

Partnerships... *It's Not Personal It's Just Business*

Heath Kruger and Heather Burke
National NRM Workshop
18 April 2017



"The views, opinions and findings contained in this report are those of the authors(s) and should not be construed as an official Department of the Army position, policy or decision, unless so designated by other official documentation."



**US Army Corps
of Engineers**



Partnerships... It's Not Personal, It's Just Business

“Bottom line...Partnerships are smart business.”



A look into the business of partnering:

- I. The Corps partnership business – building a successful foundation
- II. Game planning partnerships – finding the right partner
- III. The keys to success – cultivating successful partnerships



Partnerships... It's Not Personal It's Just Business

Well... *Not Really*... Partnerships are personal.

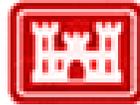
- For a partnership to be successful, it takes a personal investment by the partnership coordinator and the partners.
- Partnerships are not “free.” They take time and effort to cultivate, and require a foundation built on trust to be successful.
- Partnerships are a business decision, but personal in nature.



US Army Corps
of Engineers



Modern History of the Partnership Business



- Partnership conference in Los Angeles, November 2003
- First time the 7 land management agencies co-convened an effort of this kind
- One-stop networking between the federal government and partners
- Demonstrated Chief's commitment to partnering



US Army Corps
of Engineers



Outcomes

- The Corps of Engineers as a community recognized the value of partnering at all levels and in all business lines.
- Stakeholder listening sessions were conducted.
- Created HQ senior partnership position (Debra Stokes)
- Partnership Advisory Committee established in October 2003 to evaluate existing policies, authorities and develop new strategies
- Redefined “Partnership”

The Partnership Philosophy

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers plays a key role in shaping the future of our Nation's water resources. Our **partners are essential** in making this happen. We recognize that partnerships must **flow in both directions**. **Cooperation** and **collaboration** are the keys to innovative solutions to meet a diversity of need. When we put our heads together, we can find answers far better than anything we can think of ourselves.



Partnerships are a smart way of doing business.



US Army Corps
of Engineers



“Too often we think of a partnership as a handout instead of a handshake.”



Building the Partnership Paradigm



- Be proactive. Don't wait until you need something from someone.
- Attend local community events and make personal invitations to potential partners.
- Where there is a will, there is a way.
- Partnerships are about getting to yes and finding ways to get things done.

Internal Capacity Building

- The Corps' Culture
 - By nature, we try to control everything... we need to loosen up!
 - Embrace private/public partnerships.
- Integrate into NRM Business Lines
 - Build relationships internally with Office of Counsel, Real Estate, Resource Management, Planning, and Operations early in the process.
 - Strengthen interagency relationships.
 - Consistency between districts (sharing)
- Training
 - NRM Gateway as an up-to-date resource
 - Partnership webinars, PLA conference, PROSPECT 328
 - Best practice sharing



Succession Planning

- Partnering helps to pool scarce resources.
- Consistency
- Committed to fully exploring the potential development of new public-private partnerships to leverage limited appropriated funds and human resources.
- Partnerships are not only important, they are a necessity!



Success Builds Success

- Perception is reality.
- You have worked hard to establish your partnership. But it isn't embraced until it is perceived as a benefit to the project or the community.



Resources: NRM Gateway

<https://corpslakes.erdcdren.mil/partners/partners.cfm>

Partnerships

[Headquarters POC](#)

[Partnerships Pages Quick-finder Index](#)

In today's financial environment PARTNERING is an essential tool that allows the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to effectively manage recreation and environmental resources. In order to successfully meet our recreation and stewardship missions, and to foster shared values, vision, and a sense of ownership it is imperative that we work together with state governments, Native American tribes, private/public organizations, local communities, and other partners to maintain or advance programs from wildlife protection and habitat improvement to recreational facility enhancements.

