



Performance Beyond Precedent: A Future Rewritten

The federal agency won a high-profile \$800 million road upgrade project, then turned around and did something unexpected: decided to share the risks and rewards in its first-ever alliance approach.



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When a government agency was awarded a major federal road project, the agency broke precedent, opting to take an alliance approach. With support from JMW, the project team galvanized around the new approach and the possibilities for high performance never before demonstrated in the region, exceeding all expectations and setting new standards for the country, the industry, and alliance contracting.

The Situation

A government transportation agency received \$800 million in federal funding for a portfolio of projects to upgrade a major road artery between two heavily traveled cities, with funding contingent on specific completion dates. The project would require a significantly more accelerated program of work than the agency had historically been successful in delivering. The organization had traditionally executed conventional contractor projects, but with mixed delivery in terms of overall performance, timelines, and costs. Given this history of mixed results and deadline pressure, the agency decided to take an alliance approach to a significant section of the highway project.

There were numerous logistical challenges, including a six-month delay in breaking ground on construction, federal heritage and environmental restrictions, and poor ground conditions exacerbated by a severe drought. To deliver on the alliance's commitment, the key partners and a network of specialty subcontractors would have to collaborate and



coordinate on large-scale earthworks, drainage, concrete paving, bridge-building, environmental management, and traffic management of one of the country's busiest road freight routes.

The agency contracted with JMW to: (1) design and facilitate the selection process through which the alliance's consortium of design and construction companies would be established; and (2) post-selection, to coach and facilitate the alliance team in the development and delivery of the project itself all the way through to completion and handover.

The Work

The JMW engagement involved a combination of work with key groups including the Alliance Management Team responsible for overseeing the delivery of the project, the Alliance Leadership Team composed of executives from each of the alliance partner organizations, and Senior Project Managers responsible for essential operational aspects of the delivery of the project such as earthworks, paving, bridges and structures.

JMW also conducted a series of workshops for members of the broader team. At the front end of the project and regularly as new people came on board, JMW worked with alliance participants to cultivate a shared context and understanding of the project and to build a shared frame of reference around alliancing and the language of commitment. In addition, JMW provided regular on-site coaching from start to finish, an average of four days a month.

Far more significant than the structure of the work was the difference it made with the alliance participants, who became equipped to have the critical conversations necessary to resolve all issues within the alliance, making a regular practice of listening to and respecting the views of others, honoring commitments, and fully sharing knowledge, risk, and reward.

With a new, commonly held understanding that "the only way we can achieve outstanding rewards is by outstanding performance," the project team made decisions and arrived at solutions intended to satisfy all of the committed results and objectives without compromising one for another.



The Results

The alliance performed beyond all expectations, meeting every requirement by broad margins. The project was completed well ahead of schedule, performing at levels that demonstrated approximately \$37.6 million in savings for the federal government that would not have been realized if the agency had not utilized the alliance delivery method. Additionally, the project teams used recycled water from a nearby paper mill for 50% of construction needs and rehabilitated a former landfill. In the words of a key alliance leader:

“We quickly formed a single, integrated team whose members developed their expertise and embraced new perspectives by collaborating to resolve challenges. The culture engendered trust and open communications through a no-blame, fix-it-first, best-for-project attitude.”

The alliance’s unprecedented performance outcomes included:

- Cost performance exceeding budgeted figure by double digits
- Defect-free completion of all work in all phases
- Delivery more than four months ahead of the federal government’s requirement date
- Quality that exceeded agency specifications, was rated by the government as “superior” across the board, and led the agency to revise its technical standards for quality
- Outstanding scores in traffic and incident management through the construction phase
- Environmental management that earned an unprecedented total performance score of 38 on a 1-to-20 scale that considers 20 “outstanding”

- A consistent five-day construction work week (where the convention is a six-day week), which boosted morale, work quality, and contributed to high safety records
- Awards and accolades including:
 - Recognition as a finalist in the country’s premier environmental award competition
 - A “Highly Commended” award in the project management category in the national Engineering Excellence competition, and recognition as a finalist in the Infrastructure Projects category
 - A “Highly Commended” award at the nation’s Alliance Contracting Excellence Awards
 - The country’s prestigious “Contractor of the Year” award for civil contracting, judged on construction techniques and environmental and program management

“Less than two years after a federal government agency decided to take its first-ever alliance approach to a high-profile \$800 million road project, despite deadline pressures and unexpected challenges, the alliance delivered award-winning, defect-free performance under budget and more than four months ahead of schedule.”

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