



WATER DESIGN-BUILD COUNCIL
AN ASSOCIATION OF LEADING DESIGN BUILDERS

GUIDELINES FOR BEST PRACTICES

Using the Project Schedule as a Management Tool

Regardless of which collaborative project-delivery method an owner uses, the project schedule serves as an effective management tool for all parties—the owner and design-builder, or the owner, design engineer and CMAR contractor (CMAR project delivery). If management processes associated with the schedule—such as development, approvals, progress measurement, reporting, and updates—are not properly coordinated, the project schedule will become inefficient and ineffective. This fact sheet contains best practices for using a project schedule effectively as a management tool.

Developing the Schedule

- Clearly communicate all of the owner's schedule objectives to the design-builder or to the design engineer and CMAR contractor (CMAR).
- If and when a partnering session is organized, include in the mission statement an agreement to develop and maintain the project schedule as a central management tool.
- In a design-build project, the design-builder maintains the schedule; in a CMAR project, the CMAR contractor maintains the schedule with input from the design engineer.
- The project schedule must include an efficient work-breakdown-structure coding system that identifies the major activities of all project components, subcomponents, and ancillary items, as well as other work activities under the contract. The schedule should also include—at a minimum—key administrative functions [from request for qualifications to guaranteed maximum price (GMP)] design, permitting, construction, start-up and commissioning, and closeout.
 - All of the major activities and milestone dates are defined in the schedule, especially those activities that depend on the delivery of major equipment. Review the schedule periodically with all team members, giving particular attention to activities on the critical path and activities with less than 10 days float (or schedule flexibility).
 - Include all the activities of critical team members in the schedule. After the owner and design-builder have agreed on a GMP, the schedule should routinely (at least weekly) include input from selected vendors and subcontractors.
- Do not develop a more detailed schedule than can be understood and managed by the people doing the work. Greater detail is appropriate for those activities that are planned to occur within the next 90 days.
- Do not let cost-loading requirements determine the duration or dependency of schedule activities. Cost-loading is defined as the process of assigning appropriate cost values from the approved budget to individual schedule activities or group of activities. While cost-loading a schedule provides cash flow requirements for the owner, it often decreases the functionality and effectiveness of the schedule.

Implementing the Schedule

- Keep both the owner's and the contractor's senior management involved in the schedule process. Do not relegate development and coordination of the schedule to staff-level personnel, who may not understand or appreciate the overall management objectives of the schedule.
- Use the schedule as a performance requirement for each team member's work activities and responsibilities.

- Keep the monthly updating process efficient and timely. Do not allow schedule updating to be delayed by disputes over invoicing and payment.
- Do not use the schedule as a battleground to assign blame or to penalize either the owner or the contractor. Both design-build and CMAR contracts typically include provisions for managing disputes, if they occur.
- Do not argue over schedule float (built-in flexibility)—the difference in calendar days between the early-finish and late-finish completion dates for any one activity, group of activities, or the total project. Float should belong to the team that creates it. If a party (design-builder or subcontractor) finishes early with some or all of its responsibilities, it should earn whatever time savings it created.

- Do not use the schedule to micro-manage either or any of the team members, and do not require pre-approval of any changes that comply with the agreed-to milestone dates. If a team member is not meeting its performance responsibilities, there should be provisions in the contract to address that issue.

Incorporating these best practices will help make the project schedule a positive management tool for communication, coordination, and collaboration.



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