

PMPOV117 - PM Discipline Integration in the Federal Government Transcript

Kendall Lott

This is our third and last presenter Roundtable episode of the 2024 UMD Project Management Center, for Excellent Symposium today. Outstanding examples of federal government implementation and frankly, organizational change management around the project and program management disciplines. Our guests have all implemented programs that have gathered the PMS, whether they were titled PMS. Not in their agencies to provide support, share techniques that make work easier, create common identity and create professional cross organizational collaboration. In fact, I found out only when interviewing these guests that all of them have already collaborated with each other, despite being in different federal agencies. That is not as common as you might think. Or want and I was proud that our PM ecosystem is so valuable to be an example that defies the norm. And the best part? OK, maybe not the best part. But the nice one is. We didn't discuss AI, Agile versus waterfall or program versus project management. These presenters are all about getting what we all know to be a great discipline embedded in the government because it's a good thing to do, sit back and enjoy.

Announcer

This is PM point of view, the podcast that looks at project management from all the angles. Here's your host Kendall Lott.

Kendall Lott

Well, hello, federal government presenters at the 2024 UMD Project Management Center for Excellent Symposium. So thanks for being here today and taking the time actually to participate in their program and going through the effort of submitting your papers, preparing the presentations. Which I'm sure you have completed and have already. Now and I have something to share. So for our podcast audience now, they get to hear a sneak pre here. So anyway, let's go ahead and start out with some introductions here. And since I always give people's names wrong, I'm gonna have you tell us your names. So if you'll tell us your name, where you work and what you do there. So let's kick. It off with Jason. Hey, good morning, everyone. My name is Jason.

Jason Traquair

Require I work at the marketing and regulatory programs mission area within USDA. There I am what's called the mission area senior program manager, which puts me at the helm of assisting in implementing best practices in program project management for my mission area. Happy to be here.

Kendall Lott

Oh, excellent. Well, good. We'll want to hear what those best practices are eventually. I'd be. I'd be interested to know where. You're getting those from I. Keep getting stuck with all the common. Ones everybody already knows. So with that, let's head over to Kellie.

Kellie Cenzano

Hi I am Kellie Cenzano. I'm one of Jason's counterpart. So I represent the natural resources and environment mission area within USDA. So within the Forest Service also as the mission area senior program manager and our role is to help implement program management within the forest.

Kendall Lott

So using your natural resources environment, but that's entirely for service.

Kellie Cenzano

Yes, that missionary makes up for service.

Kendall Lott

OK, excellent. Well, thank you and welcome. And let's see. So two people out of USDA here now here we're going to get our variation. Darrell.

Daryl Frazier

Absolutely. Thank you, Kendall. I am Daryl Frazier, the division director for project Management and enterprise risk and we sit in the CFO office at Noah. And so we have. A bit of a niche mash in the CFO because of course we have the budget folks, we have the finance folks and then we've got us who are doing program and project management and enterprise risk. We oversee Noah's Program Management Council or PMC, which is a all of our C-Suite directors where all of our programs and. Projects that are Mission high mission impact, high risk report in on a regular basis. So we tried to emphasize, of course good project management, program management, that's our premier body. But throughout the organization, so we get the opportunity to work across the enterprise in implementing and utilizing program and project management. And of course at NOAA, you know our our mission is to understand, predict changes in climate, weather, ocean. To share that

knowledge, to conserve marine and eco. What that means. We're doing everything from satellite acquisitions to Hurricane Hunter weather aircraft. To lab research projects on fisheries, so we have a huge diversity in mission projects and what we do at NOAA. So we get to work across all of that, incorporating project management and enterprise risk into how we approach those things.

Kendall Lott

Well, I want to hear more about enterprise risk, but I believe you have a sidekick with you today who's going to keep it straight. Joe, you want to talk to us?

Joe Giraldi

Door. Yeah. Thanks for having me. My name is Joe Giraldi. I'm a management and program analyst in in Daryl's division, and Noah and the CFO office. You know, I'm not necessarily a project manager by trade. I'm more coming from a trading and communications background, but once I got into this enterprise PM standardization role, I ended up taking the the fact PM training and and diving deep into the world of programming project management. And I think later on in our presentation a little. It'll start to make sense why our enterprise PM Shop is run out of our Chief Financial Office.

Kendall Lott

I was actually very interested in that. When you guys all opened here, the first two of you are very much flagging yourselves as program areas, folding program management roles, bringing some sort of discipline and process presumably. And then we walk over, we're suddenly in the CFO role on the administrative and control side. But as you said, you have the. Council, which sounds like the translation layer, if I may. Uh. With the program management or the larger programs, there's certainly a large variety of things that you guys are bringing. I'm also hearing enterprise, which is really interesting there. And then for fun, a couple of things, we have to sort out with. Our audience, just in case the podcast audience is. Not familiar with the federal government? I'll give you some. Site knowledge your audience. So USDA United States Department of Agriculture is never pronounced USTA. It's USDA. Noah is never pronounced NOAA. It's always Noah. You just got to know that about your agencies when you show up here. So don't get off at the Smithsonian Metro and say, hey, we're at you stuff. No, you're not. So since I knew that part, I cleared that. Out now, people. Back PM, You better lay it on us. I got a lot of DMP's out there listening, going back. 8:00 PM What is somebody else inventing? Another thing. I gotta go pay for. No, I don't think that's the case. Who wants to speak to fact? Yeah.

Joe Giraldi

Yeah, back again. This is my world back in the end is the federal acquisition certification for program and project management. It's, it's got a lot of similarities to the PIP, the, the program management professional. I think one of the major differences is the fact PPM focuses on federal acquisitions. In the opposition process, I'm not sure how USDA does it, but in the Department of Commerce and Noah is one of 12 or 13 bureaus under commerce. But we actually have some requirements for who has to get this back to DM certification. So. There are dollar thresholds that our program and project managers must meet in order to manage those projects. So I think the entry level is at 10 million dollars, 10 million to 75. You have to have the mid level certification and anything \$250 million and over you're required to have that senior level factor. Yeah, certification. So think government as a whole is working to be compliant with uh, with these regulations that really came out I think in 2016 with the program management Improvement Accountability Act, which is a mouthful. And I think largely. There's been a lot of improvements in the last few years as far as agencies being more compliant with meeting those numbers.

