



**US Army Corps
of Engineers®**

ENGINEERING AND CONSTRUCTION BULLETIN

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Subject: Importance of the Application of Partnering Concepts to MILCON and Civil Works Missions

Applicability: Guidance

1. References:

- a. UFGS 01 30 00 (01310) Administrative Requirements (07-2006)
- b. MILCON Transformation Model RFP
- c. ECB No. 2003-9 (30 May 2003)

2. The purpose of this ECB is to emphasize the importance of the application of partnering concepts to our military and civil works construction and operations missions to enhance USACE –Industry communication, teamwork and conflict management in support of an unprecedented workload and USACE transformation.

3. USACE is facing numerous challenges to successfully execute its MILCON and Civil Works Programs. These challenges are the result of Army Transformation, Integrated Global Positioning and Basing Strategy (IGPBS), the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT), Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC), the devastation caused by Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma, world demand on basic commodities and associated inflationary pressures, and saturated labor markets. These challenges continue to stress the demands on USACE and industry resources and pose significant risks to successful mission execution.

4. In the past, we have received input from the construction industry that we do not uniformly practice construction partnering. Most recently we received similar input from the dredging industry. Now more than ever, we must embrace the concepts of partnering and recognize that USACE and industry are dependent on each other for mutual success. Gone are the days when design and construction inefficiencies could be ignored and buried in project costs. Our customers demand ever-increasing value from the limited dollars that are available. USACE and industry must respond to this challenge and continue to develop innovative ways to work together that create added value through increased productivity. Partnering concepts, when properly applied, creates added value. Industry studies have shown that the correct application of partnering concepts improves quality, reduces cost and reduces contract performance periods.

5. Partnering is a voluntary organized process by which multiple stakeholders having shared interests perform as a team to achieve mutually beneficial goals. It is based on establishing those goals early in the project lifecycle, building trusting relationships, and engaging in collaborative problem solving. It requires empowering team members to solve problems at the lowest organizational level possible. A successful partnering arrangement: removes organizational impediments to communication among stakeholders; achieves decisions through consensus when possible; results in joint responsibility for maintaining, improving and nurturing the partnering process; and demonstrates a personal commitment by every member of the team. It typically requires some or all of the following elements to be successful: a trained facilitator or team coach, a team charter articulating its mission and goals, a team assessment tool, an issue resolution process, and regular team building sessions throughout the life of the project.

6. Partnering is not a social process that simply promotes courtesy and politeness - but rather is a good faith effort at joint problem resolution. It is not mandatory, but rather voluntary - it does not attempt to mandate behaviors but seeks to influence them. It is not a panacea and will not result in mutually acceptable resolution to all problems - the stakeholders will feel better about the outcomes and are willing to continue with the process. It is not a one-way street and will not work if some parties adhere to an “us versus them” mindset - it will succeed with a win-win mindset. It is not successful without total senior management commitment - it is successful if the team has the right skill-sets, is empowered by senior management and receives the requisite resources to get the job done. It is not a waiver of contractual rights and responsibilities - it is a recognition and respect of those rights and responsibilities and a willingness to work together to help all stakeholders fulfill them. It is not contrary to the Government’s best interests – it is consistent with the Government’s implicit duty to cooperate with its contractors.

7. Various resource materials are available to get help and learn more about partnering. They include:

- a. <http://www.construction-institute.org>
- b. <http://www.adr.org>
- c. <http://www.agc.org>

8. USACE leadership is committed to fostering cooperative relationships with its industry partners. The partnering concepts discussed here, when properly applied, will achieve that end one project at a time and will help us achieve our goals in these unprecedented times.

9. This ECB has been coordinated with the Office of the Chief Counsel and the Principal Assistant Responsible for Contracting (PARC)

10. The point of contact for this ECB is Paul Parsonault, 202-761-5533.

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