

**Department of Energy – Oak Ridge Operations and URS | CH2M Oak Ridge LLC  
Partnering Framework for the Cleanup of the East Tennessee Technology Park,  
Oak Ridge, Tennessee, USA – 12348**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The cleanup and reindustrialization of the East Tennessee Technology Park (ETTP) hinges on a collaborative working relationship between the cleanup contractor and the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE)-Oak Ridge Office (ORO). A Partnering Framework document was signed on June 30, 2011, with an ultimate goal of completing the contract scope of work ahead of schedule and under budget. This partnering process was the first time that DOE and its contractor, jointly developed and signed such an agreement before the contractor assumed management responsibilities of the Site. A strong desire of both parties to utilize a partnering approach in the performance of their respective responsibilities is evident.

The Partnering Framework was modeled after a partnering process employed by the California Department of Transportation, Division of Construction. This partnering process has been used successfully by the California Department of Transportation and its major contractors for many years with great success.

The partnering process used at ETTP was a phased approach. First, a Partnering Framework document was developed and signed June 30, 2011, by the Partnering Sponsors, the two leaders of the ETTP cleanup and reindustrialization project, the DOE-ORO Assistant Manager for Environmental Management and the contractor's President and Program Manager. In this way the partnering process could begin when the contractor assumed ETTP Site management responsibilities on August 1, 2011. The Partnering Framework then set the stage for the second phase of the partnering process which would be development of the Partnering Agreement and the kick-off of the first of a number of facilitated Partnering Workshops.

Key elements of the Partnering Framework document include: (1) a statement of commitment which affirms the desire of both parties to work collaboratively toward the cleanup and reindustrialization of the ETTP Site; (2) a vision which describes both parties ultimate goal of safe, efficient cleanup, and (3) an implementation section which describes how the partnering process will be conducted, as well as how disputes will be managed.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The goals of the ETTP Cleanup Contract [1] are:

1. Decontaminate and Demolish (D&D) the major gaseous diffusion facilities at ETTP including K-25, K-27, K-1037, as well as other facilities;
2. Remediate environmental media;

3. Manage the disposition of D&D and environmental remediation wastes at onsite waste storage and disposal facilities, as well as offsite facilities;
4. Continue DOE Environmental Management (EM) facility surveillance and maintenance activities currently ongoing at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL) and Y-12 Security Complex (Y-12); and
5. Support DOE's program to reindustrialize the ETPP Site, working with the Community Reuse Organization of East Tennessee (CROET).

Fig. 1 is a photograph of many of the facilities and grounds undergoing D&D and environmental remediation at ETPP.



Fig. 1. East Tennessee Technology Park

The cleanup contract contains a provision that describes DOE's desire to enter into a partnership with the contractor as a means to enhance project performance. Section H.52 of the contract states, in part, that: "In order to most effectively accomplish this contract, the Government proposes to form a cohesive partnership with the Contractor. It is a way of doing business based upon trust, dedication to common goals and an understanding and respect of each other's expectations and values. The process creates a teambuilding environment which fosters better communication and problem solving, and a mutual trust between the participants. The partnership strives to draw on the strengths of each organization in an effort to achieve a quality project done right the first time, within budget and on schedule."

Soon after the start of contract transition in May 2011, timely communication with DOE Environmental Management (EM) Headquarters (HQ) personnel "jump started" the partnering process. At the recommendation of EM HQ personnel, UCOR obtained a partnering guide developed by the California Department of Transportation, Division of Construction, titled: *Field Guide to Partnering on Caltrans Construction Projects*. [2]

According to the *Guide*, Caltrans has been partnering with the construction industry for nearly 20 years. This partnering approach was borne from the “unresolved issues and claims” that were “the norm” on Caltrans’ construction projects. The *Guide* notes that another major reason for partnering on Caltrans construction project was that “there are more people, from more diverse backgrounds, with less experience working on today’s projects that are more complex than ever before.” The similarities between what Caltrans experienced with their construction projects and what DOE EM has experienced with their cleanup construction and deconstruction projects are noteworthy.