Kendall Lott

And I think we're going to need to get into that. And for fun one there, because that is a mouthful. We're just going to call it the PMI a right, OK, so let's get a little bit about what our presentations are going to be about here. So the audience has reason to believe. They need a reason to believe. Well, actually they need a reason to pay it. Show up. See. So, Jason, when I was checking out your abstract and looking over there, we have growing good in government by building the feedback loops of the future. Tell us, what's the thesis there? What is the claim you're making that a reasonable person could choose to disagree with, but you're going to end up showing them it's really. Important.

Jason Traquair

I think basically that in order to improve program project management, there needs to be deliberate collaboration between the actors and the system. That's I mean at the basic root of it. That's it. Now my colleagues in Kellie Cinzano and the rest of the mass PM's at USDA. Spent 4 yes. There's chewing on that question, right? How do we implement better program project management? And what we've learned is that the only way to do it without directed support and funding and all of the other good stuff that you traditionally get with implementing laws, if you don't have that, the only way that you can actually produce good stuff in the government is by working together. And figuring out how you create solutions to your shared capability gaps. And that's in essence what we're trying to do and we've identified 2 specific areas that we're focusing on this year through supporting projects and and other volunteer. Efforts.

Kendall Lott

Hey. Well, we're going to hear more about that later. I did hear a couple of things here. That's interesting. Hearing some stuff around workforce already beginning to build even as we started talking about fact peeping out hearing capability, which has something to do with that. Clearly something about this collaboration is going to come through some systems. It sounds like you talked about it being the interaction with this system. So that's going to be some interesting highlights for people there. Kellie continue on our USDA journey here. Oh, that's right. Your title is here about the USDA journey standing up and sustaining the USDA program project management, Pete and Community of Practice with an exclamation point. Apparently, this is very exciting. Tell us what's going on there. That journey.

Kellie Cenzano

Sure. So so the way that we looked at this in USDA with how do we bring people together to do this right? And I think the first piece is making sure that people understand that it's not just an added thing to do, it's not another thing on your plate. If you do program and project management correctly, it should make the things that are. On your plate that you're doing a lot easier. A lot faster. You'll be able to provide the information that's being asked of you without. You know massive amounts of data calls. So the first part is kind. Of. Like just getting people to understand the big why what's in it for me? How is it going to help me? And so in order to get there, the math bums or missionary, a senior program managers within USDA all joined forces and together worked on creating a community of practice. And essentially the thought process was not any one person knows everything about program and project management. There's a lot of good program and project management work that's already happening within US. And so how do we share that so that others can learn from it and that we have people where we can go and ask questions and place that we can learn and get learning materials. And so that's what we did. We stood up a community of practice and we focused on 4 core areas, one just maturity of program management in general. Really kind of looking at performance schedule rint and sharing how one might do that, what templates might be out there to help training. So we've already talked about the fact PPM certification, right? Getting people trained and if they're not ready for certification yet, some sort of continue with learning around program and project. We also set up a bunch of webinars, just one hour quick get in, get out, learn on a topic sort of thing. And then how do we have people collaborate? So setting up forum, that's where people can talk to one another, where they can learn about what events they're coming up. And so that was kind of the approach we took with. Concentrating on four key areas and getting people engaged and involved with one another in the car. Field.

Kendall Lott

Oh wow, using the power of some convening authority in there, like so there's that sharing piece, too. So you're pushing strengthening and pulling people back in. I again, as I looked at the presentations, I'm seeing a lot around. This is a workforce that you guys looking at, which made me think. Question. I would lean on that more if I were looking in a large institution and there we go. Federal institutions being some of the largest there, obviously. So Darrell, Joe, we've got a whole bunch going on there. The Noah approach to federal Enterprise PPM success. So you're like ha, USDA take that here's our approach, talk to.

Daryl Frazier

They are some great partners. We have been thoroughly enjoyed collaborating with Jason and the team there as well. So that's a huge piece. And I gotta say, one of the things that's really connecting for us here and when you talk about workforce, you know, I see those commercials all the time where we used indeed because we could get a project manager, you know. For us at Noah, when you look at the project management career field, we have 60. So we have hundreds of project managers, so the key part of this in the workforce is these are engineers who are also doing project management. These are scientists who are also doing project management. These are programming management analysts who are also doing project management. So that certification piece of the fact PPM and learning that skill set is extremely important because for a lot of our folks it. Adds to the skill set that they've already get. It gives them some discipline, and when I look at project management, we kind of look at it and say it's just a way of organizing the way you do business. It helps you organize and present that. So we found in our community practice and I say this all the time and and Joe, they say. Differently, we got the train going, but we're lucky to stay on to the caboose. The last car of that train because the community is so passionate about learning and wanting to do more. So we're developing programs, we're putting things in place not because Joe and I said, hey, we need to make sure we have a job, but it's because the community is thirsty for it. They're asking for it. So when we do. Professional development series and give continuous learning points. It's because these are the topics folks want to know more about when we do internal training program when we set. Things up to provide for it's to meet the needs of our actual community of practice of folks. So we have a ton of folks that really are interested and want to improve that skill set. So we've been able to take it from that collaborative approach because other than that, Joe and Rich, the entire community of practice and and we've got over 700 people who are actively in this thing. For us. Are there because they choose to be there, not because we've made them and we had said, hey, if you're not here, you're, you know, we're we're going to put a mark in your performance event. This is something that you can be a part of that we want to

come together. So we have kind of jumped onto that desire and thirst to develop things like the programs that we put together to standardize how we do reporting. Provide a software solution that is scalable at any level within the organization to be able to utilize to do better, more efficient, more effective project management. So we really are more reacting. To what the community is asking for, and that just aligns perfectly with what that PPM&PMIA are requiring, that we put those standards in place. The other thing we have huge support of Kendall, which I think makes all the difference, is we've got great leadership support at NOAA. You know, our deputy Under Secretary chairs, the Program Management Council, Joe started. Spotlight award program. So we we recognize every month the the most significant project manager or project management team and what the. Done. And the deputy secretary said I want to announce those I want to present those so he signs the certificate every PMC every month. He presents those things out and we don't start the pre brief with him until we go through the winter is that month. Why they're the winter, what they did. So he is very intent on supporting that effort that we're doing. And and Joe, feel free to.