Partnering helps to pool scarce resources, to promote coordinated, focused, and consistent mutual efforts to resolve common problems and missions, and to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort. The NRM Program has embraced this reality and is committed to fully exploring the potential development of new public-private partnerships to leverage limited appropriated funds and human resources.

This page will help you determine the [right tools for your partnerships](#), [find the right training to expand your knowledge](#), and [learn from the successful efforts of your peers](#). You will find answers to longstanding questions and discover how to effectively utilize important partners such as the [Corps of Engineers Natural Resources Education Foundation](#). The bottom line: **partnering is smart business**.

Partnership Types: [Which is right for you?](#)

- [Challenge Partnerships Program](#)
- [Handshake Partnerships Program](#)
- [Contributions Program](#)
- [Cooperating Associations Program](#)
- [Memoranda of Understanding/Agreement \(MOU/MOA\)](#)
- [Volunteer Program](#)
- [Economy Act Agreements](#)
- [Cooperative Agreements](#)

How To:

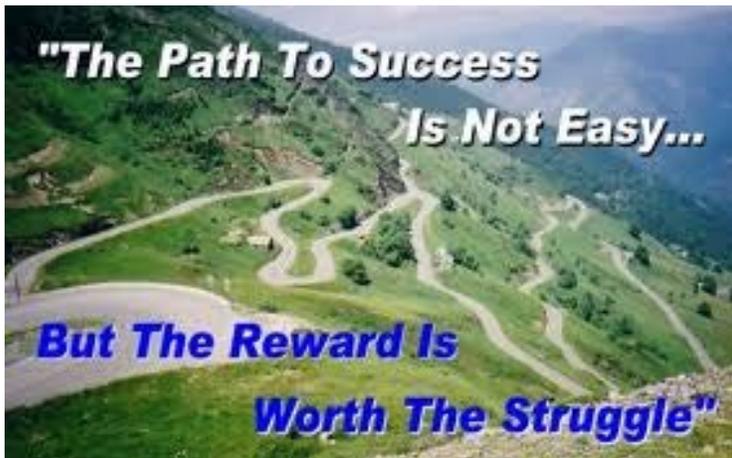
- [Policy & Procedures](#)
- [Training](#)
- [Grants/Alternative Funding Sources](#)
- [Partnership Advisory Committee](#)
- [Division & District POCs](#) 
- [Partnerships in OMBIL](#)
- [FAQs](#)
- [News / Current Issues](#)
- [Good Enough to Share](#)
- [Partnership Outreach Sheet](#)



Rules Of Partnerships

- Must not cause significant increase in O&M costs
- Challenge Partnership Agreements: Approval <\$25K: OPM; <\$200K: Operations Chief; >\$200K District Commander
- Contributions: Must have a contributions plan in OMP that describes work to be done (funds, materials, supplies, in-kind goods/services)
- Contributions; Approval >\$2,500: Manager review for propriety; >\$100K: Coordinate with Counsel; >\$1M: OC, MSC, HQ NRM, DCW
- Must have a donor recognition plan approved by OPM and OC. (Alternative to individual project plan is to develop a comprehensive district-wide plan. Can be included in contributions plan.)

Developing and Sustaining



- Formal agreements
- ‘Make it work’ attitude to get over hurdles
- Honor commitments – long term trust always wins in building partnerships.
- Find wins – even if small, and celebrate them.
- Invite other partners if possible; it can help both parties.
- Don’t just talk when you need something.
- Honest communication and expectations
- Have fun!



***“If you want people to be interested in what you are doing
... you have to be interested in what they are doing.”***



**US Army Corps
of Engineers**



Game Planning Partnerships

- Understanding the partner
- Making the pitch
- Timing
- Type of agreement
- Issues and challenges



Understanding Your Partners - 6 Questions To Ask

1. What do you need from your partner/what do they need from you?
2. What is your potential partner's sustainability?
3. What are your respective expectations about time commitment?
4. What happens if you can't work it out?
5. What is their reputation or standing in the community?
6. What questions does your potential partner have for you?