Caltrans’ *Guide* states “...that partnering is the way we do business – anything short of a full commitment to partnering is not acceptable.” The *Guide* describes a very rigorous process that is followed for all projects with a total bid greater than \$10 million. For Caltrans projects greater than \$25 million, the project team (contractor and the Caltrans client) undergoes training in partnering skill development. Training focuses on 21 “partnering competencies.” Topics such as active listening; conflict resolution; ethics; leadership; project management; and win-win negotiation are selected and taught by a professional trainer.

Using the Caltrans’ Guide as a reference point, in addition to reviewing several other existing Partnering Agreements at DOE EM sites between DOE and their contractors (Savannah River Remediation, Wastren Advantage Inc. (Transuranic Waste Processing Center), and the CH2M HILL Plateau Remediation Company), UCOR and DOE ORO developed a phased partnering process. The first phase of the process was the development of a “Partnering Framework” document [3] that described how the two parties intended to partner together to accomplish the ETTP cleanup contract scope of work with a goal of completing the work ahead of schedule and under budget. The Partnering Framework document would be signed by the two “Partnering Sponsors,” the DOE-ORO Assistant Manager for EM and the UCOR President and Program Manager. In this way, the partnering process was endorsed by the two leaders responsible for the ETTP cleanup and reindustrialization project and the partnering process could begin when UCOR assumed management responsibilities for the ETTP Site on August 1, 2011. The Partnering Framework would then set the stage for the second phase of the partnering process which would be the development of the Partnering Agreement that would be signed by all senior DOE-ORO and contractor senior managers, as well as the kick off of the first of a number of independently facilitated “Partnering Workshops.”

## **PARTNERING FRAMEWORK**

On June 30, 2011, the DOE Assistant Manager for EM and the UCOR President and Program Manager signed the Partnering Framework that set the stage for a collaborative working relationship toward the cleanup and reindustrialization of the ETTP, with an ultimate goal of completing the contract scope of work safely, ahead of schedule and under budget. This was the first time that DOE and its contractor jointly developed and signed such an agreement before the contractor assumed management responsibilities of the Site. (UCOR assumed management responsibilities for the ETTP Site on August 1, 2011.) This was evidence of the strong desire of both parties to utilize a partnering approach in the performance of their respective responsibilities related to the cleanup and reindustrialization of the ETTP Site.

Key elements of the DOE-ORO and UCOR Partnering Framework document include:

### **Introduction**

The introduction sets forth the commitment of both parties to follow the principles of the DOE EM Partnering Policy. In doing so, the parties commit to create and foster a team environment, with the goal being execution of the ETTP Contract scope of work safely, in a quality manner, under budget, and ahead of schedule. The Introduction also notes that one of the goals of the partnership is that stakeholders will view the ETTP Team worthy of additional, future investment in the furtherance of the Departments' long-term cleanup and reindustrialization goals. Lastly, the Introduction states that ultimately, "the partnership is built on the premise that contractor success and success of the DOE mission of cleanup and reindustrialization of the ETTP are inexorably linked."

### **Vision Statement**

The Vision Statement affirms the teams' joint goal. The Vision Statement reads: "The Partnering Team will complete the ETTP cleanup by the end of July 2020 in a safe and quality manner, with a goal of completion under budget and ahead of schedule."

### **Implementation Section**

The Implementation Section describes how the Partnering Team will meet on a routine basis at facilitated partnering workshops that are designed to improve communication and partnering skills, as well as discuss and resolve issues. The Framework in part reads: "DOE-ORO and UCOR are committed to working together to achieve this model of success by sponsoring and actively participating in a series of facilitated partnering meetings designed to improve communication and collaboration." The section goes on to describe the responsibility of the Partnering Team to "flow down" this partnering approach with their management personnel and key staff. In this way, partnering becomes a "way of doing business" through all levels of both organizations.

### **Dispute Resolution Process**

The Partnering Framework importantly contains a section on dispute resolution. The Partnering Sponsors recognized that "disputes" occur, are an expected part of the business, and need to be addressed expeditiously. This section describes how the Partnering Team expects that issues will "...be resolved at the lowest appropriate level of management first and then, if still unresolved, to the Partnering Team members and finally to the Partnering Sponsors." The Section also notes that if the Partnering Sponsors agree that if an impasse is reached, the normal dispute resolution processes will be followed.