Joe Giraldi

Jump in there. Yeah, just quickly. I echo everything you said, and I love hearing what Kellie had to say about the community practice because. Is that's the exact same approach that we take? I mean it, it really does take a village and Even so much so that we've all attended each others uh events and interview panels. So. So we're all friends here. But along that line, you know, we we really think about how we can standardize and how we can all do program and project management the same way. In order in organization so that everyone speaks the same language, we're saving time. We're saving effort and really our our community of practice and our whole program was was really driven. Not by myself or Darrell, but through the members of our community. I mean we. Started out with. They just three or four of us and we reached out to all the different PM's that we knew and eventually started to working, and one of the big things that they desire was a better way to do. The fact that I'm training for us, we have been doing a lot of.

Speaker

Yes.

Joe Giraldi

Vendor LED training and it's hard. I mean, there's some pitfalls that come with doing a lot of vendor LED training and it's expensive. You know you can't have control of the schedule. Or any of that. We took all these suggestions that we had from our community and discovered that we had a a certified fact PM instructor who was in the Noah employee worked for the

the National Weather Service and also here's a Maryland connection. He's a part-time professor at the University of Maryland, so. We asked would you be interested in in piloting, you know, some 5 PPM classes internally for? And this thing took off. So we've done. I mean I don't want to spoil the presentation, but we've trained over 250, Noah and DOC census employees in fact PM and doing it with no cost. And we still. Have vendor LED training now that do have costs and we supplement, but we've been able to just rapidly get our people through this program and and at multiple levels too, not just yet.

Daryl Frazier

We we also Kendall, we partnered that's part of that collaboration. So we reached outside and Noah collaborated with census and TI some of the other bureaus. And so when we do those classes, we're not just training Noah, we're training Noah, we're training census, we're training other Bureau folks that are all part of DOC right now. So we collaborate with them. So our counterparts at those other bureaus. Just like we're meeting with Jason and Kellie and Sharon, they partner with us on this as well. So we we share instructors, we share students, so that as we get there, we're getting. A broader group, and we're also providing that same disciplined training, not just to know of, but broader and DC as.

Kendall Lott

Well, yeah, Department of Commerce there. For those listening in on DC, not DOC. Hey, so that opens up a bunch of different questions for me. But Kellie, I want to ask you how large is your community of practice as well? We just got a sense of size. There from Darrell.

Kellie Cenzano

Sure. I think within 4 service, we have over 1000 participants in USCA it is. Let's see here. I'm looking. I would have to double check for all of USA, but it wouldn't surprise me if it was closer to 2000 or.

Jason Traquair

More we're over 2000 though.

Kellie Cenzano

Thanks, Jonathan, and ours is similar to Noah in the. That these are individuals who have chosen to join the Community of practice, right? We have not gone out and said you are a program and project manager and therefore you shall be part of the Community of practice. It has been a they'll selection in order to be part of that community. And so I think that really. Speak to the fact that people are interested. People have questions. Many of them have the same questions and so being able to kind of see what those are and where

we can do some work, whether it's tool, template, software. Their training, whatever those questions are, you know it, it helps us determine where can we do some work to really help move things along. And a big shout out to Noah they as they share they came to one of our webinars and did a governance interview for us. They've made some great strides in that area in the way of program and project management. And we do a quarterly governance interview and. Ask them to come. So we're trying to reach out not just within USDA, but also across to other federal agencies where we see that they may be ahead in certain areas or have a good example in a certain area that they can come share with us. And so we can learn and we try to practice in those webinars. You know, we don't want to know just everything that went great. Do you want to know what went great? But we also want to know what didn't go well because those are steps we might want to do differently if we were to go down, if the. Or. And so we always laugh. You know what went well? What would you do over again and what? Maybe would you not do or what did you learn from it? And so having that large community allows people to speak up and say, yeah, I tried that, but. Or I tried that and it went really well. So again self selection for the community and self selection for who attends the webinars and the training. You know, again, that's not a requirement. Here's the topic. And those topics come from things that they've told us in the survey. They're interested in. We announced that we're doing the webinar and if they want to come, they come and we get huge participation in those webinars.

Kendall Lott

I'm hearing some common themes here and there. This idea about it's not in your performance evaluation, so this isn't an an idea that, uh, you need to learn this skill because of your role necessarily, like and we're going to require that of you in this context. That tells me this is probably an earlier implementation in that sense, right? You're trying to generate some of the idea the strong leadership support that we heard, the use of awards, Jason, Yours was about the feedback loop and that strikes me. That's a similar theme that we're hearing here, even though you didn't frame yours as a community of practice per say, this idea that I'm hearing from Darrell and Joe and. Really is. It was kind of almost a discovery. Process. This is important. We're required to do it. Who out there wants to play. What do you need? This is in the corporate sector. It's almost like a form of what they do in marketing, right? We think we have this thing. How does it sound? What needs and and who needs to come and play. And for that, it sounds like you're getting a lot of energetic activity. Jason. Yours is about feedback loops. So after the discovery, it's about connecting the different programs or what aspect of the feedback and collaboration are you seeing here that you're wanting to focus?

