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## Facilitating solutions for complex airport projects

### Collaboration, planning and an experienced team will lead to long-term success

As the pace of airport infrastructure improvement continues to rise and the delivery of terminal design and construction projects evolves, success often depends on close collaboration between airports and their airline partners. To meet objectives and move projects to completion requires a collaborative decision-making process based on shared values that produce holistic solutions. Accomplishing this requires extensive experience in the complex issues facing modern commercial aviation, including skilled facilitation to help resolve conflicts and achieve a shared vision.

#### **Working Together Effectively**

Airport projects affect a large and diverse community, often with divergent interests whose stakeholders eventually agree on specific plans or designs. Well-managed facilitation brings together experts and stakeholders with disparate viewpoints to collectively create solutions. It's important to focus on relationship building, use active listening, and ask questions to fully understand the client and their stakeholders' perspectives. Analyzing and communicating those back to stakeholders furthers the goals of the project.

#### **The Right Start**

Preparation is key to successful engagement. A good stakeholder engagement plan will involve the right people at the right time — early and often — to produce solutions that would not have been anticipated without having extensive aviation experience to guide the process. Assembling the team involved from the beginning in an atmosphere

of trust and respect builds meaningful relationships while asking thoughtful questions will produce comprehensive base data that can minimize unnecessary expenses in both time and money.

#### **Facilitation as Mediation**

Experienced facilitators can serve as negotiators and mediators to enable stakeholders with divergent views to consider each parties' interests and align their needs with the project objectives. This gives the team the tools and processes to deal with emerging issues and differences in a responsive and constructive way, working as a cohesive and motivated group to keep the project on track. Consensus building around a preferred solution ensures that the interests of each party is being heard and addressed.

#### **Facilitation for Innovation**

Successful design professionals who facilitate stakeholders will follow an integrated approach to problem solving that utilizes their aviation experience in planning, design and implementation to minimize disruptions and maximize results. The best project teams provide a diverse range of industry expertise and thought leaders with real-world experience in identifying and resolving complex challenges faced by airport and airline clients.

#### **Facilitation for Risk Management**

Asking the right questions early and working through potential scenarios can be critical to minimize project risk. During the design phase,



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the team can identify potential problems and develop innovative solutions before construction starts. With engaged and informed stakeholders, problems can be handled on paper, and through modeling, rather than having to reconstruct. Clients benefit from risk reduction, cost control, and a more efficiently managed project that can be completed on time, and on budget.

Through a well-managed stakeholder engagement process, clients can successfully address multiparty issues, minimize risk, manage expectations and enhance the quality of solutions for more successful project outcomes. Achieving airport or airline objectives requires an organized, focused and trusted facilitator who can gain the support and involvement of all stakeholders. Strong, respectful relationships formed with all parties maximizes project success.

There will be challenges along the way, but a well-conducted stakeholder engagement and collaborative communication plan will bring out those challenges in a timely manner so they can be dealt with effectively. ■

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