



# 2023 National Planning Community of Practice Workshop Round-up



*December 7, 2023*

# Workshop Overview



## Agenda

- Telling our Story
- Thoughts from Susan
- Q&A with the PCOP
- Additional questions?
- What's Next
- Kudos



2023 National Planning  
Community of Practice  
Workshop



**Ray Wimbrough**

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# Key Take Aways What we heard -

200 Planners from Across the Enterprise



- Plan Formulation
- Economics
- Environmental
- Cultural Resources
- PM, E&C, RE

District Planners were Prioritized



- District
- HQ and IWR
- MSC and PCXs
- OASA(CW)

1. In-person engagement is valuable
2. You want mentors
3. Scoping is difficult for many reasons including mixed messaging from vertical team
4. Tools are needed for Comprehensive Benefits
5. Modernize training and development plan for next generation of CW Planners
6. Language matters – use asset-based terms







## Ask the PCOP – Follow-on Q&A

1. Why do people continue to blame SMART planning and 3x3 for cost busts when USACE had many significant busts prior to SMART and 3x3, as was documented in reports and memos between ASA(CW) and USACE in early 2010s? Since that time additional requirements continue to be added, yet our estimates don't seem to be improving? What are we doing to improve cost estimates in light of facts and not red herrings? - Mukesh
2. There is a cost engineering CR that has a good description of what a level 1-5 cost estimate entails. Is there a similar piece of guidance that defines different levels of design maturity for a 10% to 35% design level that a planner could use to help, esp. new engineers? – Vanessa/Micah



## Ask the PCOP – Follow-on Q&A

Hearing the ASACW's embrace and championing of comprehensive benefits (which in turn represents the administration's priorities) why is it that OMB (an office of the White House, correct?) doesn't equally champion comp benefits? Can't the White House basically direct OMB to relax its strict financial threshold policies (whether BCR, Net NED Benefits, or cost per acre for eco projects)? If this is a naive question (i.e., OMB is not the gatekeeper it once was), please enlighten us how to manage OMB expectations. Thanks! – ASACW Staff



# Ask the PCOP – Follow-on Q&A

1. PAO recently informed Planning there's an effort underway nationally to remove all documents from websites and going forward only files uploaded to the USACE digital library are allowed. I'm concerned with impacts to public and agency reviews. - Susan
2. What's the best library of completed studies to reference?- Susan
3. We heard about Sec 203 tribal partnership program, but I thought Sec 203 was a study fully funded and completed by the NFS - can you clarify please? – Amy F



# Ask the PCOP – Follow-on Q&A

1. Is there a date for when the selected studies submitted under the new 165 pilot program will be announced? 2: Follow up - it would be helpful to have a better understanding, especially of the timeline, for when new TPP studies are selected for funding. Its challenging to convey the timelines back to tribes who really need the study when we have no idea if or when the project will get selected or funded. –Amy F
2. We've highlighted that around 1/4 of our workshop are "newer" teammates (1-5 years). Do we think we can all make an effort to minimize the jargon? It would benefit in knowledge transfer, and make community engagement come more naturally. -Susan





# Ask the PCOP – Follow-on Q&A

1. A list of common acronyms would have been helpful for new employees. – Susan
2. As USACE moves to update ER 1105-2-100, specifically the appendices, how can we, at the implementation level, participate in developing these doctrine? – Amy F



# Ask the PCOP – Follow-on Q&A

1. What is USACE's policy on 508 compliance? Are there resources available for study teams? -Susan
2. Does anyone else struggle with the time/ effort it takes to extract approval signatures out of people? Any thoughts ever to a centralized signature/ approval tracker for studies? Equivalent to ERDC's E-PAS. –Susan
3. "Early in the study process" seems to apply to almost everything these days - to try and keep to milestones, have there been any further discussions to do addition by subtraction? Or prioritize what's possible? -Susan



# Ask the PCOP – Follow-on Q&A

1. I am an AICP (American Planning Association certified planner) and struggle to maintain my certification while working for USACE. Does the PCoP have any plans to work more with the APA to include Prospect and PCoP Webinars and workshops in AICP certification maintenance? - Susan
2. On Day 2, we saw that USACE has many new planners, but training opportunities don't align with the need. Is the enterprise addressing this and how? – Susan
3. Do you see a place for identifying risk tolerance with study team (per 5 min categories of risk) EARLY (PMP) and would that help decision paralysis and capturing uncertainty in engineering and cost estimation? - Susan



# Ask the PCOP – Follow-on Q&A

1. How would you respond to a savvy and politically connected NFS who believes comp benefits means to leave no benefit behind? And makes that the rallying cry for the study? – Jeff S
2. Ms. Colosimo made a comment this morning that we should capture the benefits as communities see them and not make a judgement. Our documents have to go through review and have to defend our analysis. How do we ensure that we capture these benefits and also ensure that these are facts, not opinions? – Jeff S
3. Please clarify if the 2021 Comp Benefits memo can and should be applied to CAP + other smaller CW programs – Jeff S



# Ask the PCOP – Follow-on Q&A

1. With the focus on comp benefits and ecosystem services, how can we get more surveys quickly to establish such benefits. Maybe stock approval surveys by accounts, or parametric benefits similar to the current most-used UDV method for recreation. –Jeff S
2. Do you have thoughts on setting the 902/ authorized cost at the end of PED? – Jeff S





# Ask the PCOP – Follow-on Q&A

1. Why is there an aversion to programmatic NEPA documents? They are extremely helpful when we defer so much analysis and design to PED. The team programmatic in NEPA is not necessarily the same as CW's definition. –Julie A
2. If we are more costly to implement and lack of guidance for non-structural than other federal agencies such as FEMA, how do we respond to stakeholders and NFS regarding being more costly? Also why are we not differing it to their federal agencies – Ray W



# Ask the PCOP – Follow-on Q&A

1. I've heard our policy might be updated to match law in terms of \$3 million federal from WRRDA 2014. Will we see this updated soon? We have seen a number of studies with \$3 million federal + 3 years that needed to seek policy exceptions. Can the policy be updated to 3 years + \$6 million total study cost? – Hank
2. How might we improve connections between feasibility, PED, and construction, including assumptions? -Hank



## Ask the PCOP – Follow-on Q&A

Can you provide one piece of advice for new study or program managers, since there are many in attendance? – ALL

Additional Questions?



# What's Next

- Workshop Materials:  
<https://usace.dps.mil/sites/KMP-PTRN/SitePages/2023-PCoP-National-Workshop.aspx>
- Mentor matching
- Find time for more Sub-CoP meetings/interaction
- Summer Series 2024
- PCoP Workshop 2025







# Kudos



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