US Army Corps
of Engineers



Making the Pitch

- Focus on important needs/goals.
- Adopt a shared mission/vision.
- Understand each other's culture, strengths and weaknesses.
- Determine the key players to develop team and begin leveraging strengths.



Timing

Comes in three ways:

- **Partnership longevity**
 - Have a plan for how long the partnership will last.
- **Timing of setting up the partnership**
 - How busy is the partner? (June vs. November)
 - “I can’t deal with that right now...”
- **Finding the catalyst**
 - Never pass up a good catalyst.



Agreement Type

NOTE: Sometimes, more than one type of agreement will work for your partnership. The length, complexity and extent of the project or partnership should drive the choice of agreement/partnership type.

- **Economy Act Agreements:** Agreements for services and/or supplies with other federal agencies which are only used when goods/services can't be provided as conveniently or cheaply by commercial contract.
- **Cooperative Agreements:** Agreements that allow the Corps to transfer money to a partner for services and/or supplies. USACE authority for cooperative agreements is limited to specific types.
- **Cooperating Associations:** Tax-exempt non-profit organizations, set up through a cooperating association agreement.



US Army Corps
of Engineers



Agreement Type

- **Challenge Partnerships:** Agreement with non-Federal public and private entities on facilities and natural resources maintained at full Federal expense
- **Memorandums of Understanding/Agreement (MOU/MOA):** “Agreement to agree” but does not obligate funds. MOA establishes legal terms that will be included in a support agreement/ reimbursable order to follow.
- **Volunteer Agreements:** Allow the Corps to accept services of volunteers for a variety of natural resources work with the exception of law enforcement and policy-making
- **Contributions Program:** Simplest form of partnership. Acceptance of money, materials, or services from groups and individuals for environmental stewardship, restoration, and recreation



Issues and Challenges

- Reduced funding, aging infrastructure and increasing customer demand
- Lack of clear policy guidance and poor decision making processes
- Lack of institutional knowledge
- Lack of basic authorities available to other land management agencies
- Inconsistency of interpretation of policies between districts and offices within the districts specifically with OC, RE, RM, etc.

Keys to Success

Flexibility and creativity

Political astuteness

Open communication and transparency

Celebrating and sharing credit

Staff partnering skills and diversity

Partner's motivations and incentives

Decisiveness

Constant nurturing and evaluation



Flexibility and Creativity

- Flexibility means focus on the results.
- You don't have to be a creative person to have a partnership full of creativity.
- Use partners' experiences to drive creativity.
- The truth is, the only problem that can't be fixed is a blank page. There's nothing you can do with that except to stare at it.
- The truth is that creativity is hard work. There are no silver bullets. The only way to create successfully is to get your ideas out there, find the flaws and get to work fixing them.



Political Astuteness

Read the room... Understand the situation

Understand there is a difference between being *Political* and *Politically Astute*

- Communication is indirect, unclear, controlled, and often manipulated.
- Conflicts occur behind the scenes and are unacknowledged.
- Decisions are made by small, powerful cliques.
- People, actions, and decisions are judged as either good or bad.
- Information is disseminated by gossip.
- Resistance to policies ranges from passive to overtly destructive.
- The mundane is overblown; significant issues are often minimized.
- When things go wrong, people blame each other.



