 2009 and developed their Partnering Program Guide in 2010. In 2015, they formed a Partnering Steering Committee and Dispute Resolution Working Group.

Through their Partnering program, they've adopted the following organizational practices:

- Leadership Commitment
- A Culture of Partnering- their way of doing business
- Partnering on all projects. The Contractor pays for it and NDOT reimburses them 100%
- The requirement of professional facilitators for projects > \$10 million
- Optional NDOT and Owner Training/ Train-the-Trainers
- Measurement and monitoring of the program
- Recognition through an annual Excellence in Partnering Awards Ceremony

## **The Partnering process**

*Kick-off:* The kick-off meeting starts everyone out on the right foot and establishes the culture. A neutral location such as a restaurant can be a more relaxed venue for the meeting and which may lead to more open conversation. Executive participation is important, and can lead to productive conversations and new possibilities.

*Charter:* The charter is not a contract or legal action but represents a tangible commitment that is signed and developed by the team. Charter goals are specific to the project and potential challenges.

*Issue Resolution:* Drawn-out issues lead to cost, schedule and relationship impacts that can impede the project even after they've been resolved. Issue resolution needs to be timely and have a predetermined hierarchy. Project team members need to understand their role in the issue resolution ladder and when to escalate issues to the next level.

Lessons learned on Dispute Resolution

- Issues must be jointly escalated.
- Involving too many people creates makes for productive issue resolution meetings
- Poor communication back down the issue resolution "ladder" results in misunderstandings.

*Team evaluation*

Regular evaluations and follow up helps teams meet charter goals and resolve issues early on.

## **Collaboration with the Industry goes Beyond the Projects**

Collaboration outside of Projects helps build trust and strengthen relationships. NDOT has quarterly meetings with the AGC where they learn what topics they are concerned about. Another way that they remain collaborative outside of the project is through emergency operations. NDOT holds regular exercises for floods, etc. so that everyone is familiar with whom to call and what to do in an emergency-- where excellent collaboration is critical.

### **Keeping the momentum and improving the program**

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To keep the momentum up it is important to demonstrate leadership support, inspire ownership of the process and engage partners and champions. NDOT is improving their program by updating their documents, putting together a toolbox with specs and training curriculums and incorporating new technology.

### **Q&A**

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#### **Q. What are the challenges of monitoring progress at the program level?**

A. Engineers like to put a number on something and the people who fund it want to know the ROI. It is hard to say “we saved this much money,” or “avoided claims” because of partnering. Anecdotal evidence can be helpful, but it is hard to measure the results.

#### **Q. What do you mean when you say there shouldn't be “too many people” in issue resolution meetings?**

A. It is important to have the decision makers attend those meetings, but trying to get a consensus can be difficult with too many people. Be careful not to undermine them, but you need the right people.

#### **Q. Is each step of the Issue Resolution Ladder exclusive? Once transferred up the ladder, is the lower level no longer involved?**

A. That depends on the relationship. When a foreman pushes it up they may be needed in the room to describe the problem before they have a discussion to resolve it. The main purpose for elevation is that we don't want the foreman and lead inspector (or other levels on the issue resolution ladder) sitting on it for too long.

#### **Q. From bottom to top of the ladder is about 40 days. Is that normal and effective in your experience?**

A. 40 days is not usually what happens. These dates may change—when it comes to critical items they may cut back on the time to elevate. Each project has its own issue resolution ladder with varying timelines and roles, established during the kick-off session.

#### **Q. Where do most items get resolved?**

A. Most items do not go past the third rung—which includes the resident engineer and project manager. Issues may need to be elevated to the District Engineer/HQ Construction Division on rung 4 if a change order is needed.