Jason Traquair

Well, I think first and foremost, I think Kellie is really taking the lead on the COP for USDA. She has a really good support team there. One of the things that we tried to do is this part of the larger growing good and government initiative was. To stand up of volunteer cohort of support people who would help to deliver content, right? So in the beginning it was just me and Kellie and our mass PM colleagues basically doing this stuff because we started by creating a survey, right? A training needs survey. We had no idea what the supply and demand ratio was, right. So we said what? Heck, let's do a survey. Let's really collect all the information and see what kind of demand we get. The first survey we got over 800 respondents, right? So we said, wow, OK, let's take that demand and let's create, you know, a, a yearly kind of training regiment for PPM's. And this goes back to for all of my program project management. Colleagues have been trying to implement. EMEA the the impetus for implementing Primea was based on three strategies, OK? The first strategy is coordinated governance. So I won't go into that. The second strategy is regular portfolio reviews and the third strategy is build a capable PM workforce, right, five or six years ago, there was some. General acknowledgement that there was some building to be done right and what happened was that we lost a lot of the star power behind Pamela about two years.

Kendall Lott

Show.

Jason Traquair

And then that's when the mass PM's, at least in USDA. And it sounds like Darrell and Joe did the same thing where we voluntarily stepped up into that void and said, you know what, this still needs to be done. Somebody still needs to shepherd this strategy into the organization, and that's what the mass PM's have been doing. So the growing good in government is basically trying to take all three of those strategies and. Implement them in a way that can be shared universally across the government.

Kendall Lott

So what we're talking about here generally in this set of conversations is less about how an actual project works or project management techniques, but about getting the discipline to be rolled out across an institution or set of institutions. You guys are giving some key characteristics and thinking about that, which is going to be important for any organization, certainly for larger ones. I've got a couple of questions in here. The first one, though, I want to check in on. This is not just for the people who are taking I'm hearing training and develop. Of it, and understanding the system, I believe Kellie, you rolled out initially with this is not about giving you a new role or new work to comply to something is actually

because we're doing things that should be easier. So you must be knowledgeable of those things in the context of these communities of practice. And of your output, is it going to people who are then PMS or acting in a PM role or is it going also to people who like I'm not a PM but I need to understand the discipline either or good answers. I'm just wondering what is the type of focus? Are we building the capacity and the context of shorthand those who are certified. Those who are in the role who've signed up to say I'm the authorized person for this acquisitional. Or is it a broader group of people? How's that working for?

Kellie Cenzano

You guys, the other, our target mod audience would be those who are program and project managers or buyer to be program and project managers. But I'm going to add a big however, there are people who attend who are not. Program and project managers, but they are interested in it many times from the acquisition side. They might be in the contracting workforce and they have a high interest in what program and project manager they're learning and how that may impact them. Sometimes from a leadership side. Right. So we don't say if you're not a program and project manager, you can't come, no, if you're interested and you want to be part of the community and you want to learn. About. It by all means join the community of practice. Keep your eye on webinars that you think might impact you, but our target audience really is those who are program and project managers. And one of the ways we kind of try to continue that development is also offering coaching. So in this last year, we've added one-on-one discussions with the senior fact PM. So let's say. You've been to one of the webinars, or maybe you haven't been to one of the webinars. But you would find yourself in a program or project management role and you're either not sure where to get started, or maybe you've been there for years, but you're having trouble in a particular space and you really wanna just talk to someone about it. Maybe you're not comfortable really going out of the community chat in front of 1000 people and asking your question, you really just kind of want to have that one-on-one.

Speaker

No.

Kellie Cenzano

Discussion. So we've set that up where people can go in and book and it will show by topic or by template, which thing you might be interested in. So maybe your questions about setting up a program management plan or about program management. And you can select riff and then it will give you a drop down and say here are senior fact PPM, they're they're certified fact PM's that have volunteered to do one-on-one discussions with someone on that topic and you can choose one of them and you can set up a one hour

discussion and kind of get that little touch base our goal there is giving you someone else that maybe. Might have a different. Effective that we know at least has some formal training and has done some work in that area to talk through a problem with and it. Also kind of just gives. You another point of contact right? Developing that community. Someone else that you might reach to in the future and vice versa. I know I have had some of these coaching appointments and people come in with great questions and.

Speaker

Hmm.

Kellie Cenzano

I've learned quite a bit from them about the program through the project that they're working, and they've had some great ideas and I've reached back out to them on a different aspect of something or helping to connect people together. So that's one of the things that we've kind of added to to continue that learning journey or continue that learn.

Kendall Lott

Joe, in your context, is it also similar where it's aimed at people like yourself that were trained in the fact PM space or is it and it has leakage into the other space? Or what are we trying to roll out here?

Joe Giraldi

Yeah, definitely. I mean, there's so many similarities and and parallels listening to to Kellie's ready to practice. But yeah, for us, it's twofold as well. I mean, we are, I think primarily going after existing PM's who are already working on those projects and that's from the compliance perspective because. When these regulations from Department of Commerce came out, there is an 18 month window in which all these managers had to get certified. So not that there's gonna be very harsh enforcement once the 18 month windows up, but we'd like to get as many people compliant with. With correct certification in that time frame and I think that is ending in June. Now let's sit twofold because the other side of it is. We kind of subscribe to the philosophy that program and project management is applicable to everyone, no matter whether you're PM or ever intended to be. I think learning about project life cycle cost estimation, you know managing risk, I think these are all areas that are compatible to any job. Especially in the federal government and it just teaches people to understand the lingo and and the words that you hear. Every single day. So that's one of our goals is to get folks all speaking the same language. I think also, you know Kellie mentioned the coaching and we have we have a mentoring program that's geared around PM so so very similar there. And then we also like to host regular sessions.