### **Partnering Kick-off Workshop**

This Section describes the beginning of the Partnering process with a "Partnering Kick-off Workshop" that will be independently facilitated by a "Partnering Facilitator." The Partnering Workshop has a number of objectives including partnering skills development, development and approval of the Partnering Agreement, and issues identification and issues resolution team assignment. Finally, at the end of the workshop, all the attendees will sign the Partnering Agreement.

### **Monthly Partnering Meetings**

Partnering Team members are expected to meet at least monthly. These regular partnering meetings foster collaborative discussion and issue resolution between the Partnering Team members. These meetings can occur as part of routinely scheduled monthly project or functional support review meetings.

### **Quarterly Partnering Meetings**

The Framework document states that the Partnering Team will meet quarterly and these meetings will be independently facilitated. The meetings will consist of additional training in partnering skills, review and status of issue resolution by the assigned teams, and discussion of emerging issues and assignments of new issue resolution teams. Formal meeting minutes are required to be kept.

### **Partnering Team Changes**

Since change in Partnering Team members is inevitable due to changing assignments, the Framework provides a section that describes how Partnering Team members are appointed by the Partnering Sponsors.

### **Annual Review and Renewal**

This section provides states the Partnering Framework and Partnering Agreement, will be reviewed, revised if necessary, and renewed on an annual basis.

### **Signatures**

The Partnering Framework is signed by the Partnering Sponsors.

### **THE PARTNERING WORKSHOP**

As required by the Partnering Framework, the first Partnering Workshop (Fig. 2) was held on November 18, 2011, and included 28 senior members of DOE-ORO and UCOR. Under the leadership of an independent facilitator familiar with the partnering process, the team members completed a “SYMLOG” survey prior to the workshop, for the purpose of helping the group gain a better understanding of their organizational culture and how this culture can contribute to or interfere with the effective operation of the partnership. A significant amount of time at the Workshop was spent examining the results of the survey and identifying and discussing areas where further work was needed in order to improve the partnership. At the conclusion of the meeting, the Partnering Sponsors assigned teams to develop and implement actions plans to address these areas. Further, during the course of the Workshop, a number of issues were raised. Assignments were also made to joint DOE and contractor teams to develop and implement action plans to address these items. The teams are to report back to the assembled group at the next partnering meeting scheduled to be held in March 2012. The Workshop was judged a success by those in attendance.





Fig. 2. DOE-ORO and UCOR Partnering Workshop

Some key learnings from the Workshop included:

1. Use of an independent facilitator experienced in Organizational Culture and Partnering was invaluable.
2. The SYMLOG survey tool used by the Workshop participants helped them better understand their organizational cultures and the similarities, as well as the differences between the organizations.
3. Provide sufficient time to accomplish Workshop objectives. If events threaten to shorten participation at the Workshop, reschedule the Workshop.
4. Hold the Workshop at an offsite location and preferably on a non-work day.

## CONCLUSION

The signed Partnering Framework and Partnering Agreement provide the needed foundation of the safe and cost-effective cleanup and reindustrialization of the ETPP Site. The benefits of partnering have already been observed as the Partnering Teams effectively addressed a number of early contract and project challenges such as funding reductions and progress in resolving Material Differences.

Based, in part of the successes achieved as a result of the partnering between UCOR and DOE-ORO, UCOR and DOE-ORO are extending this partnering approach to a number of the ETTP Site stakeholders. For example, DOE-ORO, UCOR and CROET signed a Partnering Agreement on November 3, 2011. This Partnering Agreement affirms the parties' commitment to work collaboratively to reindustrialize the ETTP Site.

Both DOE-ORO and UCOR are looking to extend this partnering approach with other Site stakeholders such as its employees, its subcontractors, the Oak Ridge National Laboratory and the Y-12 Security Complex in the future.

## **REFERENCES**

1. ETTP is managed under a contract with the U.S. Department of Energy, Contract No. DE-SC-0004645, titled the "East Tennessee Technology Park Contract," April 2011.
2. California Department of Transportation Division of Construction July 2008 "Field Guide to Partnering on Caltrans Construction Projects."
3. Partnering Framework, U.S. Department of Energy Oak Ridge Office and URS | CH2M Oak Ridge LLC, June 30, 2011.