



•Oops! I Did it Again

- Lessons from Planning Challenges
- APA PA 2025 Conference

- Keyleigh Kern, Nicole Ozdemir, Nic Fazio

Agenda

01 Introductions & Session Overview

02 Learning Objectives

03 Why Planning Challenges Happen

04 Case Study 1

05 Case Study 2

06 Case Study 3

07 Share Your “Oops”

08 Takeaways & Closing

Meet our Team



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Senior Transportation
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Urban Planner III

Learning Objectives

Learning Objectives



**Recognize
Common Pitfalls**



**Develop
Strategies for
Adaptive Planning
& Course
Correction**



**Apply Lessons to
Future Projects**

Why Planning Challenges Happen

- Where Things Can Go Wrong

Where Things Can Go Wrong



Leadership Decisions

- Mismanaging teams
- Communication breakdowns
- Delegation issues



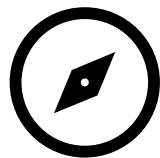
Strategic Choices

- Entering a new market
- Product development missteps
- Missed opportunities



Ethical Considerations

- Navigating challenging situations
- Addressing potential biases



Project Management

- Poor planning
- Scope creep
- Unrealistic timelines



Team Dynamics

- Conflict resolution
- Handling difficult personalities
- Lack of collaboration

Case Study 1

- Transportation Planning Misstep



The Case

01

Supporting client on planning and design of new urban trail project

02

Client is managing planning and design, but will not be the owner or maintainer of the trail once it's done

03

Project is in its early stages and only planning is funded

04

Planning is considering different routes, but all require right of way purchases and/or agreements

The Problem

Right of way information appeared straightforward at first, but ownership turned out to be complicated

Client and consultant convened a steering committee with representatives of potential owners/maintainers, but they weren't decision makers

Long timeline to clear up ownership and agreements meant turnover of staff and leadership in key roles

Delays mean increased costs and loss of public trust

What Would You Do?

Discuss amongst your group



What Went Wrong



Leadership Decisions

- Mismanaging teams
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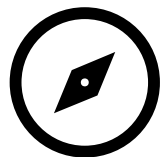
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The Cause



- Lack of recordkeeping, both consultant and client
- Not understanding political dynamics within critical partner and stakeholder organizations
- Different design standards and maintenance expectations based on ownership

How We Adapted

01

Convened meetings with many representatives from the same organization rather than a single point person

02

Made changes late in design and in construction

Lessons Learned

Get right of way experts and legal council involved as early as feasible

Get everything in writing

Document all decisions!

Do your homework to understand who the decision makers are

Plan for delays

Case Study 2

- Community Engagement Breakdown



The Case

01

Supporting client on transformative new program with engagement and outreach tasks

02

Client has engineering data but now needs the lived experience data

03

Variety of audiences need to be included: program users, near neighbors, seniors, families, and people with disabilities

The Problem

Client wants to hold two in-person public meetings as part of outreach and engagement tactics

Client uses network of community groups, CDCs and other partners to advertise the public meetings

Attendance at the two in-person public meetings ends up being very low

Client is frustrated and still needs the lived experience data to move forward

What Would You Do?

Discuss amongst your group



What Went Wrong



Leadership Decisions

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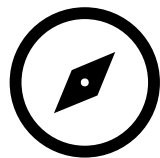
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The Cause



- Expected people to attend client's own separate meeting
- Unclear asks to local partners
- Put a lot of resources into one method of outreach

How We Adapted

01

Focused on best tactics to reach various audiences

02

Worked with local CDCs to host surveys

03

Plugged in to community meetings and events

Lessons Learned

Diversify your tactics

Give people a reason to show up

If there are specific groups you need to reach, go to them

Use the existing network of community events and groups

If still going the route of traditional, in-person public meetings, give yourself enough time to plan and coordinate

Keep advocating for best practices to your clients

Case Study 3

- Scope Creep



The Case

01

Supporting a
Prime For Public
Engagement and
Graphic Materials

02

Generated A
Vague Scope of
Work

03

Misunderstanding
of Prime and Sub-
consultant on
Terms of Scope

The Problem

As the project developed, the Prime wanted additional/more time intensive visual materials.

Prime was upset/frustrated when their request was denied since we saw it as a creep outside of the agreed upon scope.

They believed that their request was well within the scope due to the language used.

What Would You Do?

Discuss amongst your group



What Went Wrong



Leadership Decisions

- Mismanaging teams
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Strategic Choices

- Entering a new market
- Product development missteps
- Missed opportunities



Ethical Considerations

- Navigating challenging situations
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Project Management

- Poor planning
- Scope creep
- Unrealistic timelines
- Miscommunication



Team Dynamics

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The Cause



- Miscommunication of Terminology
- Lack of Clarity or Specificity
- Use of Vague Language

How We Adapted

01

Prioritized the need vs want of the request

02

Negotiated a path forward

03

Found a compromise in which be both benefited

Lessons Learned

Generate a well-defined scope

Communicate and ask questions

Use clear and concise language

Be ready to negotiate



Share Your Oops Moment

- Interactive Roundtable

Share Your Oops Moment

One person per group to share their “oops”

Guiding questions for discussion:

- What happened?
- What would you do differently?
- What advice would you give others?

Takeaways

Key Takeaways

Planning pitfalls are common and valuable

- Missteps offer opportunities for reflection, learning and growth

Root causes matter

- Understanding why things went wrong

Adaptive planning is crucial

- Flexibility and resilience are key

Collaboration and communication are central to everything

- Effective coordination and communication can make or break a project

Thank you!