We have kind of two separate tracks. We've got the professional speaker. Areas which we invite PM's who are or executives. SES is directors to come and give their two cents to an open room about how PM impacts their job and their role on a day-to-day basis. We started doing those about two or three years ago and we also have. What we call our interactive forums, which again these are open to anyone who wants to come, not just PM's. We like to just pick a very wrong topic, like acquisitions or cost estimating, and then anyone who's there in attendance gets to share their stories, share their perspectives, tips and tricks. And what we found to be really valuable and. Getting these all these people that come to these sessions is by all for continuous learning points, so that whenever they sign up and register and come to these. Options. Not only are they getting, you know, tips and tricks from experts, but they're also helping fulfill their certification continuous learning requirements little lot of time, but I find it definitely helps.

Kendall Lott

Darrell, I have a question for you then in this context, as we look at how this is going, you indicated in our brief in for the call that you you might be one of the more senior. Or mature, chronologically, mature people on. Call and in the environment and that you go way back. So one of the interesting threads I'm hearing in here is is that you know, following the implementation of Mia here is this idea that we have to build this capacity, right? We have to build the the capable workforce. A lot of the focus, both the focus we've heard from some of these programs has been around the people who have to deliver on that. Even to the point of training and certification, although we've heard a lot on leadership here, I'm hearing and that collaboration and share. Good fish still has to swim in friendly. Waters, what's your take as? You've watched this evolve on how people. Perceive in the government. How they perceive project management and project managers. The ones who aren't the project managers who are fired up in doing it right?

Speaker

Right.

Daryl Frazier

Right. You know that it's a great question. I I say because I'm retired DoD prior to being at at Noah and there it was just the way we did business. We didn't necessarily stop and say OK, now it's time to do a project management that's that's the way we did business every day. You just thought in terms of the way you were training, that's the way you organize thing. So it was just a secondary. One of the things that we found. That was a bit of a challenge at first for us because we certainly did face some of those. Is that Noah being very scientific, very engineering type organization that it was a. Bit of a. A cultural shift for those folks to

transition into doing things in a project management way, so to adopt that and say well, wait a minute, why do I have to organize and present in this standardized? This is the way I always do my findings and think so. There was a bit of a process to get. There. But what we found is once we had some believers once we had some folks saying. I'm doing a better job. I'm bored, efficient. They became our ambassadors, and so it has opened up that acceptance of that a huge amount. I'll give you a good example. Our Program Management Council that I talked about when I first got to know I was down in. 1. Of the program offices. So I was doing one of those presentations were. After report 2. Slide day one presentation, we're doing 8910 a month. One presentation. 87 slides the 2nd 78165 slides and we're doing eight of those, so you can just imagine the amount of information we were on version 27 of that thing before. I was like, this is crazy. I'm gonna quit. I can't do this. I don't even know what it did in version 26 or 20. I can't manage a project this way. This I'm doing all this. So as we've implemented standardized. We do that same presentation and that three section. So we've taken for those project managers, those folks that have to do those types of things and said, OK, we're gonna give you more efficient tool and they come back and say we're saving 10 hours a month, I get 10 hours a month back in my schedule when I follow this automated process and I follow the way you all are telling us to do it. So they've been a huge part of our ambassador then that catches on. When we get done with the podcast today, we're headed over to one of our line offices to do a presentation. Because they reached out and said, hey, we're hearing all these great things about this solution you all have going in other parts of Noah and we're headed there. We want to know more about it. So a lot of that has because of the success of it because we've had those built in and. Masseters from getting this information and using it and being successful being more efficient, being more effective because the other piece at the. End of this. If you would do a better job in how you manage your project when you need funding when you need the boss to support, I can communicate it better. I get support, I'm able to collaborate with other people and I'm more successful. I'm doing my job more efficiently, more effectively. I got more time back and. I'm more success. So being able to utilize those real stories and part of those things as Joe was talking, bring folks in, it's people to come in and talk. Hey, here's what I did with it. Here's how it helped me. So there's stories people can connect to. And when we talk about doing that training and using no examples instead of generic ones, it's people can relate to. Oh, yeah. I I know that person. I know that project. Now, I understand how that connects. So it's really making it on a personal level for folks to understand. Hey, there's something in it for me. I I really do get a benefit out.

Kendall Lott

Doing this? Yeah, I think beyond that, something you just said was really interesting, making no examples. So much of the project management training environment has to be

almost generic, right? Because with training project managers, at least in the PMI kind of space that I come from, we're training people to be able to go into any of it and it seems. May be very different if people know they want to be PM, that's probably works very well for people who didn't know they wanted to be PM. And that's so different Jason and Kellie. While Darrell was talking, you were both nodding vigorously. Everybody on the podcast should know that every time they talk about ambassadors volunteer and not making people do it, but inviting them to do it, we *** **** shakes all around. So Jason, was that your experience? How do you perceive project management is perceived by those who are not yet in your grade? In other words. We're trying to create a capacity which means some are the doers have experienced that project managers are only as effective as people will allow them to be or the system will allow them to be.

Jason Traquair

No, I think I think you're spot on and it goes back to my original point is that project management is the deliberate collaboration between two or more actors. Project management by definition is changing your organization. You don't stand up initiatives unless you're changing your organization. So these are all parts of changing your your organization and as you change your organization. You have to be mindful. Of the perception of what you're trying to do, and that's part of the project manager's. But in an environment where the discipline of project management and even program management in some cases is not really to a maturity level that allows us to incrementally improve, right. Here's an example. When we started to look for who are our program and project managers, right? We brought in a tool from Department of Commerce actually Dan Bear over there helped us bring over a tool that did basically a self-assessment where we had people go. In and do the self. Assessment. I can tell you looking at our data just right now is that we have over 70 different series. That all claim to have some applicability to program project management or some experience in program project management.

Kendall Lott

Tell us what it's serious this.

Jason Traquair

Occupational series. So in the federal government, you'll have a, you know, management analyst is a 343, right, veterinarian. Hope I don't get this wrong as a 401 I think. So you have all of these different series and they're all different perspectives, all different functions. And they all believe that they have some knowledge or some role in program project management. It's that reality that we're trying to get our hands around and how do we bring

all of those people into the conversation to better coordinate in in implementing better program project management.

