

Forum Case Study: Port of Seattle, Aviation Division

A Rational Approach Brings Clarity to a \$2.6 Billion Project

Application: Bring clarity to a massive airport improvement plan consisting of 240 competing projects with vague delivery dates, questionable budgets, and unclear goals.

Processes Used: Project Management and Problem Solving and Decision Making (PSDM)

Summary: Seattle-Tacoma Airport's capital improvement plan consisted of an array of projects competing for space, utilities, and funding. In addition, tight geographic boundaries and the need to minimize the impact on customers made work difficult and costly. KT Program Leaders, trained in both PSDM and Project Management, used these processes to help business leaders and project managers bring clarity to the confusing, multitude of projects. Using Situation Appraisal to identify, separate, and clarify concerns, they set the foundation for a programmatic approach with clear objectives. Using Decision Analysis and Potential Problem Analysis, a handful of programs were shaped with relevant projects, and any overlaps and dependent projects were identified. They reduced the number of projects from 240 to 80 and identified the need for \$900 million more in funding and an additional three years to complete. The clarity of the program made it possible to obtain the funding and time needed without controversy and move quickly to implement the plan.

Overview: The Port of Seattle Aviation Division's Ten-Year Capital Improvement Program for Seattle-Tacoma International Airport consisted of nearly 240 separate projects, many with vague delivery dates, undefined resources, unclear goals, and an uncertain \$2.7 billion price tag. The airport's tight geographic boundaries make work difficult and costly. Experienced project managers were concerned that the complexity of the situation hadn't been adequately addressed.

KT Program Leaders, trained in both PSDM and Project Management, facilitated the applications of Situation Appraisal and high level Project Definition, helping the business leaders and project managers to shift focus from trying to manage a confusing multitude of projects to managing seven programs with clear objectives. The objectives became the framework for establishing the



individual project objectives. Decision Analysis was used for major decisions such as siting of facilities and assessing project strategy options. Doing this work revealed that many of the earlier, approved projects were too focused on near-term gains. The systematic approach made it possible to identify the resources needed not only to execute the tasks in each project, but also to manage such a huge program. Project Management and Potential Problem Analysis were applied at the project level to ensure that projects deliver the right benefit for the cost and have a realistic scope and budget.

Results: KT process helped managers to step back and think strategically. Operationally focused managers learned to see the whole picture, not just their own interests. The program gained a structure that supports the projects while minimizing impact on customers and inter-project conflicts. Cost increases were identified early and budgeted. Managers gained a unified approach to achieving division-wide objectives, using the common tools and common language of KT PM and PSDM. The first phase of the program was implemented with confidence. Updates are available on the Port of Seattle Web site, www.portseattle.org.