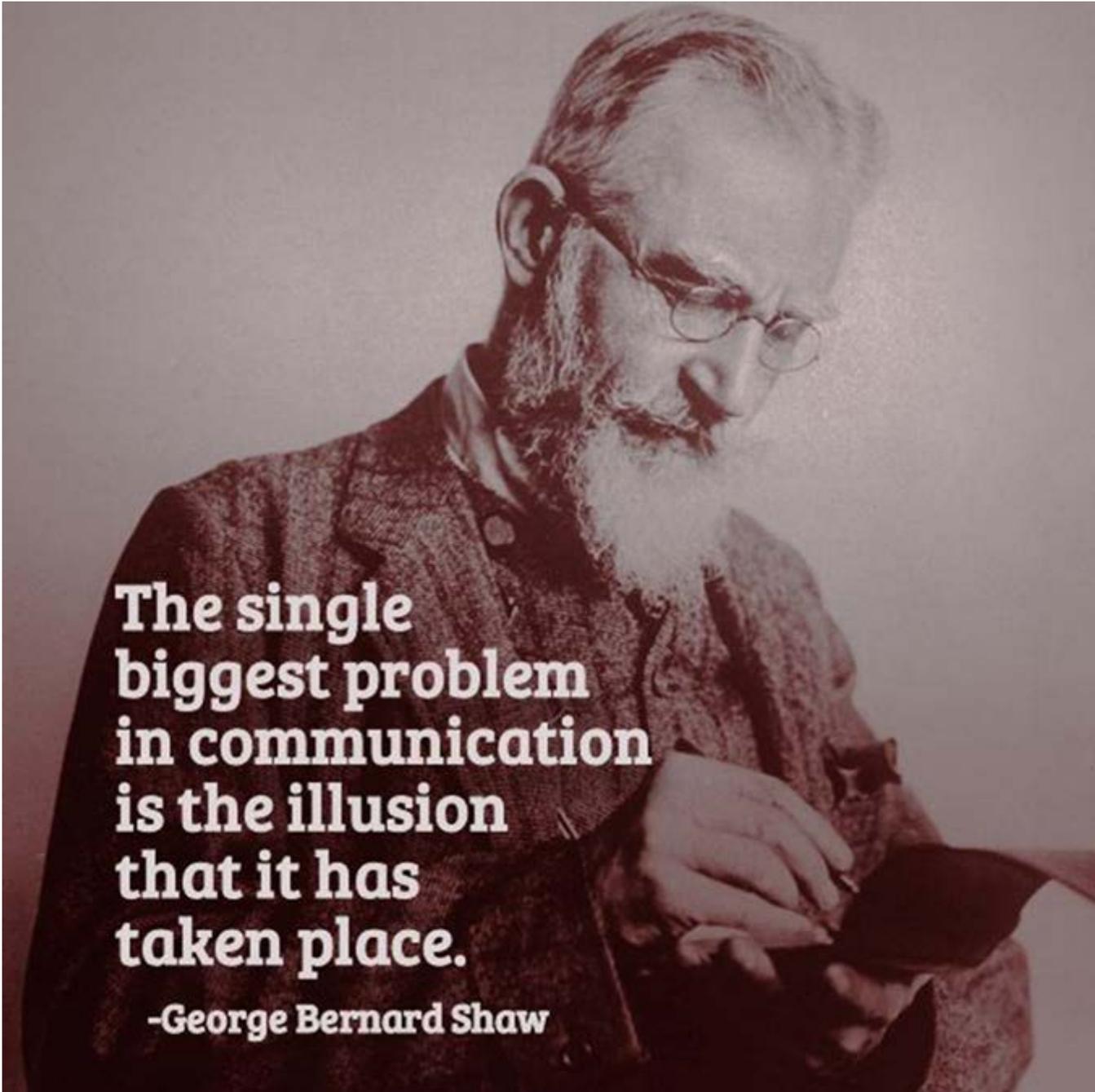
US Army Corps
of Engineers



Open Communication and Transparency

- Say what you need to say - *even if it is hard to say.*
- Speak to groups as individuals.
- Talk so people will listen.
- Listen so people will talk.
- Read body language.
- Prepare your intent.
- Practice active listening.
- Skip the jargon.