Kendall Lott

Kellie, anything to add, are you, are you gonna?

Kellie Cenzano

Say Ditto. I haven't to jump in on the phone a little bit and I'll say they kind of bring all of that together, right? So it's first, who really are your program and project managers, right? Maybe they're not just doing it on the side, but they really are understanding that getting that leadership support that program and project management is. Important and that I think one of the key elements that was brought up by our our friends that know is you got to have an example of how it works. You got to show them that in action in real life in this agency it worked. Once you do that, then they come right then then you start getting phone calls from everywhere. I heard that you did this over here. I heard that they did that over there and it worked really well. Can you tell me more about? That, but you've got to get that foothold and show that it worked, that it actually makes it easier that it not add it work. And that's one of the keys when you're trying to convince people outside of the program management career field, whoever that may be, if you're still not quite sure who's in the career field that it worked.

Kendall Lott

So and then once that starts happening, you're building your own. Rolling wave here. It sounds like. So I think we covered that a lot. Of those are very similar. So I'm gonna back up to kind of an origin question for me as working in the field that that you all have for some time now. We kicked this off. With essentially we're implementing Premia 1 of you. I believe it was Jason light out kind of its three. Major areas one of. Which was the building capacity and you're all involved as essentially one way to frame and it seems to me is implementing that requirement as it has been passed down to you via OMB and via your own organizations. Most of the PM's that we deal with outside of the Beltway. Anyway, probably don't. Have a law requiring that this discipline or role happen in their organization, and let's even go with large organizations, large tech companies, large energy companies, large defense companies. They don't. Have a law so. Besides being required by law, each of you, what's your claim on why this matters? You've told us it's about collaboration. They need to collaborate. We've helped people do something cheaper, better, faster. Perhaps for what you guys are doing or where you have seen it become.

Daryl Frazier

I'll jump in on my example from what I've watched it, Noah and what we've seen and I'll use the PMC as an example. Back when all of us were doing those huge presentations and we really weren't doing good project management, we were just throwing everything we knew at the project. We were throwing everything we knew at the executive. We weren't doing a good job of organizing it, tracking things in an organized way and present. There, the likelihood that we were going to get the result, the support, the assistance, the effect was much, much lower than now. When I do that and we get done. And so that 30 minutes, 165. But now it's down to 8 minutes and and three sections and I have the deputy Under Secretary say. I'm getting more effective information. I can make better decisions and we have those PM's feel like, hey, I got my point across. I got the support that I needed. I got the help. So watching that happen in our environment says OK, this success speaks for itself. So even without PMI a, this is the better way to do business. This is the right way to be able to do business and to be organized because you know and more effective with my time. So I can get to those things that I'm trying to achieve in for a business. Whatever that goal is. I now can see a more organized past to get there, and I'm doing it more. Efficiently. So hopefully that means more profit in the end. That means the growing the company, all of those things that you would want to be successful in that company, but anybody.

Kendall Lott

Else, I'm hearing your effectiveness in there. It's about that ability to tell the story. The communication there is goodness, but you can talk to the goodness that sounded interesting to me the way you said that. What have you experienced, Jason?

Jason Traquair

Well, from my perspective, the program project management is about relative predictability, right? And the reason that we want to implement standards and best practices, especially in large organizations like USDA and Commerce and NOAA is. We inevitably will have to coordinate with other organizations, right? And in doing so, having standardized practices enables us to have some measure of predictability of, of activities within a much larger system or nation. Now this is the thing that I think that we've stumbled upon in the last couple of years. Is it coordinating? Governance doesn't mean that I need to be in a meeting with you, right? Hashing out how we're gonna work to. Whether coordinated governance is really can I predict what you're going to do in your organization relative to what I need to do in my organization and how we are coordinating is really the key on how we implement better practices and do kind of honor the discipline that is program and project management.

Kendall Lott

I love that point. I know that may not have been your main point, but all my audience and I'm a facilitator by trade, looks in people coordination does not mean you get to or have to be in more meetings. It is not the same as cooperation and collaboration. Coordination does not mean that you just give us an interesting word, predictability. That's a really interesting lens on that. I'd like to explore that more. I hope some of that might be in your presentation, but it does not mean owe more, more and more meetings. And in fact, people get to hide in meetings has been my experience. So they hear coordination. Coordination does take more effort. I think we know that. But boy, if you could structure it on the front end. It's about passing that information, being predictive in the information, fascinating insight there, Jason. I hadn't expected that. It's really interesting. Kellie, what's your take? On this.

Kellie Cenzano

There's a few things that kind of drive me crazy, and so we'll just kind of go over those about why program management, right. So the strategic alignment, right, what are we measuring if we're not measuring the right thing, we will get what we measure, but it might not be what we want. It might not be the strategies that were set out for that program, right? So selecting what you're measuring is really important. Selecting. Measures is important that you measure something, right? How old are you going to know if your program is on track or off track until you get to the end and find out you either did do it or you didn't.

Kendall Lott

Do it right that that's just not helpful. Let me tell you, I don't know that you're swimming in Finley waters entirely. I have experienced this generally in my work with the government and explicitly, I was told. When I asked what will this do, I was told it's implicit. It's. Intuitive I was like but. But if it's so intuitive, why are people? Still asking you questions.

