

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Partnership Philosophy and Talking Points

The Definition of a Partnership:

- is a handshake, not a hand out.
- is part of our culture.
- combines individual strengths to accomplish the mission.
- fosters relationships, common goals and working together.
- builds consensus and broad-based community support.
- leverages resources to meet challenges and improve opportunities.

Partnerships are a smart way of doing business.

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 is the key 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.

Talking Points to Use When Discussing Partnerships

1. The Corps is strongly committed to providing the best services and facilities we can within the scope of available resources. Funding for programs, aging infrastructure, and increasing customer demand will always be a challenge.
2. Our partnering initiative will seek to expand the role of non-Federal entities in serving the public. Through partnerships, we can develop innovative ways to overcome our challenges and improve our opportunities on public lands.
3. However, our customers and stakeholders have spoken. They have said, "You have got great people in the Corps of Engineers and we love working with them" but "your processes are daunting; we do not understand them. You do not partner like a partner. When we deal with one part of the Corps, it's not like dealing with another part. We're frustrated!" We hear their concerns and are committed to creating a new partnership culture.
4. A successful partnership culture fosters relationships, common goals and working together. It builds consensus and broad-based community support. It is a handshake, not a handout.

5. To accomplish this, we need to:
 - a. Establish clear shared responsibilities and shared benefits.
 - b. Use resources effectively and efficiently.
 - c. Be consistent in the application of our process.
 - d. Instill a sense of ownership for the land/resources involved.
 - e. Emphasize the importance and rewards of partnerships.
 - f. Recognize that partners seek to build good will and support good work.
 - g. Be flexible and open to all ideas.

6. Part of our leadership's commitment to the partnership culture includes:
 - a. The creation of the position of Senior Policy Advisor for Partnerships whose responsibility it is to:
 - (1) Identify partnership competencies and explore integrating partnership and collaboration skills into existing programmatic and administrative training.
 - (2) Ensure the field is provided consistent legal advice on partnership issues.
 - (3) Explore legislative authorities for broader delegations and possible initiatives.
 - (4) Improve existing partnership success measurement systems.

 - b. The creation of a Partnership Advisory Committee with representatives from each MSC who have the multi-disciplined expertise in Corps partnership. The mission of the PAC is to evaluate and develop the best national strategy for the creation of partnerships.

 - c. Handshake Program - seed money to provide an incentive to Corps projects that have not utilized "partnering" initiatives to their fullest potential. This funding is intended to encourage local organizations to become a partner with the Corps.

7. We must not be discouraged by past failures. As a learning organization, we will use these experiences to identify and remove institutional barriers and other roadblocks that prevent us from being successful.

8. As public stewards, we must find ways to balance competing needs. With cooperation and collaboration, we can find workable solutions, ones that address multiple needs through partnership.