**The single
biggest problem
in communication
is the illusion
that it has
taken place.**

-George Bernard Shaw



**US Army Corps
of Engineers**



Celebrating and Sharing Credit

- Acknowledging even the smallest success has the biggest payoffs.
- A Cornell study found that small rewards make people more generous, friendly, and happy. These small “thrills” also made people more productive and accurate in their work. Rewards activate the pleasure pathway in your brain, even if they are self-induced.
- The study also found that people who worked daily to cultivate an attitude of gratitude experienced improved mood, energy, and physical wellbeing.



Staff Partnering Skills and Diversity

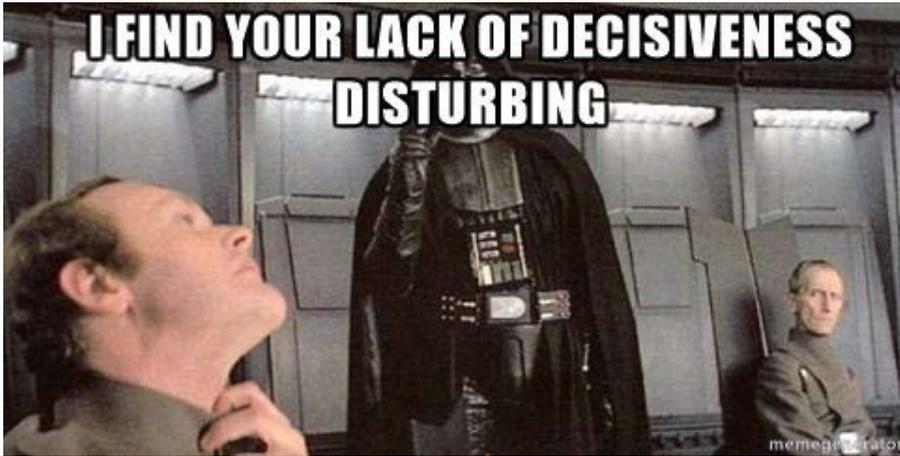
- It's important to find someone who complements your skills.
- Don't underestimate the importance of liking one another.
- Successful partners will possess different (complementary) skills and traits. The broader the partners' range of skills, the clearer the division of their labor (and power) can be.



Partner's Motivations and Incentives

- Be mission-oriented.
- Partners are mission-oriented. Each is motivated by the knowledge of where they're going and why.
- Knowing your mission and the partner's mission is a crucial building block of success, as mission-oriented people accomplish goals and lead teams better than those who lack a vision.

Decisiveness



- Don't miss your window of opportunity.
 - You must have a bias toward action, and be willing to make the decision.
-
- Don't fall prey to analysis paralysis, but rather make the best decision possible with the information at hand using some of the methods mentioned above.
 - Opportunities are not static. The law of diminishing returns applies to most opportunities in that the longer you wait to seize the opportunity, the smaller the return typically is. In fact, it is most likely that the opportunity will completely evaporate if you wait too long to seize it.

Manage Your Partnership

- Constant nurturing and evaluation - (*I don't mean coddle*)
- You need to manage your partnership every day with everything you do.
- You need to be available for opportunities you don't even know exist. When your partnership is strong and visible to the right people, opportunities come to you.



Grit

- Grit is a special blend of persistence and passion; it is the ability to persevere.
- It's about being unusually resilient and hardworking, so much that you're willing to continue on in the face of difficulties, obstacles and even failures. It's about being constantly driven to improve.



Talent x effort = skill

Skill x effort = achievement

It's ok to walk away: Like any relationship, partnerships hold a great deal of promise. However, sometimes it doesn't work out.



US Army Corps
of Engineers



PAC 2017

- Allison Walker - LRD
(LRN District Office)
- Jason Knight– SWD
(SWT District Office)
- Heath Kruger– NWD
(Kansas City District)
- Stacy Sigman- MVD
(Lake Ouachita)
- Taylor Johnson- SPD
(New Hogan Lake)
- Miriam Fleming – Chair- SAD
(Carters Lake)
- Ron Woodall –NAD
(West Hill Dam)
- Heather Burke – HQ



** Jason Knight and Ron Woodall not shown in photo