Kellie Cenzano

Right. One of my pet peeves, right. We end up using program management to keep us from assuming that others know where we're headed, right? Let's write it down. Let's know where we're going, the reporting piece. And now I'm not talking about performing, I'm talking about overall reporting at the end when people want to know, what did you do? Did your program produce results right? If we've planned for that. Then the reporting is really easy and if we haven't planned for that, then the reporting is absolute chaos and consists of. Trying to call a whole bunch of people and and remember what happened when and what we did and that leads to overworked people. Frustrated people. When you plan for it upfront, it's really easy to do. We don't want to end up during our program and in crisis management. So if we're not tracking those risks, we're just kind of waiting for them to be

realized. We end up in crisis management and they're really dilly looking at those. Thing and and I want to touch on something someone else, uh, did for another big why? And I'm going to go back to roles and responsibilities when we have really clear defined roles and responsibilities of who does what on the team, how that team is going to communicate internally and externally. And I always kind of focus on the internal because we're usually pretty good. About knowing on the external side, it takes a little more thought to think about on the internal side and when we don't have that really clear what I have found you end up with is 50 people want to be in every single meeting because if they're not in that meeting. They have normally.

Speaker

No.

Kellie Cenzano

Deal if they're going to miss the key piece of information. And that ends up with a lot of wasted time, whereas if we're setting up clear roles and responsibilities, we know who's on the IPT and whose role it is on the IPT to make sure that we are bringing in the right people at the right time, instead of all the people all the time. We're much more effective. And so those are just some of the key things that when I'm talking to people about program management, if we do it right, we're getting there. If we are looking at those risks along the way we are making proactive decisions that are going to improve the outcomes of the program during the program, not waiting till the end and going Oh well, that happened. Now what? Right, that that crisis management so. Those are kind of some of the the big things and and I too get frustrated if I hear it's intuitive, great, it probably is intuitive for. Some of you. But it's not intuitive for everyone that's on the outskirts of that program and project. So if it's intuitive, let's just write it down. Let's just put it in the plan and then when someone asks, you can say it's right here. If you have questions, let me know. So anyway, those are the things that drive Kellie.

Kendall Lott

Crazy. There was something I just heard in. There is interesting. Is the act of having discipline and this is an. Interpretation of mine. You didn't say it.

Speaker

Sure.

Kendall Lott

That is, I am hearing it emboldens, enables and powers creates, it bites trust this predictiveness that Jason talked about. I'm sorry, Jason. You totally hung me up on that this morning. I'm gonna walk around and talk about predictive fallibility, predictive outcomes, planning. I'm hearing trust. I experienced it in my audience with no, I as a facilitator. Often a project manager I work with government groups and it's amazing how many times you get 20 people at a table when you need 4 and then you get the 23 hangers ONs on the outside because of fear of missing out. And I've ascribed a lot of motives to it in my past, probably depending on my own age and observation. But it seems to me that you're getting at trust, which is. You know, it's not that I feel I need to be in the meeting, but will I get what I need out of it since something may happen, the ball may move and nobody may tell me. And if you have a discipline which is more than getting people certified in trade, right, it's the fish. In friendly waters again. If it's understood, this is how we do business. Then people can count on it that the project got set up right and I'm in the loop and somebody told me I'll be in the loop. Then I'll get what I. Need to know on. Thursday, When I. Need to know it or whatever the role is right to me. That was my interpretation, my experience. But what I'm hearing is what we have in our discipline is the opportunity to not just to improve how things happen and then communicate them. But to actually cause trust within organizations and you guys even invited cross collaboration across organizations. So project management, program management discipline is trust building trust, creating interesting thought to me that's my information. Joe. We all talked. It all out. We didn't leave. Any they didn't leave. Room for you on this one. But go ahead.

Joe Giraldi

Tell us. No, that's OK. I love hearing all the insight. But Speaking of trust and and reliability and predictability, that's exactly how we feel. Just to go back a little bit to cultural shift that Darryl menu. And a lot of our program and project managers historically in Noah haven't been programming project managers by trade. They've been subject matter experts, they've been meteorologists, physical scientists who are the senior most person in that subject area and they're all the sudden press into a. Project management role. So as you can imagine, all these highly technical people when they're reporting up to our program management Council, which are deputy Under Secretary overseas, that's where all those 87 slide presentations, those 100 slide presentations or all being funneled up through because these are not. People who are practiced in executive reporting. These are people who are highly technical, who love to get lost in the weeds, so they're going through all these iterations and trying to really, at the end of the day. Justify why their program or project is so important, so that they can, you know, be secure in their role. Now, this cultural shift that has happened. Everyone knows the the federal government is extremely open to change. And like smooth quickly through it. But once we were able to kind of put

some investment forward. In terms of training and really focusing on these areas. We saw that the level of effort for all these PM's was drastically, drastically reduced. They have time now to work on their actual mission and not just be so caught up in reporting and following up through that executive channel. So I think that's been a huge factor for us. And now that we. You know, I've introduced moving away from these huge 5 decks of presentations. Now that we've moved into these dashboards. You know, our deputy Under Secretary is now doing desk checks, so he's not. We're not always having a full hour long meeting or three hour long meeting to review everything about the program. He sees all the risks are green, the budget screen, the overall program. Health is green. Alright, see you next month. You don't need to report. So that, I mean and that's time. Back for everybody. So that's been I think one of the one of the biggest observations we've had in standardizing our approach we have.

Speaker

I remember.

Kendall Lott

So many layers in reporting to people generated that somebody else has to check to see if you're allowed to say that. If you could say that. Is that right, take that slide out. It goes up about 3 layers, right. You start your monthly reporting the day after. The last report right cause it takes 30 days to get. It ready for the? Next senior executive Jason's jumping in.

Jason Traquair

On something. Sorry, no, I just wanted to to interject one last comment on this front. Last year I made this statement in my presentation that the mass PM's writ large for USDA have come to the realization that we don't really have a program or a project management. Problem in the federal government, we have amazing heroics going on and and despite of all of the adversity we have programs being delivered. What we have is a unstructured data management problem, right specifically at the portfolio level and how that information being unstructured leads to downstream complications at the program and project level. We can continue to bolster capabilities at the program project level. But if we're not structuring that information. In a way that allows for coordinated governance for that information to flow from the top to the bottom and back up. Hence the feedback loops that we're trying to form, right. Then we're going to continue and habitually. Be creating capabilities that may not be aligned to what we're trying to do long term, and that's really the focus here. Are we implementing solutions that help us long term or are we just implementing solutions that get us through this year and we don't really and we're not

really mindful of the impact long term. And the complications that we are creating for ourselves. Potentially.

Kendall Lott

Though pass the intuitive, we actually have to think it through not only for planning it, but to even understand what could be changing. That's one threat I just heard and then to hit that deep bass chord here. Jason, you've already offered. Us if in fact our environment is an unstructured, unstructured data problem, talk about the inability to be predictive. I mean we said we can't play that game anymore. So your theme of its concern and what has to be done or certainly. Cohesive, right? We need. We need to understand our data better and how we talk about our data, right to do that. So moving into our last part here. The big question is, is how do you define success? But that's not very sexy. So the question is you got these programs rolling out at some point you will have saturated the world with the amazingness that is project management, program management and its implementation in large federal institutions. Let me just ask you this question and then I'll let you riff on it. Five years from today, 2029, we're out in 2029. What's the headline read? You're rolling off your program, you're joining the private sector, you're moving to a different agency, you're retiring. You've had it. Whatever, right? Or now you're the senior executive in charge of something. What's going to be the headline for what you're doing now that you're presenting about?

Daryl Frazier

I would say, since you've already recognized I might be the senior, you could say maybe retired somewhere on the beach watching the news come in. This is something that you could probably do a whole other podcast on and we had. We touched around this a little bit, but we didn't jump into this. In addition to maturing the culture of the organization and the project managers, a big piece of this. Ross is maturing our leaders to know what it is. That's important. I should be asking about and what it is I should be paying attention to and we couldn't ask for a better group of more receptive leadership at NOAA to be open to. OK, you tell us what you know, what you think. We know what we think. Let's see what we can do. So I think the future for us because we're starting this data management. I think Jason hit right on it. How can I do this at an enterprise level? We've been talking about this project, this project. All right. Well, what does that mean for the enterprise? Am I looking at this across all of my projects and my managing my resources? Am I putting my focus as a senior leader on those projects that need the most and those, as Joe talked about, they're all nice and green. I'm letting them do their thing. So now that next level is. Not just those individual projects being successful, but it's across the enterprise now Noah or or USDA, that organization is more successful because we've got this going across and now we've

elevated that at that enterprise level. So that to me is going to be the next five years and that's where a lot of us are, are folks sitting in our presentation, we're gonna talk about what our strategies are a little. To get.

Kendall Lott

I heard two headlines in there. 1 is Noah's programs and projects are now much more successful. The other one I heard is leadership no longer clueless. Clubul that's. About project management, absolutely. What's the headline gonna reach out?

Joe Giraldi

I think let's word here had headline. Would be that. The next kind of generation of leaders are ready to step up and understand project management and therefore giving time back to the missions. So you know it. I think 5060% of the government are retirement eligible and there are are younger folks who are going to have to step into those roles. So if we're able to get people certified and understanding project management at that earlier stage in your career, then everyone will benefit from it in 5-10 years and. And everyone will be more cohesive.

Kendall Lott

So project no longer an exception but the rule.

Joe Giraldi

Yes, yes, absolutely.

Kendall Lott

Jason, what's the headline going?

Jason Traquair

Well, so I'm going to do a shameful plug for one of my other projects and and the hide line is the integrated value network fully implemented at USDA. That is the headline for.

Kellie Cenzano

Me. Would that be meaningful if that?

Jason Traquair

Happened. Absolutely. It is. I would say that if I can get that with me and my colleagues, we have, we've been doing. This this project for quite some time, but it is the deliberate structuring of information. Mission. And then the second headline could be that you know,

USDA leads in in artificial intelligence for program and project management supports something like that. So we are on track to get into in a generative AI space. One of our projects will be talking about that. So I think in five years from now that's what you're going to be. Hearing from USDA.

Kendall Lott

OK, Joe. Gauntlet throne. USDA leads. Just saying. Doc Kellie. What's the headline?

Kellie Cenzano

Alright, so mine's going to be for service centric, so I apologize, but it's going to be for service, a premier program management agency produces results that significantly reduce the risk associated with catastrophic wildfire.

Kendall Lott

That's almost in Victorian you're a headline is so long, but I love it and lots of alliteration as well. So we are reducing fire because we're able to pull this off, although I hear recreation is growing rapidly in the public layers, areas beyond fire and how we all get out there and get the play. Thank you for that. I appreciate that a lot. Thank you all for being on this podcast too. Taking the time out of your day to do that this morning for me where I'm sitting. But I do appreciate you taking the time to do it. And thank you again for participating in the program and making sure that you you took the time to go through all the steps to share all of the wonderful stuff that you are doing. And I hope to. See you or. See your presentations. When we're at UMD. So with that, I will hope all the recording works. Really well.

Jason Traquair

Thank you very much, Kendall. Really appreciate you doing. This.

Kendall Lott

Ohh, you're welcome. You're welcome. Thank you.

Daryl Frazier

Absolutely kind. A lot of fun, a lot of fun, even even with USDA here was.

Jason Traquair

Still fun? Good seeing you, Darrell and Joe.

Speaker

Yes.

Jason Traquair

Y'all, take care you guys too.

Kellie Cenzano

Thank you. Take care. Bye, Kellie.

Joe Giraldi

So much. Billy.

Kendall Lott

Well, you may not be a fact PPM, a government project manager, but for those of you who are PMPS and who have listened through this whole episode, you can continue your certification by collecting a PDU at Pmis PDU reporting Center and select online or digital media and manually enter provider code number 4634 and select empowered strategies. And then the full. Name of the episode PM POV 0117 EM discipline integration in the federal government and select ways of working in the talent. Single. I am your host Kabbalah, hoping to see you at the 2024 UMD symposium. But whether we meet or not until next time, keep it in scope and get it done.

Announcer

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